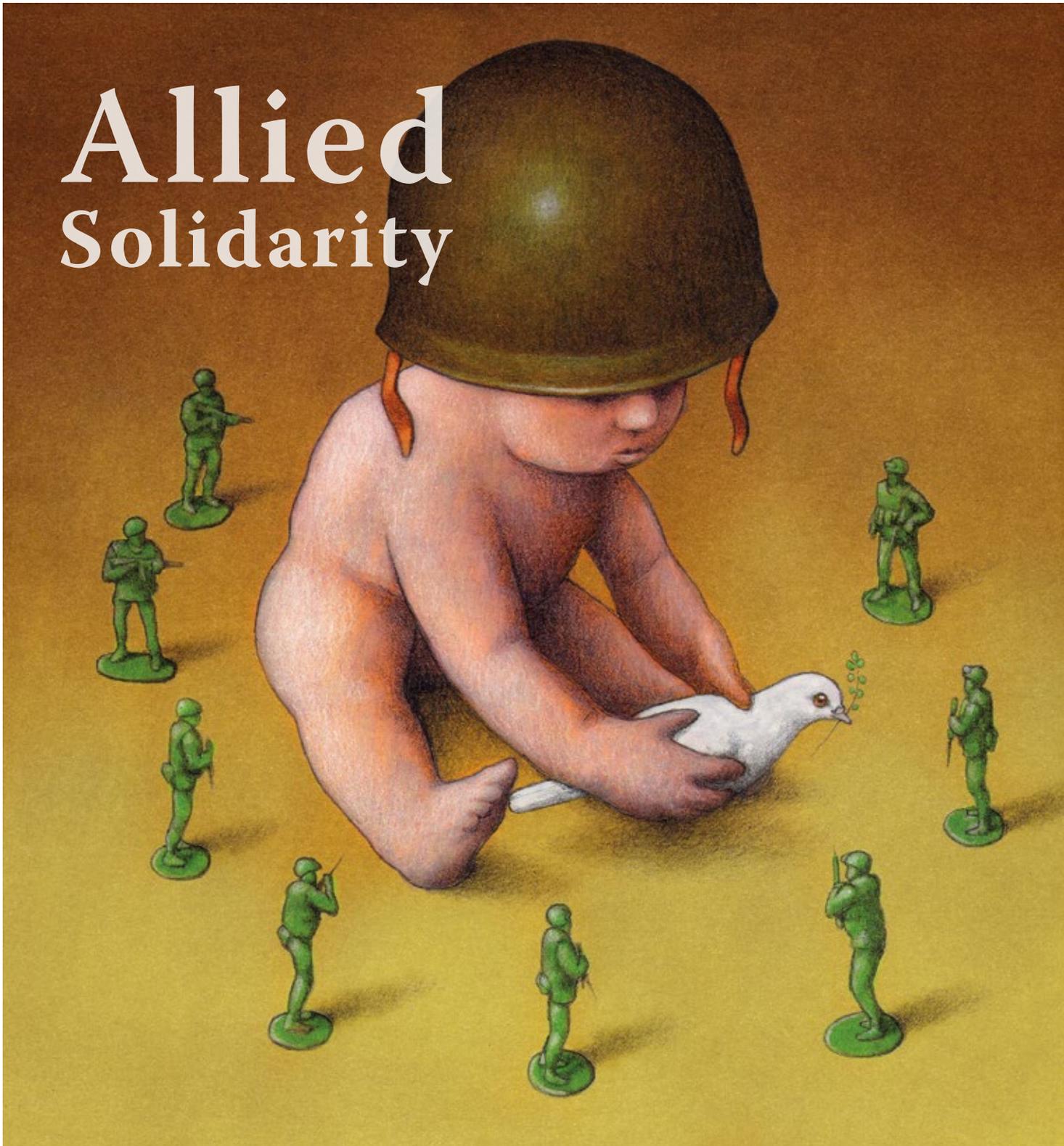


Allied Solidarity



How to reinforce public opinion support for NATO?

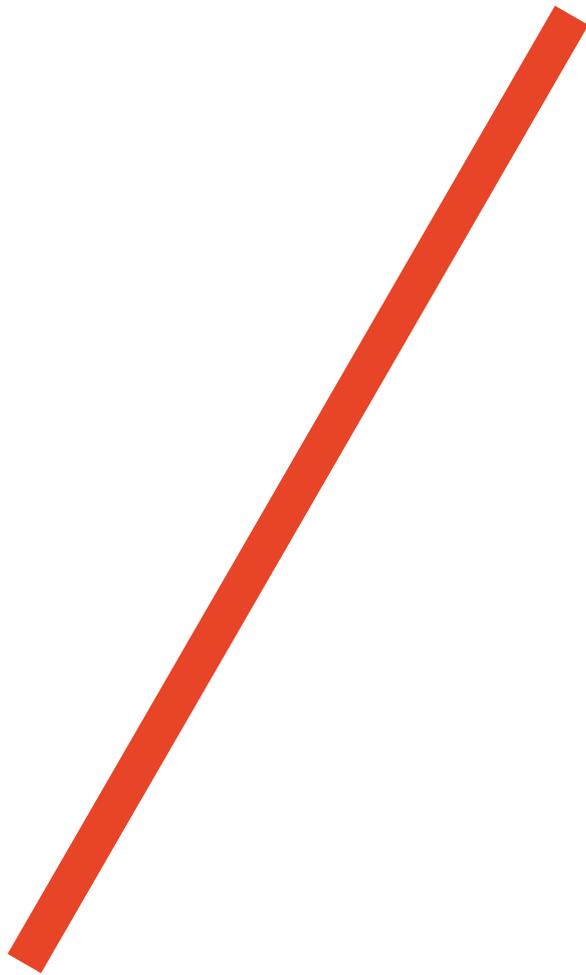
THE WORLD IS GOVERNED BY IDEAS

*We are concerned with those
that determine the shape of tomorrow
in Central Europe and beyond*

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Allied Solidarity

PHOTO: BEKAS



WOJCIECH PRZYBYLSKI
Editor-in-chief

25 YEARS LATER THE V4 SHOULD REMEMBER BETTER WHY IT WAS CREATED. ITS MAIN PURPOSE WAS TO JOIN NATO AND TO EXIST IN A UNITED EUROPE

Recently I read a story about a retired New York city fireman who decided to move into the hills of West Virginia to escape the city nights filled with false alarms and recreational arson.

He opted for a simple life. Not longer after moving to the countryside, he came across a house that was burning down and no one nearby to put out the fire. Soon he found himself collecting the necessary equipment and training men to serve in a fire brigade.

— The moral being that you can turn your back on civilisation if you like, but you're not necessarily going to escape the social contract — Garret Keizer sums up this story in his article for *Lapham's Quarterly*. It is an illustration of a basic obligation that we have with our neighbours that is called solidarity.

In late 2015 the heads of the Central European states jointly signed a declaration on allied solidarity and responsibility in advance of the NATO summit in Warsaw which is to occur in July 2016. This call from within NATO has two reasons that are worth recalling. Firstly, it is a threat of burning neighbours that we have seen in the last years. Today it is the Ukraine, yesterday it was Georgia, previously the Balkans.

The Visegrad countries and other signatories feel very clearly the danger that springs from the military might of more and more advanced rockets that mount up on the borders of NATO, threatening peace and prosperity as well as mobility. They also see the danger of demobilisation in Europe, supported by the decent desire for a simple life.

It is this dream of peace that often drives democratic societies to a point where they do not want to be on alert and would mobilise only upon seeing a burning house. It was the feeling a hundred years ago, well portrayed by the historians Eric Hobsbawm and Michael Eliot Howard, whose account of Europe's condition at the turn of the century is clearly analogous to today: the triumph of scientism masked under liberal politics, which enabled the taking for granted of peace and a lack of solidarity between nations.

25 years later the V4 should remember better why it was created. Its main purpose was to join NATO and to exist in a united Europe. Both requiring strong and functioning institutions founded on the clear legal background of international law and with democratic legitimacy. Today, as before, both principles are constantly challenged, and mostly by the same actor.

Russia is tireless in its efforts to undermine both clear distinctions of what is truth and what is not, and to exploit the greatest weakness that comes along with the Western culture of liberal democracy — rationalism and critical thinking that often turns against itself in a spiral of self-questioning and disruptive mistrust that does not seek answers but only more questions. Moscow has mastered this poker game with the West, but it is up to the joint efforts of allied democracies to halt the game before it descends into a match of Russian roulette.

The NATO countries should not abandon those achievements of enlightened reason, but neither should they forget that, to secure peace, we must be ready to fight. And the rules of the world have not changed so much, even despite hybrid warfare, since von Clausewitz summarised two conditions of superiority that keep enemies at bay: it is not only military equipment — today still insufficiently maintained and modernised — but also the moral will of the people that must resonate among everyone. All for one and one for all. /

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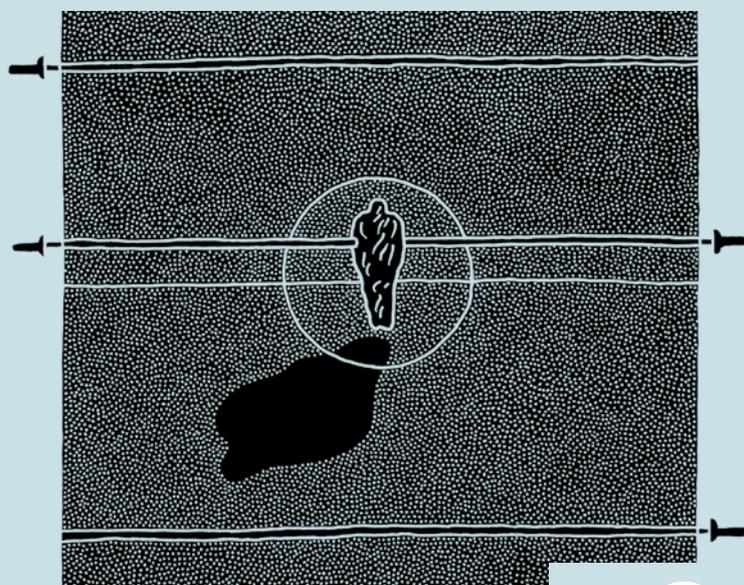
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BRNO



György Spiró

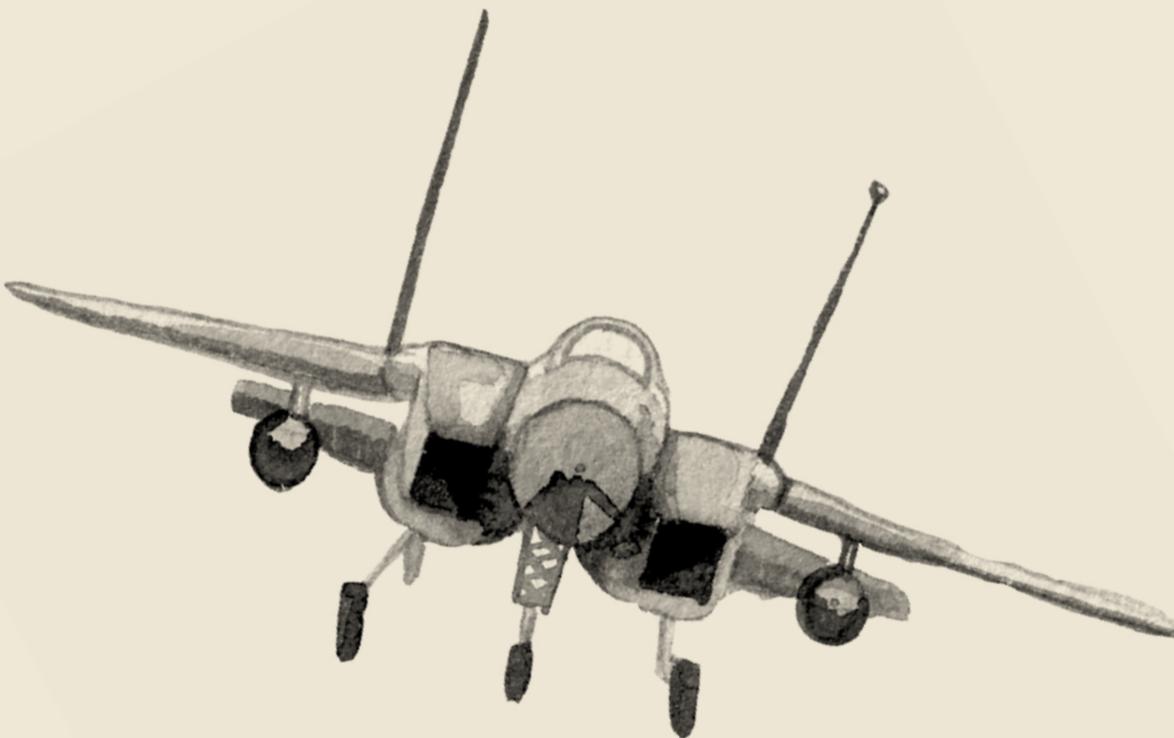
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SURVEY



We have asked
about regional defence
identity, economy
of defence cooperation,
and what directions
to look at in the future.





MARTIN STROPNICKÝ
DEFENCE MINISTER OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

In the context of this year but not only: What should NATO do?

In response to the Russian aggressive actions against the Ukraine, NATO leaders at their Wales summit meeting approved the Readiness Action Plan which embodies the unity and solidarity of the Alliance, strengthens its collective defence as well as crisis-response capabilities, and ensures that NATO remains capable of meeting every challenge that may arise.

With the Warsaw summit approaching, we are in a good position to take stock of our efforts since Wales and to decide on our way forward. From our perspective there should be four main themes guiding our further military, political, and institutional adaptation beyond Warsaw: (1) the continued enhancement of our Article 5 collective defence capabilities; (2) the further strengthening of our cooperation with non-NATO partners in order to project security and stability beyond NATO borders utilizing, among other means, the Defence Capability Building initiative and the open-door policy; (3) the flexible adjustment of NATO-Russia relations to discourage further Russian transgressions and induce more pragmatic if not cooperative stances; (4) and last but not least, to be way ahead on Afghanistan.

What decisions will best serve peace?

Through its robust collective defence system, NATO itself, which is based on a strong transatlantic link and its expanding web of international partnerships, of which close NATO-EU cooperation is the most natural and the most important one, is per se a very potent factor in preserving peace in the Euro-Atlantic area. An alliance uniting 28 states comprising three nuclear powers and more than 900 million people can overcome any conceivable adversary. Therefore, we put a great emphasis on demonstration and preservation of Allied solidarity and unity as the main source of our strength and guarantor of our collective security.

How is it possible to reinforce public opinion support for the Alliance?

We need to continually make sure that we are effective in what we are doing, and that what we do is integral to our core values and serves to preserve and promote those values through unity, solidarity, strength, and resolve.

What do you think is possible in the cooperation of V4 countries in the common procurement and integration of modern systems like radar or antimissile defence?

Procurement is the very last phase of the acquisition process, which starts much earlier by defining operational requirements. It is the very essential phase that influences every pos-

sible procurement strategy. This is the moment when other countries must share their needs. The second thing is, of course, finding the consensus, which is harder than it may appear. The military requirements of the countries could be different. There are other relevant aspects that must be taken into account. One of them is the budget readiness of the participating countries at the same time. The legal environment is another important aspect, because it is different in each country. Although EU Directives allow EU countries to cooperate in terms of armaments projects, the national (V4) legal systems are not very supportive in this matter. Despite some failures and problems we faced in the past, the Czech Republic continues to seek cooperative relationships with our neighbours, and in the V4 especially. To enhance cooperation within the V4, we have invited the EDA to help us overcome some of the obstacles and, hopefully, there will soon be some common results. /

PETER SIKLÓSI
DEPUTY STATE SECRETARY
FOR DEFENCE POLICY AND PLANNING OF THE
HUNGARIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

There is an ever strengthening Visegrad defence cooperation; naturally not as a separate identity but inside NATO and inside the EU. Nevertheless, the cooperation is visibly strengthening all the time, and, in the future, we would like to see these ties solidify on a more practical level. The theoretical level has already been accomplished; there is an open discussion between our countries, but we are trying to find ways to make that verbal cooperation into a more physical reality.

BUILDING ON THE EXPERIENCE OF THE V4”BATTLEGROUP

Let’s start with the Visegrad Battlegroup first. Yes, it’s on stand-by right now. It is a very unique battlegroup because of its size compared to most other battlegroups. It has been a good first attempt as we’ve gained a lot of experience and knowledge from it. However, we already know that the next V4-EU battlegroup will be formed in 2019. We will transfer the lessons we’ve learned from this battlegroup into that one.

Another area where we can use this experience is the creation of standing V4 formation, though this decision has yet to be made. Still, the possibility alone shows how important this battlegroup has been. But this is only one idea for collaboration. Another area of possible practical cooperation is the rotational unit in the field that will be soon be deployed to the Baltics, what we now call reassurance. Essentially, it would be a military unit where one nation would send the company for a designated time period.

All of our nations have to change our old – basically Soviet-Russian — technology to the new Western technology, and this needs to be accomplished roughly at the same time.

COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF DEFENCE ECONOMY

In the future a very important objective would be to have common capability development projects or, in other words, common procurements of military hardware by the Visegrad Four. There have been numerous attempts to accomplish this over the past twenty-five years. None of these were successful, but we haven't given up, and we are actively searching for areas where we could cooperate. An interesting area for development could be in the armoured infantry vehicles as well as the air and missile defence systems.

All of our nations have to change our old — basically Soviet-Russian — technology to the new Western technology, and this needs to be accomplished roughly at the same time. The Poles are a little bit ahead because they are spending more, and they are feeling the heat of the threats much more than we are. But there would be room for cooperation on this issue if we can agree. This is not as easy as it sounds because there are military requirements which have to be agreed upon, money that needs to be allocated, defence industrial issues that should be tackled, with, and the political will is also necessary. The easiest part is the political will because in all four Visegrad nations the top political will is there.

In each country the industry is in a different situation, so it is not an easy thing to harmonise, and naturally all defence industrial companies are looking out for their own interests. When it comes to cooperation, something we commonly say is that we need to create a win-win scenario. All of our national defence industries have to have benefits from this cooperation.

A DIVERSITY OF DIRECTIONS

Now, looking into the future and answering what threats to expect, we should be vigilant in every direction. The biggest threat is that all these threats are attacking at the same time, and they are overloading us. This is the biggest threat: that everything is happening at the same time.

While we could cope with (some of) them separately, we don't have this luxury, so we have to do everything at the same time. However, there are huge differences between the threats. The Eastern challenge is quite different from the Southern, and they both require completely differing solutions, which means that we will have to have all kinds of capabilities from our limited resources.

It is pretty clear that we will have to live with the Southern challenge for a very long time because of the demographics; it is quite plausible that even our grandchildren will have to deal with this problem. /



JAROSLAV NAĎ
DIRECTOR FOR DEFENCE AND SECURITY
AT THE SLOVAK SECURITY POLICY INSTITUTE

What do you think is working in the defence cooperation in Visegrad?

I would say that, based on the margin of 2010–2011, I had a lot of expectations, having started many good projects. I would say that the atmosphere and the whole political pressure is nowadays lower than it used to be five years ago. Even expectations are lower than back then. We have developed some projects, including the Visegrad Battlegroup, which is now on stand-by, and which we know and “hope” is not going to be deployed. Still, we need to work together on this project to keep it running and relevant. Another project, which is running far better than five years ago, is Joint Training and Exercises. We did a lot of training together, many exercises together, with at least two countries out of the V4, in different countries. This went very well, and in this very turbulent situation on the eastern flank of NATO, it is very good that the V4 is training and exercising together. That's another success story.

Where I am much more critical is of course concerning Joint Acquisitions. No success story at all. We used to say a few years ago that we should start at least from the low-hanging fruit, but honestly, we didn't find any, which is a very negative example of the result of intense dialogue among the V4 countries. I don't know what the purpose is, but I can try to guess and say that the difference is not in different planning, not in different needs, since we have at least several situations when all V4 countries, or at least two or three of them, have similar needs. Probably, the system is different in terms of the interest of its stakeholders. Most probably either government was pushing hard for its own interests, or people behind each government were pushing hard for their own interests. Eventually, we were not able to reach at least one joint procurement project, which is, really, a shame. Not even radars or ammunition. That should be something where we were supposed to find a conjunction of interests. But we did not succeed, and I don't see any hope here in the years to come.

Concerning the WISŁA program that Poland is working on right now, it is so sophisticated and expensive that I honestly don't see Slovakia participating, neither on a permanent basis, nor as a full-fledged partner.

Perhaps Visegrad could cooperate in procuring integrated defence systems?

There are different examples, including the one that you mentioned. The cooperation of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia in supersonics — the Czechs and Hungarians have already signed, Slovakia is in the last stage of negotiations — is another example. This creates some kind of joint area, where we can have joint training and shared logistics.

Concerning the WISŁA program that Poland is working on right now, it is so sophisticated and expensive that I honestly don't see Slovakia participating, neither on a permanent basis, nor as a full-fledged partner. However, the current system that operates in Slovakia has not been sustainable for a long period of time, and I know that Slovakia will be looking for another system and a more regional approach. The Czech Republic is in a very similar situation. They are running on the old system and they are looking for something new. In Visegrad, we are aware these projects are something we should work on, but they are much more complicated than the Joint Acquisition of ammunition that we did not even succeed in. Therefore, I would not be that optimistic in this regard.

What can we expect from Slovakia in terms of the army modernisation and defence spending?

During the NATO summit in Wales, Slovakia increased its defence budgets, but not dramatically. During the summit in 2014, defence spending was at the level of 1% of the GDP whereas currently it is a little bit more than 1.1%, let's say 1.14%. Both governments, the previous and the current one, repeated their pledges to increase the number to 1.6% by 2020, which is a very optimistic goal, and I am not sure that the new government will actually deliver this amount by 2020. I think 1.4% is more realistic, and still would be an interesting step. What happened was that Slovakia actually signed a contract on nine Black Hawk helicopters, and also signed a contract on two transport airplanes, and we expect throughout this year the first aircrafts to come, both in terms of transport airplanes and the first Black Hawk.

The previous government started with the acquisition of radars, and I expect to see some results by the end of this year. So this project should be finished rather soon. Then, technically, the previous government agreed 100% with Saab on supersonic jets and "Gripen" leasing. But they let the new government finalise the project and sign the contract, because they didn't want to sign such a big project before the elections.

The new government will now decide whether to sign the contract or not. I think it should be signed, because it's actu-

ally the only option for Slovakia — we do not have money for the acquisition of new sophisticated supersonic jets, and we shouldn't stay with MiG-29, which is what we have now. Few of them, and only a few of them are flying and are capable of flying. There should be a decision from the new government rather soon. And then it is of course time for the modernisation of the land force. For sure, we are talking about the modernisation of BMPs (ed. infantry fighting vehicles, Russian: Boyevaya Mashina Pekhoty): BMP1 and BMP2 and also acquisition of new 8x8 and 4x4 capability. There we have a running discussion, also with Poland on the acquisition of Rosomaks (ed. another infantry fighting vehicle). But I know there are also discussions with other options as well and the decision will probably come rather soon, because this modernization is very much needed for the Slovak Land Force. These projects are now the top priority, and even for this we do not have, as of today, financial plans, so we need to wait and see how the new government will adopt to this new situation. /



BOGUSŁAW SMÓLSKI
PROFESSOR OF THE MILITARY UNIVERSITY
OF TECHNOLOGY IN WARSAW, GENERAL
OF THE POLISH ARMY

Is it realistic or wishful thinking to imagine that the Visegrad States will one day together share a single armament policy?

The history of the Visegrad States cooperating in the field of armament has not seen much success in the last 25 years. I have had the chance to observe this cooperation myself ever since the group was formed in 1991. At that time it seemed that, until 1989, the existing Soviet system of locating assembly plants of separate elements of armament in different states of the Warsaw Treaty was to ensure that none of the states would be able to produce complete sets of armament on their own, except Russia of course. The lesson to learn was to understand that together we stand united. Unfortunately, the

lesson was never learnt. Firstly, the fashion for western armament arrived. Secondly, I think the standardization of NATO was far too exposed; it actually became the universal key used by western producers soliciting every opportunity to situate their products in our region. And thirdly, there was too little political will, and too incoherent strategies presented by our states. Once we compare the defence budgets and the size of the armies, i.e., the size of the needs and potential orders, we can clearly see that Poland had the chance to become a natural leader initiating the cooperation in the field of the group's armament. On many occasions we have been told about the initiatives of the Polish authorities to start the process of cooperation, yet most of them had failed. There are no shared significant programmes today. We have recently heard about a planned joint production of an infantry-fighting vehicle. It has not been very successful so far. There were also talks on a joint production of radars. The Czechs decided on the Israeli proposal. I could enumerate more of such cases. We should interpret the words of the Czech vice-minister of defence Daniel Kostoval, spoken during the Warsaw Security Forum, which was organised by the Pulawski Foundation last year, as symptomatic. On the one hand, he made a positive assessment of the potential areas of cooperation, but on the other hand, he deemed that Poland had been trying to propose new and high-volume initiatives, but only on its own, without reaching agreements, or even searching for partners. The effects haven't been overly enthusiastic. One of the reasons is the lack of stable and binding decisions concerning modernisation programmes in Poland. One can observe that each next government, no matter what political vision they follow, tends to oversee and consequently verify the existing settlements and push for new ones. It does not support the enterprises that often require years to complete.

However, the tightening military cooperation, which manifests itself, e.g. in establishing the Visegrad Battle Group, is an excellent prerequisite for generating common needs in the field of armament and military equipment. When subunits practice together, absolute cooperation is key and the need for common equipment — obvious.

Is it true that the future purchase, even of different devices or components, will be integrated within one system, e.g. anti-aircraft defence?

Firstly, the V4 States have very obsolete anti-aircraft defence systems, which need quick modernisation, yet only Poland seems to prioritise this task. The programme of anti-aircraft and anti-missile systems is one of the leading projects in the process of modernising our army. Secondly, so far, we have been offered obsolete Patriot mid-range systems that do not meet the requirements of the network-centric warfare and would not be able to combat the modern methods of air aggression, especially in Polish conditions. The newly developed and far more advanced MEADS systems are based on open architecture, which allows net-centric work. They also include radars and missiles in the set, which could ensure successful resistance towards a potential enemy, using for example Iskanders. Network-centric warfare has its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it allows creating and configuring complex equipment sets combining their best features and acting together within one system, but on the other, it brings the risk of eliminating whole vital fragments of the

system by a successfully performed cyber-attack, e.g. on the headquarters.

NATO settlements concerning anti-aircraft defence systems of member states, and consequently the same within the Visegrad Group, are based on individual national systems. NATO does not unify this type of armament, although it is crucial for the national systems to be capable of defending their territories. Hence, each country is searching for ways to tackle the issue on their own. We must remember that the formation of anti-aircraft and anti-missile defence systems consumes a lot of resources. To tell the truth, there have been declarations of joint cooperation of the Visegrad States, but eventually the Czechs are to run a further 2-year analysis of the solutions available in this area. They have only decided to purchase some radar.

If the radars will cooperate within the NATO system will they also be part of the Czech national system?

They will be part of the national system, which is part of the NATO system, precisely. I am talking about 3D radars meant to scan areas in the air.

What would help us use all of the advantages of regional cooperation?

Cooperation in the area of defence is always a natural derivative of political cooperation. When observing the V4 states acting individually, especially before and after the Newport summit, one could notice a positive change, which proves that we can discuss some matters together. However, if we take a closer look, we will see that each country runs its own policy concerning army equipment. What strongly affects this is only a different perception of the dangers, mainly the potential dangers that Russia causes. Poland sees them differently, as do Slovakia, Czechia, and Hungary. This is the reason why we have other priorities in the field of defence systems. We do not even share the same judgement on the sanctions imposed on Russia, or on the location of NATO troops, if they are ever to be based in the eastern flank. We cannot forget the importance of the size of defence budgets and other factors resulting simply from the size of countries and their GDPs. Poland has decided to allocate 2% GDP to our defence budget, whereas the other states have remained at just 1%. Naturally, these amounts are considerably incomparable.

The needs of our countries within the armament area are similar in many respects, not in terms of quantity perhaps, but in assortment for sure. We still use items and weapons that recall the former Warsaw Treaty. And again, it means that there is still a wide range of goods to be produced with joint benefits for all. The scale of production always positively affects economic investments, in the defence area too. Despite all the differences, the tightening cooperation in our region is likely to bring us profits; however, some proper governmental support and clear engagement of the leaders of the defence industries of our countries must finally meet. /

DISRESPECTING NEUTRALITY IN EUROPE

- 1914** **GERMANY** 
 LUXEMBOURG
 BELGIUM

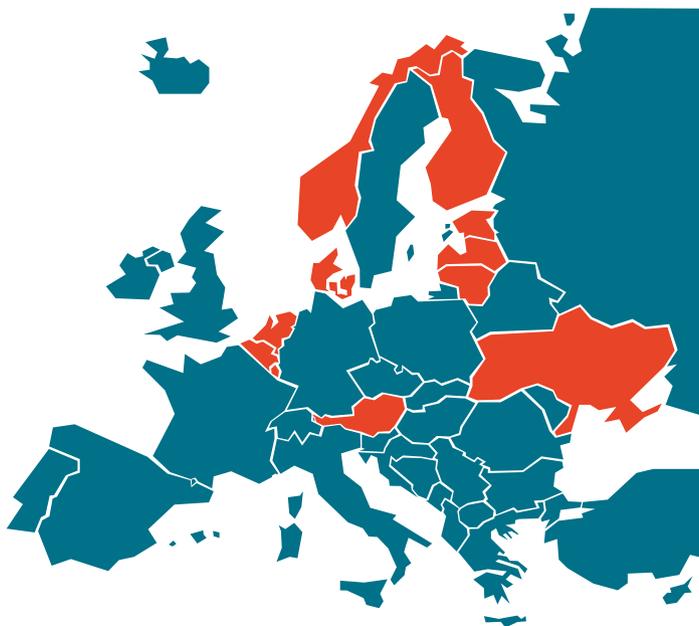
- 1938** **GERMANY** 
 AUSTRIA

- 1939** **SOVIET UNION** 
 FINLAND

- 1940** **GERMANY** 
 DENMARK
 NETHERLANDS
 LUXEMBOURG
 NORWAY
 BELGIUM

- 1940** **SOVIET UNION** 
 LATVIA
 LITHUANIA
 ESTONIA

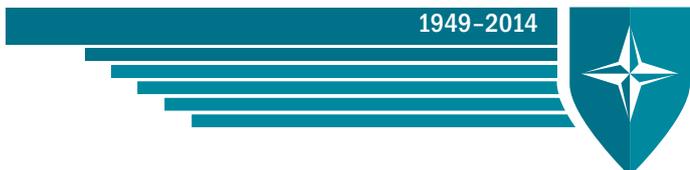
- 2014** **RUSSIA** 
 UKRAINE



IN CERTAIN CASES (SWITZERLAND), NEUTRALITY CAN WORK. HOWEVER, MANY HISTORICAL EXAMPLES HAVE SHOWN THAT THIS IS NOT ALWAYS THE CASE.



SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT IN 1949, NATO HAS NEVER FAILED TO PROTECT ITS MEMBER STATES.



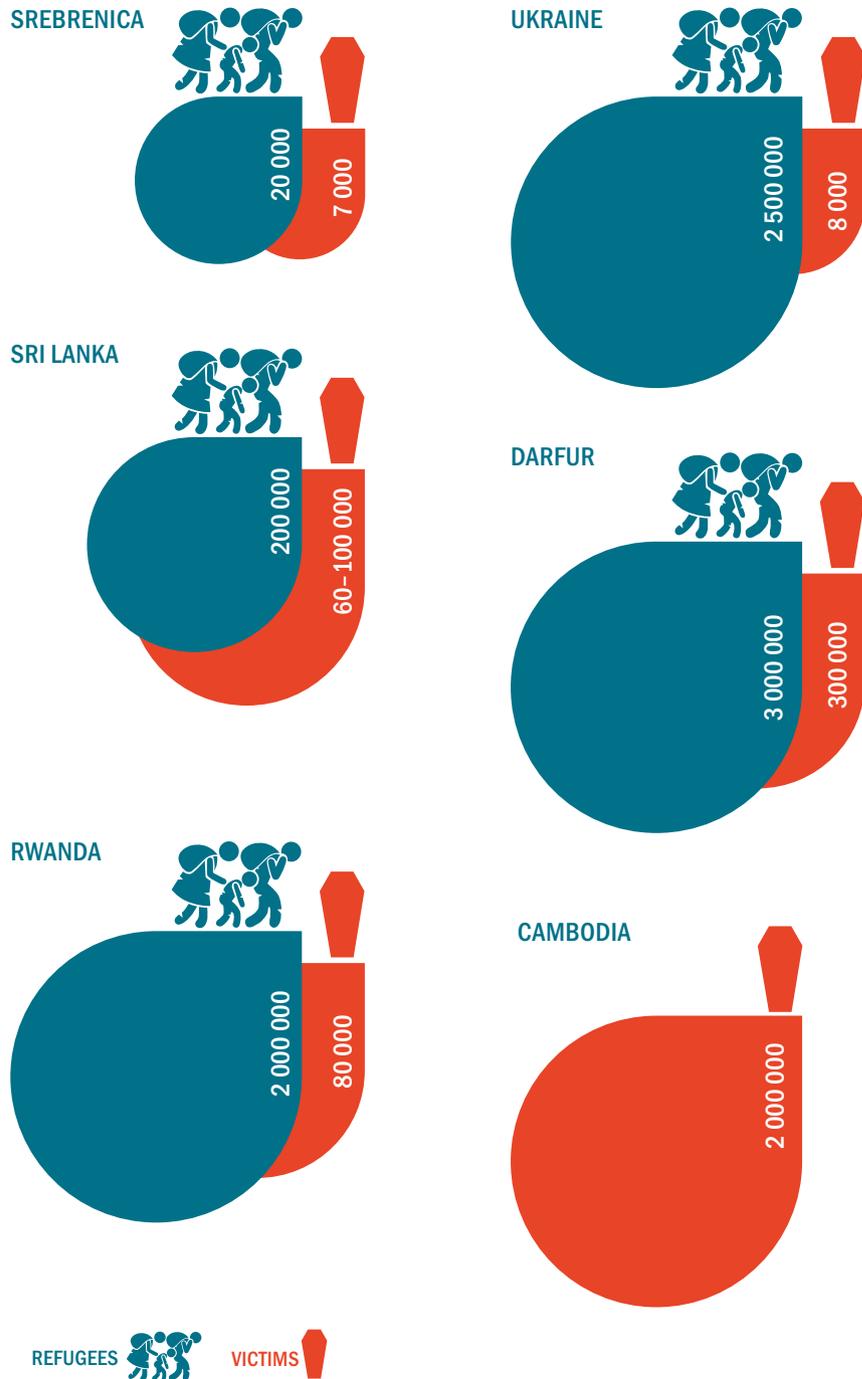
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WHEN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL DOES NOT WORK

Each of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, USA, UK) can veto any resolution and thus thwart an international solution to a humanitarian crisis.



NATO READINESS ACTION PLAN

NATO member states have decided to boost the protection of the NATO Eastern flank. The Readiness Action Plan includes:



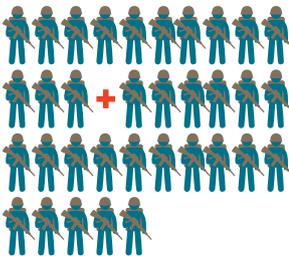
DEPLOYMENT OF SUPERSONIC AIRCRAFT IN THE BALTICS, POLAND AND ROMANIA

A BOOST IN NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE BALTIC, BLACK AND MEDITERRANEAN SEAS

INTENSIFICATION OF ALLIED MILITARY EXERCISES



CREATION OF PLANS FOR THE DEFENCE OF EASTERN NATO COUNTRIES.



NATO RESPONSE FORCE HAS INCREASED FROM 13 THOUSAND TO 40 THOUSAND TROOPS.

AN ELITE, 5-THOUSAND STRONG UNIT IS ABLE TO DEFEND THE EASTERN FLANK WITHIN 48 HOURS.



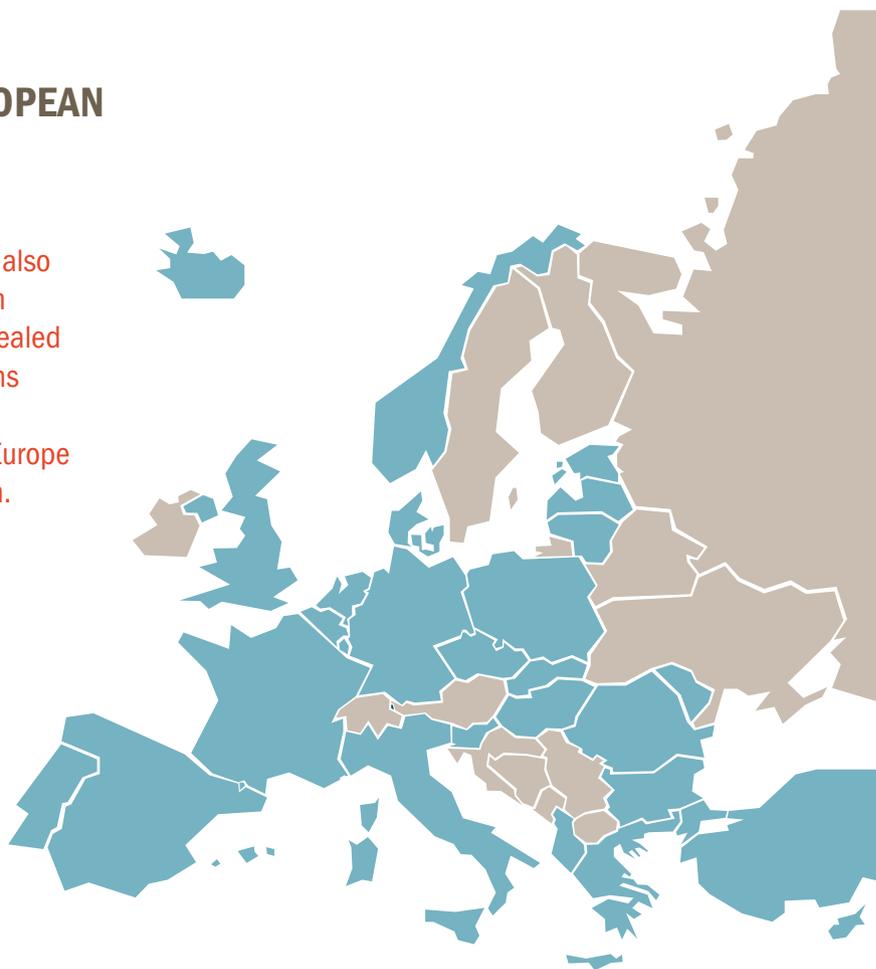
BUILDING OF INFRASTRUCTURE, SUCH AS PORTS AND AIRFIELDS.



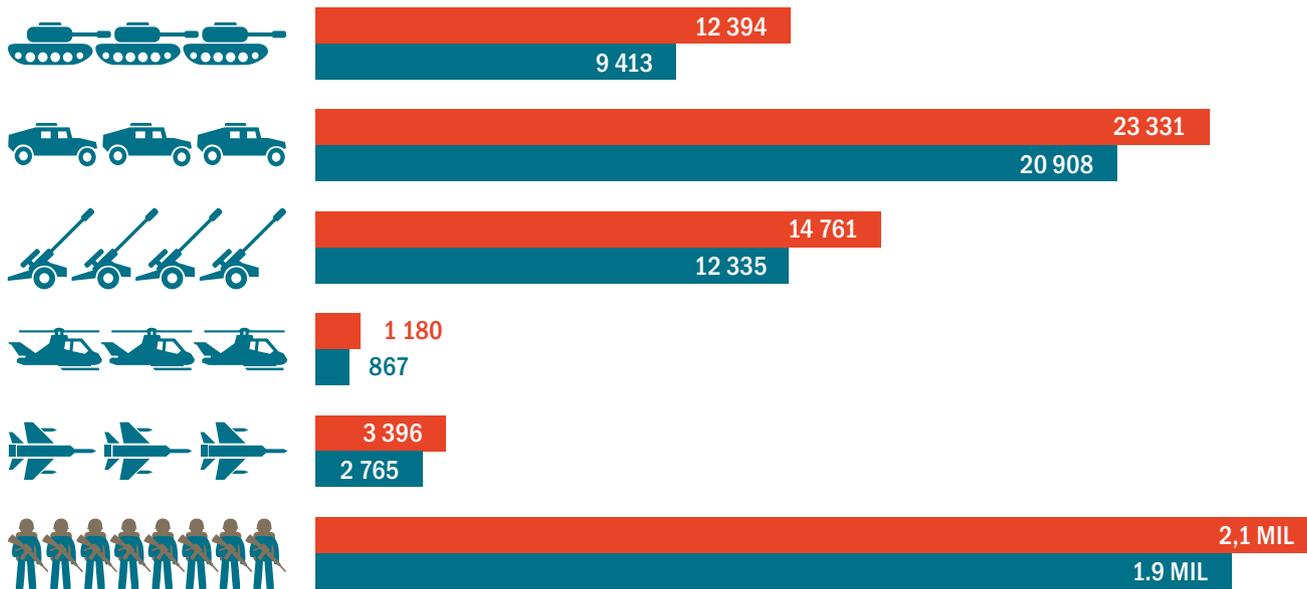
PRE-DEPLOYMENT OF MILITARY MATERIEL.

REDUCTION IN MILITARY CAPABILITIES OF THE EUROPEAN ALLIES

The reduction of military expenses has also brought about an alarming reduction in capabilities. The operation in Libya revealed a total dependence of European nations on American intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and aerial refuelling. Europe also lacked high-precision ammunition.



2009
2015



Infographics: courtesy of GLOBSEC



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NATO FOR AVERAGE



WOMAN AND MAN



SŁAWOMIR DĘBSKI

DIRECTOR OF THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

How to reassure societies of NATO member states about allied solidarity?

Firstly, societies need to be reminded about what the Alliance is for. It doesn't take reinventing the wheel; it is about going to the library. American and European politicians have been explaining what the Alliance is to their societies for nearly 60 years. It would be worthwhile to quote now its First Secretary Hastings Ismay who concluded that: "the first point therefore that the average man and woman must grasp is that NATO exists for peace by collective security — peace first, peace last, peace all the time". No further explanations needed.

The aim of the Alliance is to grant peace by joint cooperation of its members. Of course, from the very beginning, some states could contribute more to the cause of common security than others. It was the USA whose potential successfully helped to keep the peace. There haven't been enough discussions held recently on why we need the Alliance, why an ordinary Kowalski in Poland and an ordinary Johnson in Arkansas need it. If the scale of the discussion is insufficient, there are always some home-grown reckoners who start to sum up everything by saying that the USA contributes so much and the others contribute so little, but America actually gets nothing out of it.

Let's not forget the American tribute of blood to finally ensure peace during and after the First and the Second World Wars. There was a plan of withdrawing all American troops from Europe after World War II. Nevertheless, it was the Cold War that made them stay, and that was the reason why Europe hasn't seen a major war since 1945. Societies need to be reminded of it. Americans need it, and Germans need it, especially when *Alternativ für Deutschland* openly claims that Germany should withdraw from the Alliance. As if no-peace was cheaper than peace.

Reports by Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence from Latvia on Psychological and Information War, as well as a lot of what you say, point to a communication problem as one of the main difficulties NATO is facing. Is it going to be discussed during the Warsaw Summit, and is it going to be a separate aspect in the agenda? Or will the summit only focus on the issues of hard armament and equipment?

The Alliance is a living organism, a political and a military organism. The leaders of the member states will touch on all of the matters that are politically relevant to these leaders. As we live in a global village, it is difficult to define the range of hostile communicates, to evaluate the attempts at disinformation, or the attempts at sending the message that absolutely everything is relative and everybody is the same, everybody breaks the international law and everybody shoots down planes. That is not true.

The problem of the member states now is how to deal with this communication offensive. It will definitely be discussed at the summit, as will what the Alliance can do together to tackle the issue. Let's remember that when talking about what NATO and the Alliance can do, we always mean the member states, so actually the question is about what we can do.

Do you have any expectations towards the outcomes of the summit in Warsaw?

I believe that the summit will be successful if the Alliance manages to generate and send a strong, clear message about its unity and readiness to tighten its cooperation. Surely, problems will occur here, but they are not real threats, just basic trouble. Every leader attending the summit has an individual approach towards the most urgent issues, i.e. reacting to dangers. Each leader functions in a different political environment, and they are also subject to certain emotions arising because of what they see and what kind of message affects them. Naturally, the societies of countries located on the outskirts of the Alliance undoubtedly have the right to genuinely worry about the on-going events just outside their borders. It could be Greece or Turkey, but it could also be Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, or Romania. The leaders of these states are troubled by different worries, and they will express their concerns during the summit. It is essential for them to realise that solving the present issues does not mean choosing which issues the Alliance will address, and which not. The Alliance needs to act in a united way, and acknowledge the feeling of insecurity present in some societies, and the fact that some countries require greater support and larger investments than the ones located at the heart of the Alliance.

In this issue Peter Siklósi talks about the lack of sufficient resources to deal with the many threats that the countries of the region face all at once. How serious does it sound when these are the words of the Hungarian deputy minister of defence?

As far as I understand it, the politicians currently holding their positions are convinced that the whole world is pounding on their heads and that they are living in extremely difficult times. But if we look at history, it appears that the Alliance has

previously been in much greater trouble than today, e.g. with generating its power, with financing common actions, with disproportional contributions in a way that the USA was the main supplier of the potential.

The Alliance survived France, leaving the structure and the relocation of its headquarters from Paris to Brussels. With all due respect to these politicians who now think that the seven riders of the apocalypse got to them, it used to be worse in the past. I agree that today the Alliance has to adapt to new and strategic circumstances, not too simple necessarily, because for the last 25 years the group was adapting to a different set of circumstances and conditions. When Russia was a partner in building the European peace, having temporarily joined our style of politics, we thought it was a solid ground for peace in Europe, i.e. not applying physical power in foreign policy or respecting each state's borders and their political models. The fact that Russia shared similar thoughts for 25 years, allowed us to develop a different approach towards the expenses on defence, maintaining armies, and their equipment. It takes time to reverse this trend. And a political will that was sparked in Newport and will spark again in Warsaw and in the future.

NATO needs to adapt to the new reality and generate new power, which we lack now. The politicians of the member states realise the potential of the Alliance isn't sufficient enough to handle all the arising threats, which are just further reasons for changing our policy and thinking.

The Declaration of Allied Solidarity, signed by the leaders of the countries of Central Europe in Bucharest at the end of last year, also emphasised the awareness of the dangers and the will to act in a united way. How effective has it been since taking into account the spending of defence of individual states?

The key here isn't the territorial division. Each of our countries is currently in a different economic situation. New strategic challenges surprised the elites tangled up in various affairs. We need a little time to harmonise our common approach. Since there were reductions and cuts in the expenses on defence, it is hard to catch up within just two years, and it could be understood as strategic negligence. I wouldn't call it negligence, though. There were no needs for it in the world of the recent past.

After 2014, we have to deal with an absolutely new situation and new threats; we have to keep up. It can't be done in a day; it will take a few years, 10 or maybe 15. What is essential now is that all the Alliance's elites finally understand that. And it also takes time. The awareness of the threat of nuclear conflict is coming back again, very slowly in European societies, but one needs to realise that a military conflict, e.g. aggression on the Alliance, will bring the issue on and will turn it into our daily concern.

2016 is the year when first the Czech Republic and then Poland take leadership in the Visegrad Group, which is 25 years old. It was established to join NATO and then the EU. Has anything changed in our approach towards the cooperation inside NATO and our presence in NATO?

The Visegrad Group undoubtedly holds a unique feature, which distinguishes us from the other NATO member states. We are the nations that know what Russian occupation feels like and what it is like to lose our sovereignty. We know what blackmail is when a great empire is the blackmailer. When we hear Russian generals and analysts say that if it hadn't been for the Alliance expansion, the conflict between Russia and the West would have been taking place in Central Europe and not in the Ukraine, we can understand the political meaning of shared experiences from the past. It is meaningful not just

for the Visegrad countries, but also for Germany. If the Germans keep saying that our part of Europe is only a taker of security and help and that we receive all the grace, we should remind our interlocutors there that Germany would now be in a radically different position if the clash of Russia and the West was happening right in Central Europe and not somewhere far away on the Russian and Ukrainian border. /



V4

**AS A JUNCTURE
IN THE ALLIANCE
RESPONSE**



**TO SECURITY
CHALLENGES**

There is no meaningful debate about Visegrad's future and security challenges without considering the European Union and NATO at its core.

TOMASZ CHŁOŃ

The causes and consequences of the crises surrounding the European Union and the transatlantic area are interconnected. Sometimes one cannot help but make parallels even with the Cold War and consider the area on the verge of a geopolitical conflict. While these are the external factors that should be deliberated, the internal factors relate primarily to the European project's weakness in upholding the ambitions of the new generation and, in particular, the Visegrad Group's economic model is based on a cheaper work force, which is now dwindling away.

As a result, the V4's answer to political, social, economic and military security threats and risks should be comprehensive and imbedded in the institutional framework of the EU and NATO. To highlight the regional dimension, it is also crucial to expand its strategic infrastructure, especially when it comes to developing the connection between the countries (e.g., the Via Carpathia) and the energy and research sectors (a more assertive use of EU funds). Furthermore, energy and banking companies could merge to be able to compete on a global level, and a Visegrad bank should be created to support small and medium-size businesses, especially in the technological sector. Such infrastructural under-

takings would also be indispensable for creating stronger links between Visegrad and Northern and Southern Europe.

Combining the capabilities of the Central European countries creates numerous opportunities that one member would not be able to accomplish, which is why the V4 defence industries should merge as well. In my opinion, the Czech Republic may play a pivotal role, given its considerable influence on Slovakia. As for Poland, it should be the main advocate for this process since they spend more on defence than every other nation that joined NATO after 1989 combined.

Moreover, the V4 security policies need more consistency and trust. In the context of the EU, the V4 Battlegroup cannot become a mere episode, and the active use of battlegroups could be promoted to protect borders.

The geopolitical map is changing and NATO is in dire need of new defence planning and procedures of the highest quality, and Visegrad must become more of a common operational space. AWACS should not require parliamentary decisions or "visas" for tanks. As for capabilities, they must take into consideration the compatibility of defence systems and the synergy of industries.

Ahead of the summit in Warsaw, the V4 should promote decisions leading to more effective deterrence building on the Wales summit acquis, improved NATO

Response Forces, and the VJTF (Very High Readiness Joint Task Force). The focus should be to develop regional prepositioning of weapon and reinforcement systems, to ensure the presence of troops in the form of both exercises and stationing, and to enhance command structures able to run high-end, more demanding operations. All these actions should be based on sound financing by every ally, with 2% GDP spent on defence. Warsaw should not be the beginning or end of a long-term adaptation, but a juncture in the alliance's response to threats and risks from the East and the South, which are there to stay, and against which all members should be equally protected.

In twenty-five years, Visegrad has probably achieved more than its founders could have hoped for. However, its governments could convene a panel of wise individuals which, together with expert help, would propose a strategy for the development of the group for the next quarter century, and which could also be the answer to existing security challenges. /

The author is a Polish diplomat and former ambassador in Estonia and Slovakia.



Illustration: Jagna Wróblewska

SURVEY

*What should
NATO do?*

*What decisions
will best serve
peace?*

*How to reinforce
public opinion
support for the
Alliance?*



RÉKA SZEMERKÉNYI

PHD, HUNGARIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES

The negative security developments of the past few years in many major regions of the globe give us serious cause for concern. Maybe in and of themselves they each would be cause for but some concern, yet the fact that these negative internal developments are taking place parallelly cannot but warn us: we are potentially in the beginning of a major historic change that is bound to produce consequences for all the regions and countries and security organisations. In the current situation one security consideration stands out as the most clear priority.

It is the policy goal of increasing the strength, the cohesion, and the positive internal dynamics of NATO. Any action or talk that weakens the Trans-Atlantic cooperation in this uncertain historic era of unpredictable international movements and changes is inexcusable because they can easily produce the most unacceptable negative consequences for our common destiny. This is what I mean when I say that in the face of these historic challenges that NATO nations and NATO as our security organisation faces from all angles, the most important overall narrative for the Warsaw Summit must be about strong Alliance cohesion and solidarity.

This is what we have to keep in mind when we say that the Warsaw Summit shall have to demonstrate Transatlantic unity and resolve to defend the Alliance as the guardian of our values, to show our dedication to projecting stability, and to prove our commitment to keeping NATO flexible and ready to address all potential threats and challenges from wherever they arise. This principle should be reflected in a clear vision statement as part of our strategic communication in Warsaw.

It is in this broader strategic thinking that we say that NATO's adaptation is a means, not an end to achieve our objectives. We need a balanced and comprehensive geographic approach (East end South). The political, military, and institutional aspects of adaptation should remain intertwined. In particular, we will deliver in implementing the Readiness Action Plan by Warsaw, where the Alliance will also make a decision on a meaningful, coherent, and multinational enhanced forward presence in the East. Hungary will continue to contribute to deterrence; we were among the first to deploy to the Balts for reassurance, and will do so again, possibly through a joint V4 military contingent.

We cannot ignore the migration challenge, nor its root causes, since they have long-term implications. We support keeping it on NATO's agenda. We encourage an open-minded approach to NATO's potential role to help managing this crisis. Furthermore, we can envisage a closer, institutional NATO role in supporting the global coalition combating ISIL. Hungary's contingent in Northern Iraq continues to train the Peshmerga. NATO's ability to project stability by assisting partners through capacity building (DCB) should be reinforced in Warsaw, whether taking on a more visible role in Iraq or Libya, another current source of instability, migration, and terrorism on our very doorstep.

In order to achieve these goals, leaders must communicate the necessity of properly resourcing our security toolkit. Hungary is striving to play her part; the Government not only stopped the decrease, but this is the second year in a row we are raising the defense budget, while deploying forces in all major NATO operations, and also considering new procurement.

In sum, the Alliance needs to stay on top of the many — in some cases perhaps existential — challenges it faces, and clearly demonstrate its value and utility to its' members publics, and its power and cohesion to its critics and enemies. /



RASTISLAV KÁČER
AMBASSADOR, GLOBSEC CHAIRMAN

What should NATO do?

First of all, not to forget its purpose. Defend and counter any type of hostile behavior towards its members. NATO needs abilities to defend itself in a world that is dynamically changing. It needs to stay on top of defense technologies, but also develop capabilities to be better able to counter hybrid war techniques. We need better intelligence and the sharing of it. On the other hand any technological superiority and any top capabilities shall mean nothing if we loose that noble principle of "one for all, all for one". No super advanced deterrence can save us, if we loose our "political deterrence" — our strong devotion to be willing to defend our values and our way of life. That will and courage of Gandalf facing Balrog on a narrow stone bridge is what we need. That "You shall not pass" must be clear to anybody who would want to attempt to challenge us.

What decisions will best serve peace?

The history of mankind is the history of competition and conflict. Every civilization that would loose its survival instinct and start to think that it has achieved an era of eternal peace and that the only thing we needs to do to preserve peace is to have peaceful intentions — is in big trouble. If we think we have our unique values, our way of life, and we do belong to



a community which is dear to us, than we have to be willing and able to defend it when necessary. Credible deterrence has proven many times to be the best way of preserving peace. Today, in Europe and Central Europe in particular, we may have ability. We badly lack in will.

How to reinforce public opinion support for the Alliance?

This is hard question. We have reached a strange moment in our evolution. "The West" which we are part of, sees the growth of populism, lack of confidence in the superiority of our system, vulnerability to information war. This is like a serious mid-life crisis in which we doubt all of our relationships and all we have achieved. It sometimes seems crazy how easy prey we could be to any information garbage thrown at us via "alternative media". I see this syndrome of a successful man, driving his expensive car, with his wife, nice healthy kids, drinking champagne and bitching how life has been terrible and nodding to some conspiracy stuff freshly vomited out of some troll factory in Leningrad (sorry still St. Petersburg).

We need all those who have not lost their brains and their survival instincts to speak his or her mind. In politics, in civic society, in business... everywhere, to care and be active. We need back responsible politics which has got also its taboos and bars which cannot go lower. NATO lives on trust in liberal democracy, community of values and cooperation. Strengthening this will also reinforce support in the Alliance. Letting it go means to opt for a very gloomy future. /





ALEXANDR VONDRA
FORMER MINISTER OF DEFENCE
OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

NATO should do what it was created to do — to defend its members' states. The collective and mutual defence — according to the article 5 of the treaty — must remain the core of the Alliance. But it not just about formal commitment on paper. It is mostly about practical measures that need to be adopted to enhance the verbal commitment in praxis. The NATO eastern flank still remains vulnerable vis-à-vis threats mostly from new assertive and aggressive Russian policy and military behavior. Therefore I will judge the Warsaw summit according to its ability to generate decisions enhancing the security of those most vulnerable member states — from the Baltic states in the north to Romania and Bulgaria in the south.

In general, the real problem of Europe or EU is the combination of its wealth with its military weakness. If you want peace, you must be strong. Therefore the best service to achieve peace would be a decision of the NATO member states to raise their defence spending to the bar of 2% of GDP as was originally promised but never achieved (in the majority of member states).

About 75% of Czechs support NATO — much more than the EU. I don't see a problem within Central and Eastern Europe. People here understand the importance of keeping the Transatlantic bond strong. Perhaps there is a problem in some Western European countries — with their anti-American standing. Unfortunately we are missing real leaders who would be able to explain what is at stake to their people. /



TOMASZ SZATKOWSKI
DEPUTY STATE SECRETARY IN THE DEFENSE MINISTRY
OF POLAND

What should NATO do?

The upcoming Warsaw Summit should provide solutions to the security challenges that NATO is currently facing, while taking into account the specificities between threats emanating from both the Eastern and Southern directions. By doing so, it needs to demonstrate Allied cohesion according to the



“28 for 28” and “360 degrees” principles. At the same time, it should strengthen NATO's capacity to project stability in its vicinity. Lastly, it should reaffirm the Newport commitment on increasing defence expenditures.

The strategic adaptation should serve the full spectrum of NATO missions and operations, first and foremost the collective defence, but not neglecting the other two essential NATO core tasks. Moreover, the long-term adaptation of the Alliance, which we hope will be initiated at the upcoming summit, should involve the entirety of NATO forces and capabilities, not just those dedicated to rapid reaction.

The Visegrad Group activities should provide the value added to the NATO endeavour in this regard. The V4 cooperation obviously has its own value, but simultaneously, we hope that it could strengthen the security of the entire region in the context of the Wales and Warsaw decisions.

What decision will best serve peace?

We see a few important areas that the Summit decisions should address: 1) enhancing the forward presence of the Alliance on its Eastern flank in peacetime; 2) strengthening the ability of NATO to reinforce its members; 3) increasing the capabilities to deter non-state actors; 4) increasing situational awareness; 5) closer cooperation with the EU; 6) give more assistance to NATO Partners.

Effective deterrence serves peace. In the East, the credible, rotational presence of soldiers from the USA and other NATO countries would be of profound significance to the credibility and success of the Allied defence and deterrence posture. It would contribute to our resilience against hybrid and conventional threats, and could help to prevent hostile actions aimed at creating fait accompli. On the other hand, NATO should engage in a dialog with Russia, but only from the position of strength, unequivocally supporting the security of its members, and stressing the inviolability of borders in Eastern Europe.

How can NATO reinforce public support for the Alliance?

NATO should develop coherent strategic communication on expected Summit deliverables. Credibility is a vital asset, especially when faced with anti-NATO propaganda originating from both state and non-state actors. Public opinion should note that NATO is relevant and ready to face our security challenges. In our narrative, we should strengthen the visibility of NATO activities, and highlight the practical dimension of solidarity among countries to respond to each other's security challenges. Visegrad cooperation provides many examples to this end, like contributions to the Multinational Corps North-East in Szczecin, NATO Response Force, and the EU Battle-groups. /



**IS A MENACE
FROM ABOVE THAT
WE PERCEIVE IN
CENTRAL EUROPE
UNIQUE?**



**We speak with Martin J. Coyne,
Director of Business Development MEADS
International about the ballistic missile
threat in Central Europe**



Martin J. Coyne: I think the threat that we have developed our system to go against is clearly being felt inside Central Europe, in all of Europe, and everywhere else for that matter. Nations that we are talking to in fact have recognized it ten years ago when we were first put on a contract. The ballistic missile threat was only going to get worse, it was going to get more sophisticated, was going to be proliferated in much greater numbers. All that has come true and even advanced further into what we call air threats like cruise missiles, which are posing a serious threat today as well.

Just in Europe alone there are significant investments being made by countries to address this threat. Germany for example has made the decision to invest an additional 4 billion euro to procure and build an air and missile defence system based off of MEADS technology. You see the large Wisła modernisation programme in Poland. Likewise in Turkey. But it's a global fear not only in respect to the eastern neighbor of Europe. It's felt by other countries as well.

Do you think the future of warfare will be about missile and air defence? How much will that determine the actual war in the future.

I think it is going to be one of those “all of the above” answers. The threat is 360-degrees. It is both ground and air so defensive weapon systems in the future have to be able to address the 360-degree threat. It has to be very agile and flexible because you are never going to be able to populate a particular country with massive amounts of units to blanket the country. Therefore the capability has to be tailored, has to be able to be moved quickly, has to leverage previous nation's investments and inter-operate with other countries units. There is a global recognition of this development in warfare.

Today, there are only four European countries that have Patriot units, which are all approximately 30 years old. Plus, only two, Germany and the Netherlands, have the ability with PAC-3 missiles to address the ballistic missile threat and the air threat. So there is clearly a huge gap with respect to the rest of Europe. Germany is making a strong statement. Not only with their past investment but their future investment, as well. And they are seeking other countries to come join the partnership. And our MEADS team is actually happy to be a part of that as well and play a role in industry to help build a much needed NATO air missile defence umbrella.

MEADS is contracted to deliver the system to Germany and the contract is to be signed this year?

We are actually in the proposal stage. MEADS industrial team, which is a combination of Lockheed Martin and MBDA. Germany wants to be on contract by the end of the year and we are

on track to do that. This new contract will allow us to complete the last remaining portion of the development, essentially qualification, but more importantly tailor the MEADs unit for Germany's needs. Germany would like us to integrate in a secondary missile to go after the air threats, and save the PAC-3 MSE for the sophisticated cruise missile and ballistic threats. They also want us to further tailor their units and bring in a higher-level battle manager to integrate it along with ours. When this development is completed, we will go into production and then fielding. We will not know the exact number of units until the end of the contract negotiations. But today Germany has twelve Patriot units remaining. MEADS would replace all of them.

If you were to describe to someone who does not know anything about air defence systems, what is your actual offering? What are the capabilities that MEADS can deliver?

I will describe four of five major capabilities of MEADS that now have become literally mandatory. The framework of the MEADS requirements established ten years ago were quite visionary and today everybody wants them. First of all, you have to have advanced radars and hit-to-kill missiles because the threats are very sophisticated now. We have even seen ballistic missiles that can now be manoeuvred.

We have seen Russians firing such missiles from the Black Sea to hit targets in Syria and they have been manoeuvred.

Exactly. So to be able to address those type of targets you obviously need to have an advanced weapon system. You have to over match the threat-watch them. Our very sophisticated radars provide the needed accuracy to the missile hitting the threat at a great distance from its target at the perfect spot. Those are the fundamental technical characteristics.

Other capabilities and abilities of the MEADS system is that it is a full 360-degrees system. Radars rotate 360 degrees, the launcher shoots missiles a full 360 degrees. Today the Patriot PAC-3 units that Germany and the Netherlands have are sectored. Obviously with the threat that can now come 360 degrees and manoeuvre, sectored systems are vulnerable on the left, right, and behind. So that is also a mandatory requirement. Mobility is also very important. You have to be able to set-up the system very quickly and move and set it up again. That is built into our requirements.

Finally, what is very interesting and exciting for every European nation, is the fact that MEADS is network-based. This is the first world's air and missile defence system that is literally built as a network. It requires one battle manager that establishes the network. Everything else, the launchers and radars, can be added to that. A country can have one launcher or

ten launchers. It can go out and start up with one launcher and then without turning the system off, as the situation changes, could add ten launchers, for example. The network-based system provides operational flexibility but also procurement flexibility. Hence, a country can buy components now and get in at a much lower price than they could before when they had to buy the entire system.

It looks like bricks a little bit.

This is the concept with MEADS. Once nations accept and invest into this network architecture they will have a common network architecture. First Germany, later Poland and others. This would be a common network architecture for other NATO countries.

MEADS was always about burden sharing and partnership. Germany, Italy, and the United States all recognized the threat 10+ years ago and knew that a new system was required. So they decided to partner together and to share the burden of development. The Europeans paid almost 50% of the cost for MEADS, 42% to be exact.

How will that affect defence policy?

In one of her public statements, the German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen stated that one of the reasons MEADS was the best path forward for Germany was because that it could be extended to other nations.¹ Other European partners are talking about it now. Interestingly it is also because with MEADS there is better way to protect national economies.

Speaking of economics, defence purchases need incentives that are beyond the technical capability of the system and support industry of the nation that buys it. What does MEADS provide in these terms?

This is very important. Countries are going to invest large sums of money in defence projects. Obviously then they want a long-term return on their investment. Because we developed MEADS as a partnership we are used to operating it like this. It is very natural for us to bring in another industrial partner, as a teammate in a particular country. I will give an example — Poland. We are taking to Poland right now about MEADS potentially satisfying their Wisła requirements. The significant portion of our offer is the industrial aspect. We would like to bring in Polish industry as a partner, not as a supplier, but as an equal. We also believe that we can provide Polish industry 40% of the total value of their investment in work inside Poland to help finish development, produce the system, and maintain it.

Which components could Poles be capable of producing?

Our concept is to have them involved in every aspect, the radars, the launchers, etc. We believe that there is a need for a long range air defence missile. We also believe that Poland, Polish industry, could take a leading role in that. Leading and developing this much needed long range air defence missile, to complement the PAC-3 MSE is one example. Again, we would involve them in literally every aspect of the weapon system, with the goal of having them become the primary system inte-

grator. The only way that happens is that you bring an industrial team to the family and bring them as a partner so that they can learn. You do not say “go, do this”. You must teach them.

In our concept we would bring in Polish industry and we would share with them everything we have learned in the last ten+ years. Then we would give them significant work and allow them to play a leading role in the development and procuring their own weapon system and then as a member of our team they would go with us globally.

How does it help develop cooperation with the Baltic states or the Visegrad Group?

If Poland invests in the foundation of this network system, they would have the opportunity to engage with neighbors up and down Central and Eastern Europe to see what they could contribute. There are opportunities for countries with the smallest budgets.

Once the network architecture is established then literally all options are available. Options for countries over time and as their budget allows to add components themselves. Or it allows them to have agreements with other countries like Poland and say: “I will take on this role and commitment if you potentially can provide the other components in the time of need”.

Those are our regional thoughts and what we are also hearing from countries and other ministries of defence about how they could potentially leverage this network-based system and participate in a significant way. /

Presented in cooperation with MEADS.

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THE STATE AND THE ECONOMY AN OLD RELATIONSHIP REVISITED

SOON AFTER TAKING OFFICE, POLAND'S NEW CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED IT WOULD EXPLORE THE OPTION OF MERGING SEVERAL EXISTING ENERGY BUSINESSES INTO ONE SINGLE NATIONAL COMPANY INCLUDING THE LARGEST CENTRAL EUROPEAN COMPANY IN TERMS OF TURNOVER, THE PKN ORLEN GROUP.

MARTIN EHL

Other governments — including Viktor Orbán's in Hungary after he took power in 2010 — have pursued the policy of designating certain industries as national champions, but Prime Minister Beata Szydło's cabinet now has to grapple with something every European government in the past eight years has had to deal with in the wake of the financial and economic crisis. Indeed, even during the

period of growth in the early years of the century, before crisis struck, the creation of national champions in countries such as France was a sign of concern about the weakness of the economy.

Another tangible manifestation of the growing role of the state has been a discussion about introducing a national minimum wage. This has been on the table for a long time, but there is now an unprecedented consensus throughout Europe about it being necessary. For example, it was introduced in Germany as recently as 2014, it has increased in the

MY TIONSHP

UK, and the Swiss rejected its introduction in a referendum. In the course of 2015, minimum wage was increased in every European country, except Ireland, rising at the fastest rate in Romania, Latvia, and Lithuania. This trend was also reflected in the debate that followed the inauguration of the Law and Justice (PiS) government in Poland. Beata Szydło's cabinet is planning to introduce a minimum hourly wage in mid-2016, and to ensure that it also covers people on what are known in Poland as "trash contracts" [short term contracts without job security, holiday and social entitlements, and healthcare benefits — *trans.*]. Although Polish employers are legally obliged to pay a minimum wage, they have used these contracts to avoid it, and so the promise to tackle the problems faced by ordinary citizens was one of the most effective arguments in the PiS election campaign, as among young voters — who came out for PiS in strength at the ballot box — trash contracts and the resultant lack of job security were among the hot button issues.

THE CRISIS OF CAPITALISM?

Desperate to tackle the 2008 crisis, European governments reached for a number of basic tools, including more stringent regulation and the identification of companies too important to fail (or their outright rescue by means of nationalisation). This not only provoked a debate on the

future of the common European currency, but also a comprehensive discussion regarding the end of the neoliberal economic model and, at times, the end of capitalism and the state's role in the economy as well.

The European Union went round in circles trying to salvage the euro and took ages to develop a rescue mechanism for the common currency and banking regulations. However, this has proved to be more suited to resolving past crises than any future ones. By contrast, the response of the national governments was fast and flexible — unlike in the previous two decades, the state's role as regulator directly involved in economic activities has been bolstered. The so-called scrappage allowance, a form of government subsidy for the purchase of a new car, became the new symbol of this kind of state intervention in the market economy, even though in many countries, including Germany, replacing an old car with a new one was presented as being environmentally friendly, as well as providing a direct economic stimulus. Seen through the lens of the current Volkswagen scandal, this ploy now appears almost too cynical.

However, as the car industry is systematically important, for it boosts other industrial sectors linked to it and because many jobs depend on it, it is quite understandable that a government should feel obliged to intervene in this sector.

The US government opted for a similar, albeit more robust and, at the same time, more flexible intervention in 2009 when it made General Motors file for bankruptcy and then bought a stake in the company in order to bail it out. By 2014, when it was clear that 1.2 million jobs and tens of billions of tax dollars from the state budget had been saved, the government sold its shares in the company. Nothing of the kind happened

THE HUNGARIAN CASE IS QUITE AN EXTREME EXAMPLE OF RAPID AND RADICAL STATE INTERVENTION IN THE ECONOMY.

in Europe, partly due to the greater complexity of EU regulations, less flexibility, and much greater reluctance to act on the part of national governments, as well as a preoccupation with the future of the common currency.

A similar pattern emerged in the bailout of financial institutions. TARP, the 475 billion dollar government programme, was not limited to banks or car plants: money also went to aid families unable to repay their mortgages and also into rescuing the insurance company AIG. In institutions that had been bailed out by means of federal funds, consistent and transparent standards were introduced for the remuneration of bosses. Interestingly enough, taxpayers actually ended up profiting from the bailout: thus, 30 billion dollars more went back into the state coffers than the government had spent on bailing out the banks.

The US government responded rapidly and withdrew just as rapidly. This kind of response cannot, of course, be expected of the European Union, if for no other reason than that huge systemic

differences exist between the countries inside the eurozone and those outside it, to say nothing of further structural differences between the affluent countries in the north and the poorer ones in the southern parts of the continent. But on the whole, apart from the scrappage tax, individual member states were much less reluctant to intervene in the economy than in the past.

The repercussions of the decision to introduce changes in regulations are still visible in the form of additional tax burdens and penalties, as well as in the haggling with big businesses, which until 2008 were able to exploit the liberal economic environment and “domestic” EU tax havens. It is difficult to give credence to Jean-Claude Juncker’s talk of fighting tax evasion given that in his capacity as the Luxemburg Prime Minister and Finance Minister, he had de facto supported it for many years.

Compared to the US, the response in Europe has been more cautious and cumbersome. For example, it was not until early 2016 that the European Commission announced a plan to curb tax evasion by major companies, and it took the British government until 2015 to reach an agreement with Google on tax payments going back to 2005. However, this tax deal was immediately denounced in Brussels as falling foul of European competition rules, which only goes to show how complex and inflexible the relations within Europe are.

In addition to protecting domestic companies some European countries started paying more attention to where and how taxes are collected. New technologies have provided tax officials and politicians with previously undreamt of opportunities. This is why many governments have introduced measures such as online checks in Croatia, electronic records of cash sales soon to be introduced in the Czech Republic, or the tax lottery in Slovakia. However, all these solutions are on the micro level, while dealing with major multinational businesses is much more difficult and takes more time, although they will not in the end be able to avoid penalties.

Following the landslide victory of Viktor Orbán’s Fidesz party in the 2010 election, the Hungarian government opted for a technique condemned by liberals throughout Europe, although its implementation is being followed with great interest. Orbán’s government has im-

posed taxes on certain industrial sectors, particularly foreign energy, retail and telecommunication companies, and foreign banks. Its entire economic policy is based on one fundamental premise arising from Hungarian nationalism: strengthening the state's role in the economy. A secondary goal is the redistribution of economic influence among individual political groupings, or perhaps forcing out supporters of the former post-communist and liberal faction that failed to resolve the economic crisis.

The Hungarian case is quite an extreme example of rapid and radical state intervention in the economy. This has been repeated on a smaller scale in Poland since the Law and Justice Party won the election in November 2015. However, the key difference vis-à-vis the US situation, where the government also intervened on a massive scale, is that in Central Europe the state does not withdraw once the economic situation has calmed down: instead, politicians use the enhanced role of government to strengthen their own power. Because of the experience of the financial crisis and numerous corruption affairs involving the previous ruling elites, it is no longer certain whether the former more liberal (neoliberal) model can ever be reinstated. Those parts of the electorate susceptible to populist slogans are fearful.

THE ROLE OF POPULISM

The crisis and the response to it have thus redefined the role government plays in Europe's economy, bringing it — at least on a theoretical level — closer to the Keynesian model. The fact that the attempts to reduce unemployment and accelerate growth have failed has, naturally, been grist to the mill of populists who have bolstered their position and reinforced the strong role of the state and of the financial and business groups they are associated with. In Central Europe, we have seen this not only in Hungary and Slovakia, but also in the Czech Republic. Deputy Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, who is also the owner of one of the largest Czech companies, has been able to get away with a conflict of interest unique in European terms, comparable to Italy's former prime minister and businessman Silvio Berlusconi.

POSTCAPITALISM

Whereas in Europe the crisis has helped to strengthen the role of state in the

economy, on a global scale we have seen the opposite trend. However, this is not the result of a new surge in the neoliberal economy, but comes down to fundamental changes in the manufacturing process (automation) and a shift in the relations between all those involved in it, as well as the advent of a shared economy. The British journalist Paul Mason, who describes this process in his book *Postcapitalism*, has concluded that the Internet and the networks it has helped create form the basis of a new economy, which has been particularly affected by automation. According to some estimates, many highly qualified positions will be lost due to automation. Some countries, Finland for example, have recognized that there simply may not be enough jobs to go round and have responded by introducing a minimum income paid by the state.

Paul Mason believes that the state will play an ever smaller role — not just in the economy — because, for many people, the proposed options will be much preferable to being left without income or doing nothing. Suffice to observe that the rise of Uber in Europe (and in the rest of the world) to realize that the government's regulatory role may be curtailed by new economic relations.

Hungary has introduced the notion that energy suppliers should really be not-for-profit companies, thus embarking on an interesting experiment that tests new economic directions and new relations between business and the state. The government is trying to restore its strong regulatory role and counter the trend whereby even banking services stop being a "real" business and turn instead into a utility just like water or gas. But since the entire operation is linked to a single politician and a single party and to bolstering their power, and since it is being advanced by using nationalistic policies, in Europe it has been regarded as something evil and reprehensible. What we have here is an allegedly conservative government in Central Europe promoting an experiment which left-wing commentators such as Paul Mason actually ought to welcome as a move away from the neoliberal understanding of the economy and towards post-capitalism. Unfortunately, this move is not taking place in a vacuum, but rather forms a part of a political process, thereby proving that post-communist countries are not quite ready for one-party majority rule.

Furthermore, despite all the measures against the growing indebtedness of state budgets taken at the EU level, in the long term, the politicized demands for increased regulation may result in higher indebtedness in countries such as Hungary and Poland. Thus, the Slovak example demonstrates the benefits of being part of the eurozone since it actually prevents the single-party government from increasing debt and forces it to adopt a sensible budgetary policy in macroeconomic terms. If Slovakia did not use the euro, and if the Slovak economy were not so tightly intertwined with Germany's, the country's debt and deficit would soar.

The new Polish government aims to strengthen the role of the state, create national champions, and increase investment in domestic innovation. However, it will find it very difficult to retain its promises in the area of social expenditure. Although Poland has a constitutional debt brake, by de facto dismantling the second pillar of the pension system, the former Civic Platform government demonstrated that this constitutional safeguard can too be circumvented. The neoliberal economic model is certainly on the decline throughout Europe. However, at a time of the advent of shared economy, the Central European successor to the neoliberal model, combining as it does a strong governmental role with nationalism, appears to be only a short-term solution to the crisis for it does not offer long-term economic prospects. /

Translated by Julia Sherwood

The author is the Chief International Editor of Czech economic daily *Hospodářské noviny*.

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE END OF SCHENGEN

Are empty promises of increased security worth emptying our pockets?

TOMASZ KASPROWICZ

Humans quickly grow accustomed to good things but the irritating ones never leave our minds. That is why it is worth remembering great achievements that have faded into the background; especially if we face the quite real possibility of losing them. The European Union is a conglomeration of worries and we hear about them continuously. They are used by the eurosceptics and it seems to be potent fuel that may even cause Brexit. But the EU is also a set of major achievements that we tend to forget.

The first achievement worth mentioning is the Euro. Common currency is frequently blamed for the Euro area crisis but the criticism is mostly unfounded. It cuts transaction costs of trading between member states by an estimated 1% of GDP¹. The average person experiences this when traveling and there is no need to use a currency exchange that earns its living on currency spreads. Due in part to this factor, tourism between member states increased by about 6%,² not to mention the currency is quite and that is a new experience for many countries, especially in the south. The fear that the Eurozone may be heading for collapse has now subsided, but the threat that the problems will resurface remains.

The tragic events in Belgium in March 2016 and the terrorist attacks in France in 2015 bring into question the future of another great European achievement: the Schengen zone. The ability to travel freely across Europe seems perfectly normal to most of its citizens. For me, a Polish citizen born in the 80s, who personally experienced the Soviet border, it is still quite astonishing — every time. The ability to travel from Poland to Portugal without a need to stop is remarkable (short of refueling of course). It is estimated that about 3.5 million people daily cross Schengen ‘nonborders’³.

Today the refugee crisis and terrorist attacks exerted a large strain on the idea of the free movement of people. It is understandable that after the attacks borders are controlled again — for a while. However, longer lasting refugee crises resurrects the idea of permanent border control. Of course this is mostly a political issue as practically the border controls will not impede large movements of people/mass migration. Currently we can see the failure of controlled borders even reinforced with physical walls. Migrants find a way around them as the case of Macedonia showed where hundreds of migrants just walked around the fence. Not to mention the possibility of going over or under them. Still, it seems that border controls make EU citizens feel safer. But at what cost?

Losing our ability to move freely in Europe would be painful and discouraging to travel. The European Commission estimates losses of 13 million tourist nights at the cost of 1.2 billion Euro in the case of reinstating border controls. But hotels are not the only ones to lose in such a case: the total cost of lost tourism would amount to 10-20 billion Euro per year. But we cannot also forget about 1.7 million cross-border workers who switch countries daily. Border controls would cost them up to 4.5 billion Euro in terms of lost time. Finally, they will probably settle for a worse job that is nearby. And what about the millions of temporary migrants that visit their families often?

The cost of infrastructure and manpower to implement border controls is also substantial. The administrative costs alone are estimated to be around 1.1 billion Euro per year. We need to add to that infrastructure cost including examples such as the Øresund Bridge between Denmark and Sweden that would need to close. On the other hand, countries would need to construct new border infrastructures at costs that are hard to determine at this point.

But this is not the worst news of all. The lack of borders over the years created a web of economic connections between companies across Europe. The quick travel of passengers is important but the quick shipment of goods even more so. Most

companies work in just-in-time frameworks, which means that they work on very thin inventory and depend on reliable suppliers and consistent transportation. Erecting borders between factories and suppliers is unacceptable because of unpredictable lead times. Currently, two thirds of companies rely on cross border cooperation and border controls would lead to an estimated 300 million Euro per year losses due to lost business and delays in just-in time production processes.

Therefore, reestablishing borders would immediately strain economic connections between countries. Broken logistic chains would be a nightmare for most corporations in Europe — even those which are middle sized. Switching suppliers is not easy as it requires product adaptation on both sides. Concurrently, production must flow, but disruptions are next to certain, especially if a crew is not at work on time due to border control, not to mention extra out-of-pocket costs: it is estimated that companies would face more than 500 million Euro extra transportation costs per year and an additional 200 million Euro per year in other costs related to border controls.

Economic integration between the member countries would surely suffer. Joining the Schengen zone translates into faster increase of bilateral trade by about 0.1% per year. These effects would be reversed — studies predict decrease in trade between Schengen countries by 10-20%.⁴ We would have to bear the costs in the form of higher prices and a poorer selection of goods in shops. Unfortunately, the

estimates of the European Commission are not the worst case scenarios. The total estimated cost for the Schengen area could reach 1.4 trillion Euro by 2025.

Clearly the Schengen zone concerns far more than ease of border crossing while going on holidays. Its long term suspension would affect even those that never leave their homelands by slower GDP growth and higher prices. The consequences for these who live their lives more internationally would be even worse. But the most disastrous consequence would be the reversal of European integration. The Schengen zone as the euro that is the achievement of EU, which is directly observable to many Europeans, would be lost. With it the public and eurosceptics would be a step closer to questioning the European project as a whole.

Therefore, if terrorists want to weaken the West, the banishment of the Schengen zone could be their greatest victory. We should seriously consider our priorities and realistic solutions to problems. Border control will neither stop immigrants, nor terrorists. We need more — not less integration. We need a common system of external border control and secret service cooperation. Internal border control may sound like a quick solution but it is merely a waste of time and resources. Are we then ready to pay a huge price to feel safer but not actually be safer? /

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NEW APPROACH TO GROWTH

A conversation about the significance of the region to a global company and challenges for further growth.

Symbiotic with economies and governments of particular countries only?

And with our partners. We have built a very strong base here. Our supply chain and manufacturing activities are significant. 90% of what we produce here is exported to the EU and a lot to emerging markets. There is an example here in Hungary, from our plant in Veresegyház. The products we make here go to Indonesia and Egypt, helping to power those countries. We also have 5 R&D centres in the region and we participate in modernising the region. The technologies we have in power and energy management, as well as in healthcare, also contributed to the progress of the region. We are fully integrated here, and that's very important.

And how important are the region's human resources or the quality of education? It seems that even though the level of education is good, there is still a need to upgrade the curriculum.

One of the reasons why GE came here and decided to invest and become active here, was the upcoming opportunity we saw — with the markets opening and the quality of people. This is one of the factors we always look at. We are in the technology business — we are a digital, industrial, and technological company, therefore innovation and the quality and skills of people are a decisive factor to us. I'll give you an example from Poland. More than 10 years ago we opened an Engineering Design Centre in Warsaw, which started with 10 people. Today we have 1900. And 10 years ago nobody thought: "We'll put it there and in 10 years it's going to be 2000 people". But because we found a working model involving private-public partnership and we were able to attract a lot of great engineers, it developed a speed that hadn't been planned originally.

It was all because of the driving force of those young engineers who design products for the aviation sector. You will find elements that were designed in Warsaw in the latest model of an aircraft engine flying around the world. Not to mention other research done in the energy sector, the results of which were later implemented. That's exactly what made our plans develop much more quickly than we actually anticipated.

With the relatively cheap and good workforce it was possible to achieve that result by now. But what about fears of a middle-income trap? What is your take on that?

When we look at the last 25 years of the Visegrad Four economies, we see that they are doing pretty well. Poland doubled its GDP in last 20 years. When we look at statistical data from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia — we did well, as economies. It was driven by talent — we discussed that — and it was driven by open economy. These are open, flexible, export-oriented economies, generally welcoming towards investors. And it was driven by good absorption of technology.

AN INTERVIEW WITH PETER STRACAR,
CEO OF GENERAL ELECTRIC IN CENTRAL
AND EASTERN EUROPE

Wojciech Przybylski: In what way is this region important to a company like GE?

Peter Stracar: I would say that GE needs Central Europe and I think Central Europe needs GE. I mean it without any sign of arrogance, I think it's mostly about partnership. We have been here for the last 25 years. We are a global company, we are a European company, and we are a Central European company. We were part of developments in this region in the last 20 years or more, so we are in a very symbiotic relationship.

The economies here were able to absorb technology from the outside — either through investors like us, or through local companies that created pretty effective industrial policies. Our countries are also highly industrialised. When we look at the gross industrial output, it's higher than the European average. And now the question is: will that model work for another 20 years?

I think that there are limitations to growth. Sooner or later, that potential will be exhausted. Therefore, the task ahead of us — our companies, small and medium enterprises, local companies, institutions and the government — is how to create more innovation here, especially innovation coming from the region. How can we add more value-added technology in the region? We have to make the R&D much more effective.

There are two interesting points to make here. The first one is: how much money is spent on R&D? Countries in the region spend approximately 1% of GDP, which is below OECD average. Another issue — or “potential for improvement”, to be positive — is how to make R&D spending more efficient. How to make research results turn into marketable, commercial products, so that spending on R&D has a real impact on the GDP and the economy. Today this process is limited.

Could you give me some examples?

Among the world's top 100 patent applicants there is not a single Central European company. What is also interesting is that only two public institutions are on that list. One of them is Fraunhofer Institute from Germany.

First of all, this tells us that public institutions are probably not efficient enough in turning their R&D into patents, and a patent is the indication of the actual commercial potential of an innovation. Central Europe is definitively not enough in the game. In 2015 Poland filed 568 patent applications, which would be ranked 28th in Europe, while by the size of the economy it ranks as the 6th. Meanwhile, a country like Switzerland filed 7000. Most of the filings in Europe come from companies. Phillips is number 1, Samsung is number 2 — we are talking about over 2000 patents last year. GE, with 1300 patents, is also in the top 10.

A lot of R&D money spent here goes to institutions. We need institutional research, which is done by the classic, top-down R&D institutes, driven by the government, to be more connected to the economy and the private sector. That relationship needs to be much stronger.

What sort of policies would help to achieve that? Tax exemptions? A new education policy? What would you expect?

There are several factors. In order to navigate between them, we use a tool we call an innovation barometer. We are in dialogue with the industries to find out how they think about innovation, what issues they challenge, etc. That way we get an estimate of how innovation is perceived here and what is happening. We are now finding out that private companies and entrepreneurs are well aware of the technological change and bet on innovation as the future source of growth.

A new business model is absolutely essential because there is more and more technological Darwinism in the business. One needs to be sharp and fast with innovation, even in order to survive. If the market overhangs you, your business becomes outdated. We see the same thing, which is why GE is plugging into the digital wave of innovation. On the other side, 65% of respondents said that they would rather invest in incremental innovation and take less risk. Here is where the public-private connection can help.

It's about the mitigation of risk. Helping private companies take bigger bets and go for the innovation that is riskier, but can be a breakthrough. This is the area where we can create a collaborative environment together. In fact, more and more companies realise that you cannot do everything by yourself. You need to collaborate, you need a whole ecosystem, and it's about trusting to share the risk, but also the gains. This is the challenge for Central European economies — to make the system more inclusive for various types of actors from private companies, universities and big companies. Then we can overcome the threat of the middle income trap and our economies will be more productive. /

The interview took place at the think.BDPST conference on March 8th, 2016.

ASPEN REVIEW

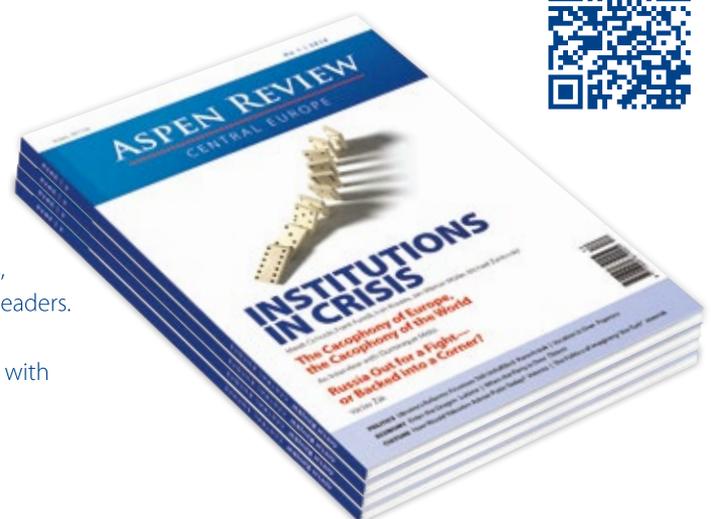
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*The European Union
today inhibits
integration instead
of enabling it*



Tadeusz Późniak / Polityka

INTERVIEW WITH JAN ZIELONKA

Maciej Kuziemski: Today's European Union is riddled with tensions and has diverged far from the ideals and ambitious aims that lay at its foundation. Multiple external circumstances and the pressure exerted by them could have had an integrating effect, but the opposite happened: today the Union is on the brink of collapse and its leaders lack ideas for real solutions.

Jan Zielonka: I believe there are three scenarios for the possible disintegration of the European Union. One is that everything will collapse due to external shock, and the European leaders will be unable to take control of the situation. The second scenario involves an attempt at reforming the Union in a way that is so disastrous that it will lead to its demise. I call this the Gorbachev scenario, but we might as well compare it, for instance, to the Habsburg Empire, the fall of which was also accelerated by certain reforms. In the third version I can image a Union that exists formally, but has stopped fulfilling its functions — it becomes an empty shell unable to solve problems important to its citizens.

These three scenarios are still current — first of all, we observe how the shock caused by the immigration wave has shaken the foundation of the Union, and we do not know if it will recuperate from this. Previous turbulences were caused by the economic crisis of the Euro zone, which was never permanently solved, but only superficially patched up. In fact, the attempt to respond to migration and financial pressure divided the EU members instead of uniting them. Moreover, it did so without solving the problems. Will Greece pay its debts? Have any of the summits devoted to refugee issues resulted in any solutions? Today the proper partner for effective action in Europe is still Angela Merkel and not Juncker or Tusk. The third scenario — slow dwindling of position — is occurring right before our eyes. The Union is already in the process of disintegration, but no one wants to openly admit this. The question is when the next shock will occur and whether it will be sufficiently strong to destroy the Union. There is no point speculating, because the nature of shocks is that they occur unexpectedly. Everyone knew that the world economy was in crisis and that the Euro was not adapted to surviving strong economic blows, but “to know” and “to know” are two different things.

Your description suggests the leaders of nation states have a very cynical approach to the Union. Maybe the problem lies in the deficiency of mass trust in the European institutions that stems from their extreme inefficiency: in critical situations the telephones start ringing in Berlin, not in Brussels.

It was like this throughout the entire history of the integration, but I think that the interpretation of the situation is far more severe: the integration model we opted for assumes a monopoly for nation states legitimized not in the European sphere, but in the national sphere. The lack of general European democratic legitimization has its limitations: it functions well when the winds are favourable, but it does not work when legitimization needs to be built based upon participation or choice. Why? Because the nation states realize the interests of their voters. Even though Angela Merkel is truly pro-European, she answers only for the German voter. All the decisions she made in the last years, even if they factored in European interests, represented first and foremost German interests. The problem is the disproportion of power of different nation states that violates the equality procedures created by the EU: when the Greeks rejected the reform package suggested by the Union, the German minister Schäuble replied that the voice of Greek voters is of no interest to him when there is German money at stake.

On the other hand the countries that voice the need for reforming the Union most decisively, like Great Britain, do not want to deepen integration and do not consider democratizing the Union through elections and through civil participation a good solution — rather the opposite. Do we have to accept that the Union must undergo some sort of fragmentation and become a community of isolated multi-level interests instead of values?

I see Great Britain as a pathological example. On the one hand, it claims that the monetary cooperation system should be federalized, but, on the other hand, Great Britain will not belong to it. It is easy to have opinions on others' business. There are two camps in the referendum debate: one claims that the Union is the symbol of all 'evil' and has to be abandoned in favour of the nation state. The other camp says: let's stay because we are outside any significant area of integration anyway. I consider this approach pathological. However, it is true the Union should be reformed. But the reforms proposed by Cameron were designed to realize his own internal problems — not even British interests, but the interests of the Conservative Party. It seems more and more obvious that the Union is structurally incapable of undertaking any serious reform. Small reforms do not change anything and large ones are controversial. One institutional trick will not change a complicated system. The elimination of the circus that is the functioning of the European Parliament in two cities, or choosing the president of the European Commission in general elections, will not make the

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citizens fall in love with the Union. Our situation is like in the joke: we can turn the fish tank into fish soup, but we cannot turn fish soup into a fish tank. I fear the European Union has become fish soup and we must integrate Europe from anew.

Interestingly, the Union enjoys greater sympathy and acceptance among Poles than among the citizens of any other nation. Maybe there is some correlation between the amount of funds Brussels keeps pumping into Poland. In such a utilitarian sense, integration remains fruitful for Central Europe. This will probably end when the source dries out around the year 2020; however, wise leaders should think in a longer perspective than the budget cycle or the next elections. Given the Union's impotency, can it still be a guarantor of peace and prosperity?

I do not want to deny the merits of the Union in stabilizing European democracy, but it is not the only factor, nor even the most important one at play in the economic success of the EU. If it were so, how would it be possible for Poland to develop well at the same time that, for instance, Latvia and Hungary are in crisis? The Union is not to be credited for all our successes, but is also not to be blamed for all of the 'evil' that we encounter. The Union as an international integration system has little to do with the crisis of capitalism and democracy with which we are still struggling.

Public opinion poles on trust towards other nations show that the younger the generation, the less will to cooperate and the weaker the sense of solidarity and responsibility for other Europeans. Do reasons for this lie in a radically different historical experience, without the Berlin Wall and a divided Europe, or in the growing feeling of insecurity connected with the job market, the lack of intergeneration solidarity, of which the emanation is the fact that the generation entering the job market today cannot count on the same social security and state care that were available to their parents?

My explanation as to why the younger generation is different than the older one is not only different historical experience, but also different from/in material experience. Today's youth belong to the digital generation. This revolution

gained momentum only about a decade ago, changing communication and the feeling of social solidarity. In the digital world the church, family, and school — institutions that used to control the formation of youth — have lost their significance. Communication has become highly pluralized, and the possibilities of manipulating value systems have become narrower. Today people mobilize for a particular issue, not for an ideologically coherent package of issues. You can organize a protest, mobilize masses through social networks without leaders, achieve certain results and disperse.

The world of politics does not keep up with the digital revolution, remaining stuck in the twentieth-century paradigm, in which communication with citizens does not occur directly, but through traditional institutions that were supposed to organize life and control society. Today's politics does account for the fact that the Internet has taken down the limits of communications, changing permanently the functioning of capitalism, democracy, and integration.

Let us examine the example of the recent discussion in Poland on military issues: I read that Poland plans to adopt a territorial defence act that might as well have been written at the end of the 19th century. Firstly, due to a completely archaic idea of how wars are conducted in today's world, and secondly, because of its disregard for the scale of social changes. How many Polish youth will put on uniforms to fight for their fatherland? Probably fewer than in the old days. And anyway, contemporary war requires computer specialists instead of boys marching in uniforms.

The economy naturally has to keep up with changes, because it lives off of it, while the world of politics is not keen to adapt. I will venture the thesis that the European Union is a postmodern alliance that has not modernized rapidly enough to answer the challenges of the present world.

I fully agree. Within the last thirty years three immense revolutions have occurred, shaking the pillars of state power — and the Union is an organization of states. The geopolitical revolution, the economic revolution, and the digital revolution. It suffices to examine how the Union offices use the Internet: as if it were an instrument of propaganda. Instead of trying to create tools for moderating so-

cial dialog and bringing the Union closer to its citizens, it showers them with unreadable documents or overenthusiastic tweets.

The last few decades have confirmed that inside the Union we do not have common interests, even when it comes to defence. The Italians care for the Ukraine as much as the Poles do for Libya. Moreover, we do not have a system that could translate our general principles to community solidarity. The Union is not only not a state, but it also does not have a common demos, or a mechanism for building common interests.

What emerges from your description is a grim image of a patchwork in which the denominator of common interests is low and the available instruments are incomplete and faulty.

Politics is about solving conflicts. Societies are always divided. When we speak of the Union we speak of the division between nation states, because they control and create it. But nation states are also not uniform. Even Poland, which has so few ethnic minorities, is divided between inhabitants of cities and of the countryside, or between people who would wish for separation of church and state, and people who want the state to realize their religious norms. The role of politics is to conduct a continuous tender for a common definition of interests, which are not given once and for all in democracy. The European Union does not have a mechanism for doing this.

Not all of the actors are represented at the European table, only certain nation states...

Exactly. One example of how the Union did not adapt to changes is how states have monopolies over integration, and mega-cities, which generate 80–90% income, are excluded. Cities organize mass events — they are one of the largest entities organizing public security. Cities like London, Paris, or Berlin have a key role in immigrant and refugee issues. Despite this, they are absent at the Union decision-making table, at which places are held for fallen states like Greece or Cyprus, or tiny states like Latvia or Malta. The same applies to international corporations, which have broken completely free from state control. Nongovernmental organizations, the intermediaries in the global discourse on ethics, are also absent from the discussion. And hence the persuasion that this EU world is

limiting its own scope of influence. Today, in order to be effective, you have to navigate three scenes: first, the global theatre, where the actors are mainly markets, and the criterion of effectiveness is profit. Then there are the nation states, a very provincial theatre with local actors, where the decisions are legitimized democratically, unlike in the global theatre. And between the two there is the EU, which does not have an immediate influence; neither over profits, nor over the legitimization of the system. And we must come to terms with this.

The European Union today inhibits its integration instead of enabling it. For people who are as European as I am, this is frustrating. Meanwhile, criticizing the Union is erroneously perceived as an expression of xenophobia and backward nationalism. I believe that if we are true Europeans, we must say: we want to integrate, but in a way that is adequate to reality. The role of politicians is to help solve this impasse, and if they do not do this, they should be replaced. /

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WHAT LAWYERS CAN DO FOR THE UNION

The Mayor of London has decided to back Brexit. Besides stating that *“there’s too much legislation coming from the EU”*, he took a surprising move.

JURAJ ČORBA

Boris Johnson explicitly attacked the Court of Justice of the European Union: *“...you’ve got a supreme judicial body in the European Court of Justice that projects down on this entire 500 million people territory a single unified judicial control from which there is absolutely no recourse and no comebacks. And in my view that has been getting out of control. There’s too much judicial activism...”*

Boris Johnson clearly challenged the pinnacle of the Union’s institutional system. His statement was primarily political and it should be understood as such. Although his strategy to cast doubt on the Union’s judiciary did not actually gain too much attention on the continent, it is worth having a closer look at the Union’s highest judicial institution. Is there actually any room for a meaningful debate before the criticism of the Union’s judicial body becomes politicised or perhaps even politically misused in other corners of the EU? Should lawyers actually do or mend something before a wave of emotions and sharp political statements of Johnson’s kind take over the continent?

The public perception of the Union’s legal architecture is often inadequately reduced to questions of obvious political importance: the Union’s institutional design (the “democratic deficit”, “accountability” and “legitimacy” debate) and the scope of the Union’s competences (the “ever closer Union” and “subsidiarity” debate). The question about what or how much is being regulated by the Union is also publicly raised from time to time (the “red tape” debate). But the question about how the Union implements and enforces its rules is rarely publicly discussed. If so, the debate is usually reserved to relatively low-numbered circles of legal academics circled around the EU institutions. Or, in some cases, to legal consultants who exchange their views in their private couloir chats. While some important dialogue is taking place through the

institutionalised channels of communication between the EU and national courts, between the EU courts and other EU institutions, and between the EU courts and the member states' governments, such a dialogue normally takes place only in the courtrooms, is often only implicit and seldom followed by a wider European legal community (not to mention politicians, media, and laymen).

It is the intricacies of the practice of the courts and related inner legal workings that are crucial for the actual *modus operandi* of the legal system underpinning the European integration project. And crucial also for the Union itself. What makes these discreet operational rules appear unknown, somewhat distant, or even awkward is perhaps their judicial origin and nature. Unlike in the case of the Union's financial and fiscal architecture where both effects and deficiencies had suddenly become visible and could even be literally counted, the impacts of the Union's judicial decision-making practice shaping the resulting Union's legal operational design are usually incremental and their effects take place over long periods of time.



Although seemingly hidden from the eyes of the wider public, the Union's "legal world" faces a major challenge. Over the decades, the European legal arena has become incredibly complex and the price is a rising loss of certainty; modern information technologies are further fuelling these trends. There is hardly any major economic player or active lawyer who could plausibly deny this.

Following the recent crises in banking, the common currency, security, asylum and migration, the Union may soon face another important challenge of a different kind: a serious reconsideration of its legal *modus operandi*. If EU law is to continue fulfilling its mission of harmonising and extending the common European legal space, successfully accommodating and balancing its differences and tensions, it needs to cease all its inherent tendencies of weakening legal certainty, clarity, and predictability. In order for the wide EU legal universe (and the whole Union) to be sustained, the *underlying legal operational architecture enabling the Union to function needs to undergo a significant adaptation mitigating the rise of complexity and corresponding loss of certainty*.

It is of course true that any process of integration (or globalisation for that matter) is normally connected — at least temporarily — with a rising degree of confusion and instability. But the decisive question rests in proportion. The EU may soon reach a point when the collateral legal uncertainty of its inhabitants and economic players will not be outweighed by all the benefits brought about by harmonised and expanding common legal space. Even the cherished protection of rights of individuals and private entities against the mistakes and maladministration of the member states — the cornerstone and driving rationale of the ever larger and imposing outreach of EU legal requirements — may not be an acceptable trade-off for loss of certainty in the eyes of the very same individuals and private entities. The benefits of wider and expanding European legal space need to be put to a new balance with an elementary need for clarity and predictability. The crucial question is *how this can be achieved without losing previous valuable gains*.



It is not very realistic to expect that any "better regulation" or "subsidiarity" initiatives addressing the deficiencies of EU legislature will themselves bring about the desired certainty, clarity, and predictability of the EU's legal environment. The practical lessons learned so far, as well as the rising complexity of the globalising world hungry for more supranational regulation, show that any such streamlining of legislative efforts will have only limited (albeit important) impact. It is equally improbable that the EU member states would soon agree on a radical institutional overhaul of the EU's judicial branch, such as creating a standard federative judicial system. Despite some bright efforts in the European legal academia, it is neither likely that a magical "Norm of the norms" or other ultimate mechanism solving the shaky relationship between EU law and national legal orders will soon be discovered and widely accepted. Therefore, *the necessary increased level of certainty, clarity, and predictability of the EU legal space can be most likely achieved only through gradual adaptation of those very instruments which actually serve to implement and enforce the vast body of EU requirements: the discreet underlying operational architecture and techniques that have been developed until now mainly by the courts*.



To whom to address this urgent call? If one wishes to express worries or systemic objections against the current Union's legal operational architecture and techniques, there is actually hardly anyone to turn to. There are no easily identified politicians or public officers directly responsible for this discreet and sensitive area, which has developed mainly through judicial practice. Moreover, it would be bizarre or even unacceptable to publicly challenge the EU or national judges. It is just as if the rising legal uncertainty accompanying the ever wider impact of EU law had no instance capable of addressing such concerns.

In any case, it would be completely wrong to come to a conclusion that the time is ripe for a revolution against the untouchable "*gouvernement des juges*", as some may believe. There are reasons why the judges are behaving the way they are. One must also bear in mind that the operational legal architecture of the Union has developed into an extremely unique and fragile phenomenon. It has started as — and still remains — a kind of testing playground for future global and regional attempts to integrate national legal systems and traditions without a prior fully-fledged political integration. Due to its inherent characteristics, any abrupt change in the Union's legal system may do more harm than benefit, if not even become fatal. For this very reason any scrutiny of the Union's legal design must be handled with care by anyone who is truly concerned about the rule of law, the future of Europe, and the global community. That does not of course mean that such issues should not be openly discussed.



It is perhaps not extremely difficult for any active EU legal practitioner to identify those tricky features of the Union's legal operational system, which currently tend to impede certainty, clarity, and predictability without actually offering an obvious and convincing countervailing benefit in return. They can be roughly divided into three types: (i) features that cause a disproportionate delay of finality of legal solutions; (ii) features that unnecessarily blur the content of the EU's legal requirements; and finally (iii) features that simply disappoint natural legal instincts of individuals and private entities. As many of these confusing or even destabilising tendencies have actually been developed through spontaneous judicial practice, they can be equally addressed and balanced by reasonable response in such practice. And by a careful approach of the European Commission when using its policing powers, as well as by relatively simple legislative amendments that can be passed by relevant legislative bodies.

A delayed finality of legal solutions (the first type of tricky features) can make a meaningful legal solution and advice extremely difficult. As EU law advances into more and more fields of human activities and relations, where reasonable time planning, early feedback, and adequate risk mitigation is inevitable, these features prolonging "final answers" need to be revisited with a new degree of sensitivity. Several negative tendencies of a largely procedural nature stand behind this problem. First of all, the absence of limitations on the retrospective effects of CJEU's legal interpretations provided to national courts through the preliminary ruling procedures is very unfortunate since the interpretation usually has a retrospective impact beyond the remit of the individual case in which it is rendered, i.e. on all other similar previous situations in the EU. As such interpretations do indeed have serious and sometimes surprising impacts on intra-state or EU laws, decisions and contracts on which private parties and public authorities had relied, the effects of such interpretations should be — as a rule — limited to the pending case in which the interpretation is rendered and to cases arising in the future. For the good reasons of certainty and predictability, the starting rule should not be the one currently in place, which is that unless the court limits the effects to the given interpretation to the future (which happens only very rarely), these apply to all similar situations, including those preceding the judgement. Instead, the ability of the CJEU to provide for retrospective effects beyond the remit of the given case and future cases should be construed only as an exception. Secondly, questioning or even ignoring intra-state final judgements (*res iudicata*) in infringement proceedings initiated by the European Commission and on other occasions where the CJEU finds national solutions and outcomes incompatible with EU law is certainly not a positive trend. The rising tendency to consider intra-state administrative proceedings and final administrative decisions as largely irrelevant under EU law is a problem of a similar type. All this is further exasperated by alternative EU avenues for a (prolonged) revision of intra-state decisions and procedures even when those are final and finished, namely through the so-called infringement proceedings initiated by the European Commission and decided by the CJEU. The problem is not necessarily that intra-state final decisions and procedures are being revised *ex post facto* for the sake

of their compatibility with EU requirements. The problem is that all this reopening of final decisions takes place outside of standard rules of procedural retrial, which normally provide for limited periods, and limited grounds for such reopening. A more nuanced approach by the CJEU and the European Commission in this respect and clear principled rules would bring much ease to many complex projects and transactions implemented (previously or in the future) in the Union.

The second category of tricky features of EU law relates to the blurred content of EU requirements, which creates problems even for the most compliant and diligent ones. Firstly, the legislative use of open-ended provisions with vague normative content that are deliberately left for further development by integrationist judicial practice should be used in the future only in those instances where this is clearly inevitable. A new kind of cost/benefit test and impact assessment needs to be adopted so that the potentially destabilising impacts of such open-ended provisions can be better appreciated (this is something different from the "subsidiarity" and "proportionality" tests currently employed). Courts need to be more careful with using such open-ended provisions for their decisional expansion into fields where the final programmatic goal may be desirable, but without a proper detailed legislative regulation simply confusing. Secondly, the use of soft law instruments by the European Commission for filling in legal gaps should be abandoned for they only further encourage and in a way legitimise incomplete legislation while the above corresponding judicial programmatic expansions create poorly regulated fields of law. For the sake of legal certainty, the vicious circle of this well-intentioned but disputable activism needs to be cut somewhere for the benefit of all those involved and impacted. Thirdly, legal techniques developed by the courts defining the situations and conditions under which EU requirements quash the solutions provided for under national law should be streamlined, more clearly set, and "tamed" so that their limits are clearly understandable, and can be relied upon. The current tendency in the application of the so-called "direct" effect or "indirect" effect and primacy of EU law where the resulting message often seems to be that the national authorities (courts and other bodies applying law) simply need to make sure that the case at hand is simply somehow effectively attuned to EU requirements, is not very helpful. Fourthly, the current trend of deriving rules and especially obligations for private parties or public entities purely from abstract general principles of law is extremely problematic, unpredictable, and burdensome. The calls for abandoning such practice (or limiting it only to few clearly defined instances) are justified and should be visibly addressed by the decisional practice of the CJEU as this is indeed possible to achieve. Finally, a judicial piecemeal unification ("communitarisation") of legal concepts, terms, and notions where the CJEU simply creates a Union solution to overtake and regulate the national counterparts should be employed only when absolutely necessary and better left for complex legislative initiatives. The courts have sufficient possibilities for how to signal problems and needs to the legislators.

The last category of tricky features of EU law is a special, a very subtle one. These features somehow disappoint natural legal instincts and orientation skills that have evolved over centuries of development of national legal orders in Europe. Such disappointment leads to frustration and pitiful and unfortunate blaming and ridiculing of the European integration project by private parties, if not even by national public of-

ficers and representatives. One such subtle example is the Union's legal operational rules, which expect the private parties who had already entered into some kind of a direct or indirect relationship with national public authorities, or just follow the national legal framework in place to bear negative consequences if the relevant national legislative framework, public procedures, and decisions and contracts later turn out to be not fully compliant with EU requirements. Although fears of unjustified "capture" of the state (and the Union) by private parties and ill-intentioned public officials as well as of the resulting moral hazard are certainly justified in areas such as public contracts, public funds, etc., the principle of legitimate expectations should be adequately protected and a new balance found. One cannot reasonably expect private parties to bear responsibility for the complex and complicated relations between the Union and its member states, the respective legislatures and complex bodies of administration. Instead, more effective and coordinated ways of legislating and of the exercise of mixed or delegated administration should be sought. If a correction disappointing natural instincts and expectations of private parties must nonetheless be taken, only proportionate solutions should be employed (especially by using instruments under private law). Another similar disappointing feature of the Union's law is its tendency to introduce rigorous and hard-line legal consequences for the breach of EU requirements, which is especially disappointing in cases when content and impact of such legal requirements is vague and case-bound. This is closely connected to the effect of (EU) public law requirements in the fields of private law and *inter partes* relations. Mandated outright invalidity of contracts, repeating of complicated procedures, bizarrely strict sanctions — all these will hardly win the hearts of citizens and economic players, especially of those active on a large scale and taking significant risks. All of these can and should be mitigated through wise and reflective decisional practice or legislative amendments. Finally, the credibility of EU law is easily undermined in those instances when common sense leads the private parties or even national public officers to a conclusion that EU institutions (including the courts) are unwisely preempting national solutions by attracting jurisdiction over the matter, or simply by enforcing a "last word" for themselves. These are situations such as imposing EU-preferred solutions over the national ones where the balance of interests is assessed exclusively at the EU level without a detailed examination of the real legal impacts on relations and situations on a national level. The initiation of infringement proceedings against a member state in concrete cases of breach through the application of law with a consequent obligation for a state to undertake an unspecified remedy to correct a complex intra-state situation is of such a kind. The better and transparent use of policing powers and tempered judicial practice may alleviate these concerns.

All the above tricky features of the Union's operational legal system are truly systemic as they cut with varying intensity through multiple fields of EU (and national) law — through both the overarching fields as well as the sectoral ones. Fundamental rights and liberties as well as the four economic freedoms, public procurement, competition and state aids, taxation, environment, consumer protection, corporate law, labour relations, judicial cooperation, and protection, agriculture, transport, energy, electronic communications, fi-

nancial and other services — all of these and others are at play. But, as suggested above, some solutions are identifiable. They should be further considered and examined, and subsequently gradually firmly embedded in decisional practice, with some necessary help from legislative bodies.

The basic common denominator of all these possible solutions is a heightened Union's (and especially CJEU's) sensitivity accustomed to legal instruments and techniques as well as to detailed circumstances occurring at the level of member states and within their national legal orders. All of these suggested improvements can be potentially beneficial to legal certainty, clarity, and predictability. And none of them is truly revolutionary, but rather represents only an important and visible adaptation.



The possible recipe for finding a new balance between legal complexity and certainty is then at hand. It is time for an increased and tangible appreciation of those building blocks and principles developed over centuries in national legal orders that fulfil important services for the stability of the EU legal system as a whole. Not a takeover, but a real appreciation. The EU institutions and especially the CJEU need not to continue compensating for "infant" deficiencies of the Union's (still emerging) legal order by introducing and enforcing those of its features that create tension and confused reactions on the national level. It is important to start to show clear signs of maturity. It is time to accept the fact that in no near future will the Union law become a fully-fledged and fully autonomous legal order; in practice it will continue to be heavily dependent in its operation on national legal orders, especially on their institutional and procedural elements supportive of legal certainty and predictability. EU law should not only utilise features of international law through which the intra-state legal relations, procedures and laws may become altogether irrelevant when chasing breaches of EU law, or when imposing EU requirements over national law. It should not only adopt and borrow from the national legal orders their constitutive elements and concepts in order to show that the EU legal order is qualitatively comparable to them and equally "complete". Unless the Union undergoes a complete institutional and legal revamp with the aim to give birth to a standard federation, its legal order can be neither self-containing nor self-sustaining. Therefore, *the EU legal arena needs to show tangible signs of appreciation of the fact that the Union's legal framework creates an indivisible whole with the national legal orders. Equally so, it can become in a way supportive of those national legal instruments that enhance certainty and stability, which may actually help sustain whole EU system in the long term.*

Due to the rising complexity of legal relations and the system as a whole, any other approach may lead to rising frustration and centrifugal tendencies. It is not hard to see that any overstretched and disproportionately confusing legal system nurtures either escapism from the system (in search of a better and more natural and comfortable space), the rise of grey zones of non-official solutions, or at least bona fide parallel worlds of benign ignorance of the respective legal requirements.



The current Union was born with and developed through a very unique institutional design that enabled its legal system to expand dynamically. There are many experts around the globe who recognise the value of the specific initial judicial setup (especially the successful preliminary ruling procedure) that has been effectively fostering further integration and forcing member states to fulfil their commitments. The ensuing legal system successfully followed the integration programme outlined by the founding treaties, while the judicial branch enabled the whole system to respond “on the go” to changing circumstances and new windows of opportunity. The success story mainly rests on direct application (direct effect, respectively) of EU law instruments, their declared primacy over national laws, the protection of individual rights vis-à-vis the member states, and the judicial assessment of national laws and actions through the lens of non-discrimination and proportionality, on making member states liable for breaches of their commitments. And on the fact that it was the CJEU that took jurisdiction and firm control over these tools which it itself developed or adopted.

Now that the Union has expanded into almost all fields of law and human activities, it is perhaps time to recognise that its successful *modus operandi* — inspired in principle by a monistic approach to international law and by elements of international and constitutional human rights adjudication — may also produce destabilising effects on legal relations within the member states. Although this operational model confirmed its strengths as far as effective expansion, unification tendencies, and flexibility are concerned, it is capable of also producing counterproductive effects, especially those which undermine legal certainty, clarity, and predictability. The monistic and human rights type of adjudication is not quite universally applicable and does not necessarily operate well in all kinds of situations and relations, especially not in the environment of *inter partes* relations, which are nowadays heavily impacted by EU law, either directly or indirectly.

The rising complexity of human interactions can (and should) be neither ignored, nor artificially eradicated by means of law. But the resulting uncertainties need to be wisely mitigated for the sake of keeping the system sustainable. It is necessary and desirable to now give the celebrated Union’s proportionality principle and the declared care for the fate of an individual a new dimension. It is not only important to constantly strengthen the effectiveness and outreach of the EU requirements (which was the case until now). It is equally important to enable those targeted individuals to be burdened by the whole legal labyrinth only to a proportionate extent; comfort them with a reasonable degree of legal certainty. For the sake of clarity, this argument should not be confused with rising calls for more security and limitations on liberalising fundamental economic freedoms of the Union such as caps on the freedom of movement of persons, for the radical eradication of the abuse of economic freedoms, etc. Although the difference may appear subtle, that latter issues are issues of a completely different kind (and of largely political nature). Success in bringing the desirable legal certainty into the Union’s legal system is unlikely if oranges are mixed with apples in the debate.

In any case, a new sensitivity, reasonable degree of self-restraint, less result (programme) oriented and more means-oriented approach, determination, and clear signalling is necessary and desirable on the side of the EU institutions (especially CJEU) if any change is to take place in the Union’s legal operational system. Instead of further strengthening EU law at the expense of national legal orders and the member states, an internal consolidation of the system as a whole is now preferable. The unique Union’s legal *modus operandi* — the destiny of which is being closely watched around the globe — needs to prove that it is indeed a sustaining and evolutionary innovation. That it is not an innovation problematic vis-à-vis its member states, their legal orders, inhabitants, and economic players. That — despite the rising overall complexity — it does not detract from its member states and citizens the previously achieved level of legal certainty, clarity, and predictability. And that — following the Union’s advance into vast areas of law — the legal operational system is itself mature enough to recognise and mitigate its own possible destabilising effects. Unless the Union itself creates a completely new and autonomous institutional and legal framework through which it itself would provide for adequate levels of certainty, clarity, and predictability to all users of law (which is unlikely in the near future), any further weakening and destabilising of those intra-state legal elements, building blocks, and principles which actually help to achieve that goal will in fact become nothing else than a weakening of the Union itself.



Perhaps the most important message of this essay is that *there is no one else in the Union to further analyse, verify, and address these sensitive and discreet legal issues except for the (somewhat fragmented) European community of legal professionals itself*. This is so precisely because all of the described tricky and peculiar features and tendencies in the Union’s operational system were actually created by lawyers. Although the effects of these tendencies finally impact the Union’s citizens, economic players and political representations, none of these laymen groups is able to define in detail the problem and offer an adequate solution. Unlike the effects, the causes of the problems can only be carefully identified and addressed by legal professionals. Just as in the case of the recent financial instability and related complex problems in the banking and other sectors, the wider public is in a way dependent on expert advice and diligent action by the relevant professional circles. Lawyers seemingly owe it to the rest of European society, if not in fact to themselves, for it is becoming increasingly difficult to work as a lawyer.

The described dangers will not create an imminent drama (at least not on a macro-scale), but to some extent certainly a negative tendency. What is needed is not revolution rather, a sensitive and controlled adaptation. Many of the issues outlined in this essay have already been raised by various experts on various occasions, and the CJEU seems to show signs that it is being receptive. But if the problems are to truly be addressed, a clear and decisive move should take place in the legal practice. It is evident that all the problematic issues described in this essay should still be further carefully analysed and their critical importance for the stability of the EU legal system verified. A clear and visible action ensuring the public, the citizens, and the

economic players that the system remains fully reflective and capable of adaptation needs to be taken.

The whole adaptation process will require a new quality of focused, open, and explicit dialogue and mutual feedback within the wide European legal community. Lawyers with primarily international or EU background will need to speak more to practitioners facing and solving issues in the field in the member states, and vice versa. Lawyers acting as public officers (and also academic lawyers) will need to show more interest in the challenges faced by legal consultants and their clients. Legal consultants in private practice will need to deepen their understanding of the underlying logic of the EU's legal operational architecture. The member state governments' and EU institutions' agents and other legal representatives appearing before the CJEU will need to more openly and explicitly address issues stretching beyond their usual remit of analysis and argument. The European Commission may need to opt for a more predictable and proportionate use of its policing powers and may initiate relevant legislative changes. Both EU and national judges will need to carefully listen and, if necessary, show clear signs that the judicial branch is indeed being reflective, capable of sending out very clear signals and — if necessary — even being capable of exercising a certain degree of self-restraint.

All of this can and even should happen. The overall gains of the integration and common European legal space are simply too precious to be endangered by tendencies undermining one of its crucial functions: bringing certainty, stability, and predictability.

AUTHOR'S POST SCRIPTUM

I started to ponder the main points of this essay sometime around the 10th anniversary of the accession of my country (Slovakia) to the EU. I started to write around the time when my country was commemorating the 25th anniversary of fall of the Iron Curtain in Central Europe.

Being a real admirer of the enlarged and united Europe, I felt I should somehow try to explicitly formulate some of my concerns about the future of its common legal space. Ever since I had started my professional career as a lawyer, my work was connected to EU law and EU affairs. The views presented in this essay are based on genuine experiences, which I gained while working as a legal counsel in private practice, or as a government agent before the CJEU. Strange as it may sound, I was inspired by current scientific knowledge of life-sustaining mechanisms of cells and complex organisms. I was also influenced by theories of self-organising dynamic systems. Last but not least, I was struck by the fascinating political and legal history of the disintegrated Habsburg monarchy — especially since the era of the so-called *josephinism* —, i.e. by the history of the Central European empire to which the territory of my country once belonged (for several centuries, actually).

I wrote in this essay primarily about the complexity and uncertainty faced by the Union's *economically active* players (entities or individuals) on which the Union has actually grown. But I believe even the "citizenship" (non-economic) dimension is facing similar challenges. If for no other reason, then at least because rights and entitlements usually bring in mirroring obligations of other actors and public authorities, thus the legal problems become equally complex.

This essay deals exclusively with the internal aspects of the EU's legal system, i.e. the relationship between EU law and national legal orders of its member states. That does not mean

of course that the legal relationship of the EU to its external environment is less important. Quite the contrary — the EU's relationship to international agreements and jurisdictions is equally crucial as such a dimension makes the whole legal arena even more complex. It has an equally — or at least comparably — important impact on the overall stability of the system and should be scrutinised as well. Actually, one could even say that the global world has reached such a complex network of legal relationships that it is even hard to distinguish between "internal" and "external" dimensions. What appears "external" may in fact be "internal", and vice versa — it basically depends upon one's point of view (and jurisdictional competition).

I hope it is understood that this essay is neither an academic article nor a properly elaborated legal pleading. It is more the reflexive essay of a practitioner. Therefore, the text does not contain references to case-law, legislation, or published articles and other works. I do not discount that there may be other works and papers that highlight very similar if not even identical issues — all the better. If there is anything that I actually plead and argue for, it is the need to analyse and verify further the described tendencies, to look in a more detail manner into the outlined structural issues, and to analyse in depth the vast amounts of constantly growing case-law, its actual implications, and possible inconsistencies.

All the views presented in this essay had been shaped at the Eastern geographical periphery of the Union, in a member state which itself faces important challenges in providing its own citizens with an adequate level of legal protection and certainty. But I guess such fact does not necessarily weaken the points I tried to raise. As for the accession into the EU, I often had a feeling that a "charming advantage" of living on the periphery of the Union is that some of the effects — both positive and disputable — of the incoming tide of the Union's governance patterns and legal culture can somehow be seen and felt more clearly here on the Union's edge than in its "centre" (wherever that is). It is just as if these Union's characteristic features manifested themselves more sharply in peripheral environment which is in a way — perhaps just like the Union, on a different geographical and qualitative scale — in a state of a dynamically evolving legal system (at least in comparison to some of the more developed and established national legal systems). Maybe this is some kind of a paradox. But perhaps not; perhaps it is actually quite logical. And perhaps I am just completely misled by my impressions and feelings.

I fully understand that many of the problematic features of the Union's legal operational system that I have tried to describe in this essay and have titled as tricky had actually historically emerged on the EU level as a response to a poor record of the implementation of the EU's requirements in the member states. Some cynical hardliners may even claim (off the record) that the Union's controversial legal rules of operation are an inevitable price of the EU's expansion into those geographical areas which generally exhibit a poor record in abiding rules of law and in law enforcement. I strongly believe such a conclusion is insupportable, too simplistic, and certainly very dangerous. At the same time, I equally believe it would be simplistic and dangerous to say that it is not necessary to examine afresh and in detail possible negative effects of some of the tricky features and rising complexity of EU law on legal certainty, stability, and predictability inside the Union and inside its member states. /

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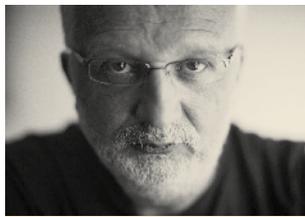
New *Enlightenment*



LEONIDAS DONSKIS



PATRIK OUŘEDNÍK



HARIS PAŠOVIČ



MICHAL HAVRAN

Leonidas Donskis, Patrik Ouředník, Haris Pašovič and Michal Havran in conversation about intellectual courage versus industry of fear.

MICHAL HAVRAN: Is there any sense in speaking about the project of the ‘new’ Enlightenment today given, first, a history of criticism against the flawed original project, and second, taking into account our contemporary political reality?

Patrik Ouředník: I do not have any problem with the notion of the ‘new Enlightenment’. While the original Enlightenment is accused of being homogenizing or universalistic, the ‘new’ Enlightenment would be questioning and reflexive. However, I would argue that we don’t have to speak about the ‘new’ Enlightenment, since the Enlightenment, as a concept, has not been exhausted. Modern Europe is quite clearly an heir, and a result of the ‘age of lights’. Enlightenment is both a philosophical and a political concept of administrating an area. Kant spoke of the liberation of the human mind. In this perspective, the Enlightenment is a project of liberation from prejudices and conventions, which we of course can achieve up to a degree. Enlightenment opposes orthodoxy and pushes us to think for ourselves. On the other hand, it also allows us to discuss together how to organize our lives in society; how to achieve the most harmonious, or least discordant, society.

Leonidas Donskis: The topic of the Enlightenment appears to be quite relevant for many reasons. The outcomes or the derivatives of this project had deeply permeated the 20th century European thought. There is a joke among political philosophers that Communism is the Enlightenment gone astray, a sort of prodigal son. But the same applies to the opposite movement, which was a major philosophical and cultural movement in Europe, Romanticism. Romanticism could be described as having a difficult and murderous child, Nazism; or Nazism could be described as an outcome of the dark side of Romanticism. In the 20th century we witnessed a sort of struggle between those two European moral and political sensibilities. Nevertheless the Enlightenment deeply permeated European political and moral discourses...

MICHAL HAVRAN: But did it really? Even in Central Europe?

Leonidas Donskis: I think it did. It is telling that you addressed the issue saying Central Europe, not Eastern Europe. In Central Europe, even the most sophisticated circles experienced major intellectual movements second-hand. Those great currents — the Enlightenment, Romanticism — did not originate here, but were accepted; in a way, they came late. Things were ever

more complicated in Eastern Europe. The Russian thinker Pyotr Chaadayev in his philosophical letters — written in the 1830s — complained that Russia did not have any single major European movement. Whereas in Central Europe, I believe that both the Enlightenment and Romanticism affected us; they were not so much commonplace components of intellectual life as they were in Western Europe. The problem is that we are discussing this topic with contemporary political map of Europe in mind. I think that Central and Eastern European nations emerged as more or less legitimate children of Romanticism. The Nobel Prize winning poet Czesław Miłosz made a joke that Lithuania emerged due to activities of linguists who were playing some linguistic games and derived Lithuania as a project.

MICHAL HAVRAN: How can we talk about the Enlightenment as one, given the geopolitical differences and traditions you mentioned?

Leonidas Donskis: The Enlightenment was not a monolith; there were profound differences between, say, Montesquieu and some of his contemporaries. There were people who represented more or less the technocratic current, for example, Antoine Destutt de Tracy, the author of *The Elements of Ideology*, a perfect product of the rationalizing reason of L’École polytechnique. The problem many European thinkers had with the Enlightenment, like Vico in Italy, or Herder in Germany, was that the Enlightenment underrated emotions, feelings. But it is not universally true; Montesquieu and Voltaire did appreciate them. Romanticism derived more from the Enlightenment than it would like to admit, even the concept of a more or less coherent Europe. Of course, there were differences. The Romantics covered the mysticism and emotional component of human life while the Enlightenment, with its focus on reason and civilization in singular, lacked subtlety. Only together did both movements create a new sensibility. And they both spoke of misery, of human pain, in a novel way.

Haris Pašovič: I am very much under the impression of yesterday’s attack in Paris. There is a very strong message coming from Parisians, the one of resistance. They say we are strong. There was a man playing “Imagine” by John Lennon in the streets. There are many examples of the determination of Parisians who do not let terrorism or evil overwhelm their city. I was also there in January 2015 at the time of the Charlie Hebdo attacks and I also saw Parisians, including French Arabs, united. To be Parisian today, is to be part of the ‘new Enlightenment’.



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MICHAL HAVRAN: Is the expression of unity, standing together, enough? Shouldn't they also do something together?

Haris Pašovič: It is not enough, but it is a precondition to treasure humanistic values. This is also what we did during the siege of Sarajevo. For four years we were exposed to barbarism on a daily basis, on live television broadcasts all around the world. What was a spontaneous reaction of survival was to keep multiculturalism alive, not to take revenge against the people of Serbian origin who lived in Sarajevo with us, despite the fact that there were Serbian forces targeting the city; not to destroy Orthodox churches in the city, despite all the calamities. What I see in Paris this year is the same spirit, and I believe we should follow this spirit everywhere in Europe. What happened should not be understood. It is not understandable, because it is evil. In Sarajevo, I often asked myself why is it happening to us. Such events cannot be understood. But they can be confronted. It is very important to focus on confronting the evil instead of trying to understand it, which is a waste of time.

MICHAL HAVRAN: Are we less resistant to terror because the Enlightenment ideas are weaker or less widespread?

Patrik Ouředník: If we speak about the ideas of tolerance and respect for the Other, indeed, these are more and more fragile in today's Europe. The Enlightenment in French is *les Lumières* — it is plural, which is very important, because this suggests there is no one truth, and also that there is no truth in singular. A note to what was said before: I do not wholly agree with the demarcation of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, as there was also pre-Romanticism. Moreover, we could also see the line of demarcation geopolitically: as a German reaction to the French cultural domination of the Enlightenment.

Leonidas Donskis: Still, we cannot confine the Enlightenment to France alone, with all due respect. Especially tonight, we are tempted to say *nous sommes tous Parisiens*, but Immanuel Kant is a cornerstone of the Enlightenment, and he was decidedly not French. It is from

his writing that we derive the idea of a great peaceful international European federation. Also, Scottish forces, Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith, were hugely influential. The Enlightenment was a *European* project of modernity. The French Enlightenment gave us the social sciences, new forms of sensibility, struggles with religious fanaticism and bigotry. While the Scottish Enlightenment of Adam Smith gave us economic modernity. The Enlightenment had many fronts, and it would be unjust to reduce it to one movement. True, 'civilization' was meant to oppose 'barbarism'; but it was also about compassion, justice, and our cherished human rights.

MICHAL HAVRAN: Are human rights really cherished?

Leonidas Donskis: We cherish human rights only when they are at great risk, it is the same with human health. We sometimes make fun of the Enlightenment as the simplistic vision of one superior Western civilization against perceived Eastern barbarism; say Jean Jacques Rousseau trying to write the constitution for Poland without visiting the country. But at the same time the Enlightenment was about the democratization of human sensibility, which gave the foundation for granting rights to all, for the idea of the universal rights of men.

Haris Pašovič: I am curious to know how Enlightenment ideas fare in contemporary discussions about technological development. In 2000, Bill Joy wrote an article, "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us", about developments in science. He established the category of the 'democratization of evil', which, to put it simply, means that some unassuming person, sitting in a small village somewhere, can be a serious threat to Europe or the United States. We are facing the effects of this democratization of evil now, but we have not yet found the answer for it, except for tightening security measures and increasing surveillance.

Leonidas Donskis: The great paradox of modernity is that everything is very close to its polarity, to its own antidote. For instance, in terms of political existence, I am afraid Europe will become even more securitized and surveilled. But the crucial thing is to defend the humanistic legacy of Europe. First and foremost, our task is not to become paranoid or fear ridden. The challenge for the 21st century is to protect democratic Europe with respect to our humanistic sensibilities, and respect to human rights and civic liberties. This will be quite difficult, but we must stand together for it, especially given the rise of violent political extremism.

Patrik Ouředník: The devotion to reason and the unfettered belief in science and progress lead to scientific racism, eugenics, and eventually Nazism. This is the dark legacy of the Enlightenment. Extremist movements have never ceased to exist in Europe. For quite a long period those tendencies were perceived in much of Western Europe as dormant, which is not the case anymore.

Leonidas Donskis: The other important factor is the industry of fear. For a couple of months after the Russian annexation of Crimea, the Baltic states lived in fear, despite NATO's pledges to article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. My country panicked; I felt it strongly. I tried to counter that fear by writ-

ing essays, as people of my profession do, but it was hopeless against the daily activity of the tabloids, which profited from the industry of fear. Fear has become a valuable commodity. I tried to mobilize my best rational self, explaining to my frightened students that Russia won't invade the Baltics risking a catastrophic war. The industry of fear, whether it's fuelled by the fear of war, of refugees, or of migrants, is extremely difficult to beat. Kant propagated the motto *sapere aude*, which translates to 'dare to know'. Intellectual courage is extremely important in times of social unrest. If intellectuals or artists succumb to hysteria, we are all finished.

MICHAL HAVRAN: Are we close to succumbing to panic?

Leonidas: The sociologist Zygmunt Baumann said that if you want to be a star in your society you need to invent yourself either as celebrity or as victim. But I think there is also a third way out for the intellectuals, who way too often become fear mongers. This is in my opinion their sin against societies. At the same time, we still have many sober voices resisting this temptation. The principle of intellectual or journalistic work is not to scare or paralyze people. The best thing to do now is to encourage audiences to live their lives without fear, in dignity.

Haris Pašovič: I was also thinking about the selective use of 'Enlightened' ideas for political purposes. There is a kind of Enlightenment of convenience, especially salient in politics, where, for example, European leaders are praising some minor reforms concerning women's rights in Saudi Arabia to close massive economic deals. I'm afraid that when we focus too much on the noble issues and humanistic values, we will miss out on the economic, corporate rendering of the language of human rights, the language we owe to the Enlightenment.

Leonidas Donskis: One of the superstitions of the Enlightenment, the current that vehemently fought superstitions, is that you can negotiate everything. Once you educate people to speak one language, you can discuss matters of universal concern and eventually arrive at proper conclusions. But no, there are unsolvable conflicts and issues, which are not negotiable! For example we cannot negotiate with racists and misogynists, who have only contempt for other people. We cannot permit their languages to be preached. Democratic life is a type of life consisting of dissonances, differences, which are often difficult to deal with. Our task is to strive to deal with them as long as possible, but there is a boundary: terror or violence. /

The text is based on a discussion held at the Central European Forum in Bratislava on 14th November 2015.

Leonidas Donskis is a Lithuanian philosopher, political commentator, and former Member of the European Parliament.

Patrik Ouředník is a prominent Czech author and translator. His book *Europeana* was translated into 29 languages.

Haris Pašovič is a Bosnian theatre and film director, Professor of the Academy of Performing Arts in Sarajevo.

Michal Havran is a Slovak theologian, political commentator, and founder of Jetotak.sk.

The Journey



PÉTER HUNČIK

In late February of 2016 I took part in a discussion in Budapest on the consequences of the 1920 Treaty of Trianon. As a member of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia where I live, my remarks understandably focused on the traumas that affected those who are members of the minorities. I pointed out that the main losers of Trianon were not those who lived in the motherland, but the several million Hungarians who, because of a decision made by the great powers, became Romanians, Slovaks, or Serbs overnight.

Belonging as I do to the third post-Trianon generation, my insights and attitudes differ in many respects to the experiences of my parents and grandparents. I remained a Hungarian but in addition learnt Slovak and thanks to this language secured free admission to the world of the other Slavonic languages. There is though more than merely a linguistic dimension to this admission. The worlds of Hašek, Čapek, Hrabal and Havel have also, to some extent, affected my world, and I hear the music of Dvořák, Smetana and Janáček, too, with ears that are different from those of Hungarians in the motherland. I also see certain historical events differently than if I wore only Hungarian spectacles.

Over the last few decades I have read a vast number of books about the

Trianon peace treaty. Before I start reading one, however, I always check its list of sources and references, and if I find that the author has drawn only on Hungarian materials, I tread very carefully. For although it is true that Hungarians were the ones who suffered the most losses through the Treaty, unless we bear in mind the views of the other countries affected — Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania, and even Austria — we cannot gain a realistic picture of this event. In the absence of these views, we are able to speak only of “our” Trianon. Likewise: of “our” War of Independence in 1848 and “our” Ausgleich of 1867.

I am aware that such a lopsided view is not a specifically Hungarian phenomenon. The citizens of the “great” nations also see the world in a similar fashion. On the one hand each has their own ideas and views, and on the other hand: nothing. And they are outraged if they are criticized for this.

There are also nations whose peoples were taught to respect otherness by their neighbours, or their own, minorities. Initially, they too saw every event exclusively from their own angle. However, there soon appeared on the scene the leaders of the minorities ceaselessly parroting the irritating mantra: “Put yourselves in our shoes.” An intelligent leader is careful not to allow the rumblings of the majority to drown out the remedial clam-

our of the minorities. For it is often due to such “internal noises” that they take steps applauded by the rest of the world.

If we examine ethnic homogeneity in our part of the world, it becomes clear that in Central Europe it was the Czechs, Poles, and Hungarians who received the “best deal”. In the course of the twentieth century, these three states were shuffled and shifted, clipped and trimmed until they were completely “cleansed” ethnically. The Jews were largely exterminated during the war, the “criminal” Germans and Hungarians were deported afterwards, and any remaining national minorities were assimilated. Of course the Roma remained, but in them no one has taken the slightest interest.

Hence, over the last quarter of a century, these three countries have not encountered any kind of ethnic otherness except for the Roma. And there’s the rub. Because it is precisely “via” the Roma that they could have learnt the rules of interethnic behaviour that they now so badly need. But nothing was learnt. And yet, Europe expects them to demonstrate empathy and tolerance towards one another, to cooperate and show solidarity with the refugees from the East and relinquish some of their national privileges in the interests of a common European future, which is dubious.

For what they were taught by Trianon was precisely how to establish communi-

ties of nation-states in Central Europe. Since then, it has been shown that this idea was misguided, as nation-states are incapable of coexisting peacefully. This is especially true in our part of the world, where the nation-states that came into existence had never been ethnically “pure”. The case of the above-mentioned states provides proof that it is only possible to establish homogeneous nation-states by artificial means, through coercion.

Under what might be called normal circumstances, Europe is characterized by multi-ethnicity and, alas, the discord that is the result of its inevitable accompaniment. It was this apparently insoluble problem that the EU sought to overcome, by creating a kind of federation and a borderless Europe as an alternative to incessant contestation. For Western Europe, this plan did more or less become a reality. After 1989 the leaders of the EU wanted to extend the world of democracy to the citizens of the former socialist countries. But they neglected to take into account that the Western and Eastern halves of Europe are separated by a chasm of several hundred years.

In the West, you have the individual with his clearly defined rights, duties, and responsibilities, a system of values that has crystallized over the centuries; in short, a system with all the attributes of a civic form of life.

Alternatively, in the East, there are feudal traditions that were eliminated only through decades of socialism. For the modernization of Eastern Europe did not take place on the basis of civic values. In our region, the citizen “arrived on the scene too late and left it too early”. And the 27 years that have since passed have proved too short a period for us to bridge that profound chasm. At school we did not learn about polyphony, about tempering views, or the psychology of the individual. Nor did we learn the fundamentals of self-knowledge, and this has made us unable to devise realistic plans. One day we have delusions of grandeur, the next we are plunged into a deep depression. Instead of confronting the past, we eschew the problematic periods of our history.

Of course, there are among us a few high-calibre individuals, but they are generally soloists. They go abroad, learn the elements of polyphony, and how to play in a symphonic orchestra. But here at home the members of the political elite would much prefer to suppress every dis-

sonant chord. They are interested only in the “music” that they themselves make.

These countries’ citizens, too, undergo changes. At first they talk among themselves and then, when a few years have passed, they talk only *to* themselves, like those who are deranged. The situation of the community deteriorates year by year, because in addition to ethnic homogeneity, other kinds of homogeneity also evolve. Within a few years the politicians in charge begin to consider even political heterogeneity as harmful. Why should one need any kind of otherness, when it is the case that all decent Hungarian folk think the same way, as they say.

In this topsy-turvy world it is, in any case, difficult enough to pay attention to even one current of thought. If there many people try to seize the helm, the ship of the state can easily run aground.

Between 1998 and 2006 the members of the MKP (the Hungarian Coalition Party), and since 2010 those of Most-Híd (Bridge), have been the deputies who have stood up in parliament when national issues “defining the future of the country” have been debated and continued to insist that “on this matter we hold different views”.

How did we move from the question of Trianon to the Visegrád Four? As noted, the goal of the discussions in Paris was the establishment of nation-states. But the rivalries between the nation-states gave rise to hatred and this hatred led to war. That was followed by a long period of Soviet domination, which sought to solve the issue by proclaiming the *homo sovieticus*. And finally there came 1989. The EU leadership told us: 1. The borders cannot be changed! 2. You could not defeat each other in any case! 3. Try and cooperate! Our leaders nodded in agreement: if those are the conditions for joining the EU, let us make common cause.

Make common cause — but against whom? The aim of the original Congress of Visegrád in 1335 was to create new commercial routes to bypass the common enemy, Vienna. In 1991, however, it was not the enemy that was common, but the goal. And those are two quite different things! In the struggle to achieve a goal there is no danger of being annihilated. The so-called “must” factor is missing. And when there is no “must” about something, that is all too evident.

The Visegrad Four, for example, all considered the acceptance of one another’s viewpoints as signs of weakness.

There could be no question of empathy or solidarity, for they each looked down at one another. For each, the only “real” relationship was having a Western partner. After they joined the EU, this was the policy that they wanted to continue.

Hubris and egomania, the search for loopholes, the wresting of advantage and, above all, the flaunting of the national ego. In the absence of the requisite self-knowledge, they wanted to retain for themselves a much bigger slice of the European cake than was their due. And if anyone warned them that this was disreputable, they muttered sheepishly or simpered vapidly.

Only when the refugees began streaming in were their true selves revealed, as their uncouth behaviour, their cruel and selfish expressions, and the squawking with which they strove to outdo each other horrified the West.

For them it was, naturally, the West’s behaviour that was hostile. And, within a few weeks, they had their common enemy. They laid their own minor squabbles to one side and refused to allow their concerted vehemence to be inhibited by the West and its appeals to all those human rights and constitutional courts. Why bother with those checks and balances when they hold such trump cards as corruption, the tax office, and the courts! And let’s not forget that the Visegrád countries’ leaders were elected to office by the will of the people, unlike those Brussels bureaucrats. And they made quite sure everyone/people were aware of this!

We know exactly what we want, these leaders say, so there is no scope for debate. That is indeed true, as the “decadent” Westerners will echo before long, since they are at a loss as to how to handle this curious, Eastern-type of democracy which has resulted from a cross-breeding of feudalism with socialism. The centuries of lagging behind can only be set aright if those affected want to catch up. But this way... This way leads straight back to Trianon. Then and there our affairs will surely take a turn for the better. Let’s just make sure those damned Slovaks (Czechs, Poles) understand: the Hungarians are always in the right! /

Translated by Peter Sherwood

The author is a Slovak psychiatrist and writer.



We are not a buffer zone

V4 can still play an important role in inspiring new countries or regional groups for democracy

RADOSŁAW SIKORSKI

The original function of the Visegrad was about convincing our partners from Western Europe that since we were able to cooperate with each other, we would also make constructive members of the European Union. However, the V4 also created a buffer for the more developed economies of the West from the social and political aspects of the former communist states once held under the sway of the Soviet Union; the V4 acted, in essence, as an Eastern porch to the EU.

From the very beginning, the issue of democracy has been of the utmost importance for the Visegrad Group, and when this fundamental component was challenged, we did not hesitate to act. This was exemplified by the suspension of Slovakia's active membership in the V4 when it was ruled by Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar.

Since our progress and determination during the years that preceded our accession was so focused, the V4 was presented as the paragon of successful transformation for the Eastern Partnership (EP). More generally, the EP was inspired by the Visegrad group, and — to protract the metaphor — it has taken on a similar functionality and purpose of another porch, to the now extended European house, showing Europe that multilateral cooperation is possible.

Until recently, there have not been any issues about the democracies of the Visegrad Group. So the fact that now two out of the four countries are being carefully observed by different international institutions is greatly weakening the power of the brand.

This brand, in my opinion, had become as equally strong as Benelux, and Western Europe had got used to the V4 states coordinating various statements (e.g., before European Council meetings). Nevertheless, we can still play an important role in inspiring new countries or regional groups, but we will not or should not if the countries in question do not share the same democratic values.

The reason for this hesitation is not our unwillingness to help burgeoning or struggling nations, but because we know all too well the amount of time and effort it takes to forge the foundations of modern, European-centred societies.

We spent eight years turning Poland into a democratic Mecca and to make Warsaw a home for numerous pro-democratic institutions; efforts which coalesced with a congress, established by Bronisław Geremek, on the 10th anniversary of the Community of Democracies. We managed to organise a new seat to ODiHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) — the most significant institution of OSCE — which supervises elections in countries around the world. Furthermore, I have had the good fortune to be the initiator of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED).

Poland has also become the place for dialogues and discussions on democratisation, housed in a centre in Natolin (a district of Warsaw). Moreover, the Polish Institute of Diplomacy organised trainings and workshops for diplomats especially from the EP countries. Long standing support for Bielsat TV for Belarus and assistance to Ukraine during EuroMaidan come in accord also with V4 priorities.

The brand we worked hard to create was priceless; it was one of the pillars of our co-operation with the USA, and the weakening of this brand is deteriorating our capability to shape the world.

When Poland held the presidency of the group for two years, which was during my tenure, we treated this responsibility with the utmost seriousness. Our country tried to take the position of group leader in the EU Council, so I personally visited the other capitals to find out what were their expectations from our presidency as such temporary leadership must always be based on serving the interests of the whole region and not just our own.

It is never going to be successful if our interests are simply contradictory. The divisiveness of the Russian issue is a great example of how the level of cohesion can support or mar a union.

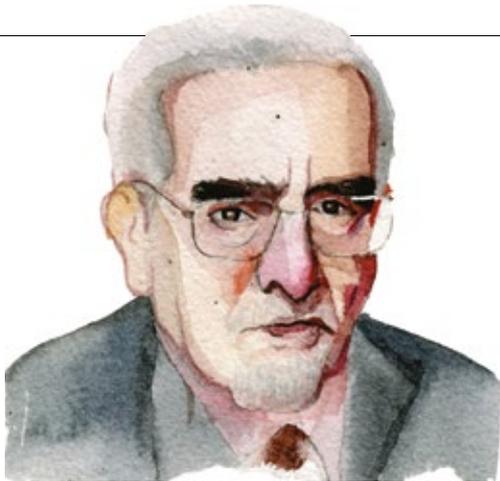
This situation displays how Poland is acting both like a medium-sized country and a country on the front, which will never accept some solutions imposed by Russia. But some other players tend to take the position and mentality of a smaller country, which just adjusts itself, in the name of economic interests, to whichever prevailing political actions might be in the wind.

That is why imagining the V4 as a united power and buffer of the EU, especially when concerning the relationship between Germany and Russia, lacks realism, and the situation

is quickly unfolding into a fiasco. In the end, the V4 will get weaker and none of our goals will be accomplished. /

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The abbreviated version of the text appears in the forthcoming book *V4 – 25 years*, edited by Vít Dostál, Wojciech Przybylski, Tomáš Strážay, and Zsuzsanna Végh.



MARTIN BŮTORA

What Visegrad was for?

The recent resurgence of geopolitics, in particular in this part of the world, is connected with Russia's aspirations to return to the stage as a global power, and accompanied by the historically highest levels of negative public opinion towards the West, which itself is being supported by the assertive anti-Western propaganda. It is a different picture from that of twenty-five years ago when the Visegrad group was born.

Then, there were two key geopolitical challenges lying ahead for the Central European leaders.

The first one was to complete the departure from the zone of Soviet supremacy, especially considering the fragile political situation in Moscow at the time and the unpredictability of any future developments. The common policy of the Visegrad countries contributed to the dismantling of the Warsaw Pact, opening the door for other solutions congruent with the new democratic regimes which emerged after the fall of communism.

The second challenge, expressed both officially and informally, was to fill the vacuum, to seek a firm political anchoring and security for its members in the Euro-Atlantic community.

While there have been controversies among the member states on how to achieve these goals — with periods of stronger and weaker Visegrad cohesion, cooperation, and a lack of ability to find a common purpose or to speak with one voice — the group has found favourable resonance in the West. This is due to the perception of it being a generally positive, sen-

sible and stable region, presenting a constructive alternative to the outburst of violence which occurred after the breakup of Yugoslavia.

To put it in a simplified way, while the North Atlantic Alliance was, in the famous words of its first secretary general, Lord Ismay, “to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down”, Visegrad served similar goals for Central Europe as NATO had for Western Europe: to detach from Soviet/Russian domination, including the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the abolition of the Warsaw Pact; to ensure a continued American presence in Europe and to enter NATO; and instead of the Germans, to keep “the demons of Central Europe” — aggressive nationalist populism — under control.

After its creation, the Visegrad group has been repeatedly involved, directly and indirectly, in attempts to influence the geopolitical architecture of its neighbourhood. The first action has proved to be a success: the three frontrunners in accession to NATO and the European Union — Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary — helped Slovakia, after the favourable political change in the 1998 general election, to accelerate its course towards integration. Secondly, in accordance with its wish to find its own place in shaping EU policies, the V4 has contributed to the pro-European moves in the Balkan countries, serving as a model for the transition to democracy, offering consultations and advice, and supporting their aspirations politically. Thirdly, a more ambitious engagement of V4 in promoting the Eastern partnership has yet to be realized, though progress has been made. And fourthly, although the Visegrad countries differ in their views about the nature of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and on methods and tools of help and

support, all of them have been trying to contribute to positive developments in Ukraine.

As for the behaviour of Visegrad countries concerning the recent crisis caused by migration, even if at first sight there does not appear to be any immediate relevant geopolitical consequences, it can weaken their position in coping with future challenges, uncertainties and threats. Indeed, for many European partners of Visegrad in the European Union, it has been a surprise to see these countries and most of their leaders taking a tough stance on issues of migration. It was not about the rights or wrongs of the criticisms expressed by their politicians who argued, for instance, against the disputed EU quota system intended to redistribute asylum seekers among all member states. It was rather about the lack of solidarity in times of emergency as well as a persisting mentality still widespread in Central Europe. The attitudes and policies by official representatives were accompanied by rhetoric in social media based on hysterical dramatizations of security risks produced by migrants, especially those coming from Muslim countries, who were depicted as possible perpetrators of terrorism and criminality.

There are three possible problematic areas which could stem from the V4's attitude towards the migration crisis. First, it does not strengthen their positions in shaping future EU policies: with attitudes and behaviour a limited perspective, it is difficult to imagine how these countries could promote their national interests and priorities within the EU.

Secondly, while it is appropriate to talk about the legitimate concerns of ordinary people over migration issues, anti-migrant sentiments and fear disseminated by officials can appear counterproductive. In times of future crises, politicians might find the public marked by hostility towards otherness, and when this is coupled with a lack in self-confidence, the effects could result in being less willing to seek win-win solutions, or worse being distrustful towards European values as well as towards the potential of European and global institutions to master huge problems.

Thirdly, there is one country encouraging — both openly and secretly supporting — fragmentation, nationalism, and Euroscepticism within the EU in efforts to undermine the Union's capacities to act. It is the Russian Federation — and any steps undertaken by the EU members that are in accordance with this Russian goal should be closely watched and discouraged. /

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The abbreviated version of the text appears in the forthcoming book *V4 – 25 years*, edited by Vít Dostál, Wojciech Przybylski, Tomáš Strážay, and Zsuzsanna Végh.



JACQUES RUPNIK

Perhaps it would be helpful to remember that the collaboration came about immediately after the fall of the Communist regimes, and that it was forged with the democratic ideals, aspirations and leadership of the former dissidents in the late 1980's. It also represented a strong opposition to nationalism which had stemmed from that great lesson of Central European history: nationalism had been the poison that had prepared the ground for the demise of democracy in the region. And thirdly, there was a European dimension — the common goal was to join Europe, to create a new Central Europe while simultaneously integrating it with the broader European project.

That was the initial goal and I need not over-stress the fact that it did not flourish once the early "leadership" in Eastern Europe associated with the democratic changes of 1989 was removed. Particularly harmful to the Visegrad idea was the breakup of Czechoslovakia and Czech politics, in general, under Vaclav Klaus. He was the Prime Minister at the time and was extremely sceptical, to put it mildly, towards Central European cooperation because he thought it would delay us in the march towards the West. For him, the only thing that would be worthwhile would be CEFTA — the Free Trade Association. And indeed, it was not easy to reinforce Central European cooperation when you have Czechoslovakia — the state in between Hungary and Poland — disintegrating. Regardless of these troubles, the project, on the whole, has survived and has been probably the most coherent and successful incarnation of the Central European idea in recent history. If we consider the EU accession of the V4 (2004) as the main goal of the cooperation, in the subsequent years many people thought that the Visegrad Group suffered from a lack of purpose. After all, why would you maintain such a regional grouping once the mission was accomplished? Nonetheless, there were a number of reasons why the cooperation continued, and, more recently, there has been a revival of the idea,

What is alive and what is dead in the Visegrad project?

but coupled with this resurgence are the factors that have challenged the existence and cohesion of the Visegrad Group.

The challenges to Visegrad cooperation resulted from two successive predicaments: first in the form of the economic crisis and then the Ukrainian crisis. Unearthed by the resulting quandaries of the economic crisis, the countries of Central Europe discovered their common vulnerability to energy dependence vis a vis Russia. While it did create a positive incentive to get in line with the European energy strategy, more generally, this situation was just one aspect of Europe's economic and financial crisis. On the eve of the EU summit of 2009 — a summit devoted to coming up with solutions to the crisis — the Czechs were taking their turn as President of the Council of the EU and were supposed to make Visegrad proposals for dealing with the crisis. However, in the preparatory meeting, conveyed by the Prime Minister Topolánek, it became apparent that there would not be anything resembling a “common” approach. Essentially, the four Visegrad countries took distinct perspectives reflecting the needs and situation of their individual countries and not that of the region as a whole. The Poles were able to really deny the existence of the crisis because they were the only country with continued, positive growth. The Hungarians were terrified of the situation; their own Prime Minister asking for a “Marshall Plan” for Eastern and Central Europe. In contrast to this, the Czech Prime Minister feared that such a plan would reinforce the idea that Europe is still divided: reviving, in essence, the spirit of Yalta. Perhaps most striking was the response of Prime Minister Fico of Slovakia, who at the end of the meeting suggested that a united, common response was unnecessary because the situation in Slovakia was “thousand times better” than in Hungary. To understand Mr. Fico's statement for no solidarity with its Central European neighbour requires a historical perspective where Slovakia was, for a thousand years, a marginalised part of the Hungary... Obviously, with this set of circumstances, the Visegrad cooperation failed to deliver.

Then the second test came with Ukraine — with the Euromaidan, the annexation of Crimea and the destabilisa-

tion of Donbass by Russia. Here again you would have expected a common Central European response — given that those countries of CEE share the relatively recent experience of domination by Soviet Russia. Though again, nothing like that happened. The Polish government responded very firmly and was engaged in the process of dealing with the Ukrainian crisis. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the Orban government in Budapest had a much more “mild” response, and did show some understanding, if not empathy, for the Russian need to protect any Russian-speaking minority. Orban himself wanted to secure rights for the Hungarian-speaking minority in Ukraine. This sympathetic notion was further exemplified by the signing of a deal to have a nuclear power plant built in Hungary by Russia. At the Globsec meeting of the Visegrad Prime Ministers, Orban even said that there was not much difference between the democracy in Kiev and that in Moscow. Trapped in between the Polish and Hungarian options were, as always, the Czechs and the Slovaks, who both rejected the annexation of Crimea, but also did not want to pursue any sanctions. So here too, the Central Europeans could not produce a unified response.

A conclusion that one could derive from these situations is that Visegrad is good for fair weather cooperation — it works well when you are focusing on the accession to European Union, when you have shared goals to cooperate on. When crises come — like the economic crisis or the Ukrainian crisis — the divisions of Visegrad become far more obvious. So one could have concluded, like Edward Lucas did in *The Economist* that the Ukrainian crisis could have shown the importance of the Visegrad but instead revealed its irrelevance. That was an extreme statement, which in a way was immediately disproved in the following year, 2015, by the convergent Visegrad positions in response to the migration crisis. The group's importance was shown in their unified opposition to the European Commission's suggestion of quotas for sharing the refugees as well as their very sharp criticism of the policies — not just of the Greek but also the German government — in undermining Schengen. Without discussing the merits of the

whole affair, this was the moment when the Visegrad came together. Although to the great disappointment of the other three members, Poland did briefly defect from that unity under the pressure from the President of the European Council — who happens to be the former Prime Minister of Poland, Donald Tusk — and looked for a more compromising position. But that did not last. After the election of last October with the victory of PIS, the Visegrad is once again united in response to the migration crisis and, I would say, in opposition not just to EU quotas but basically to the whole policy followed by Germany since last summer.

And again, the merits of this case would make for a separate discussion, but it is interesting for me that suddenly Visegrad has been united on a new basis — very different from the one that started the experiment twenty-five years ago. Then, the Central Europe cooperation was born from the dissident movement, as mentioned above. This can be exemplified by Vaclav Havel's speech to the Polish Sejm in January 1990, where he gave the basic outline of what the Visegrad cooperation could or should be. It was clear that Central Europe would lean Westward, trying to distance itself from its the geopolitical entanglement with the East and with Russia in particular. What we are seeing now in the migrant crisis is that suddenly Central Europe is back, Visegrad is back, but now it is distancing itself from Western Europe, from the EU and from Germany in particular on these questions involving migrants and borders. Visegrad has, rightly or wrongly, adapted this position believing that firstly, Germany's policy is unsustainable and secondly, that the German threats to withdraw EU funds from the countries of Central Europe should be resisted. While there is Germany trying to fix an agreement between Greece and Turkey to slow down the flow of refugees, you have the Central Europeans proposing to build a stronger fence on the border with Greece.

To make matters more complicated, it is now raising — in the eyes of Western Europeans — numerous questions about the state of democracy in the countries of Central Europe. Until the past few months and years respectively, Poland and Hungary had always been regarded as the successful democratic transitions. Today, they are considered to be basket cases where so called illiberal democracy is being promoted, undermining the rule of law and the separation of powers. Basically, they are distancing themselves from the European union, from the most fundamental constitutional principles. If this trend were to continue, it would be very unfavourable for both the Visegrad and the EU because you would have a reinforcement of the divisions within the EU — on the issues of migration and border security — as well as the adoption of very strong nationalistic and sometimes xenophobic ideals.

There is also a second gesture of Visegrad distancing itself from the EU as was symbolized by Kaczyński and Orban meeting in the Tatras. Dissidents used to meet in the Tatras to prepare for one day, perhaps, democracies, and now we have an opposite symbolic moment — Hungarian and Polish leaders are meeting in the Tatras again, but to strengthen a model of democracy which is at odds with European mainstream. These are all rather worrying trends, but nothing is definitive, everything is in a state of flux and one could say, that we have been through other tensions and crises before. I would accept such an argument if we did not see that Europe is confronted with several crises at the same time and several dividing lines:

the continued and resilient North-South economic division with Greece again as a key symbolic player, and we now have a West-East division with migration and borders on one hand and illiberal democracy on the other.

These kinds of partition create tensions and perpetuate negative perceptions. Not only is there recrimination against the EU and particularly against Germany in Visegrad, but we also have a reciprocal negative perception of Central Europe. Here in lies the novelty of the situation, at the very moment that Visegrad is “back in business”, the editor of *Der Spiegel* giving an interview talking about the East-West division as a contrast of authoritarian, xenophobic East with the bastion of democratic values in the West. In a similar tone, Munchau, in *The Financial Times*, suggests that perhaps enlargement to the East was premature, and perhaps a big mistake. When I hear these kinds of responses, which I do not share of course, I am worried that the comeback of the Visegrad is happening under a negative umbrella. What used to be seen as the positive discovery of Central Europe, as part of a greater European liberal project, is now positioning itself as a region abandoning the values it had previously supported. Some are cheering Visegrad's return; I am afraid this homecoming is not under the most favourable auspices and this at least should be a matter of thought and perhaps for action for intellectuals and people in civil society, who want to return to the initial inspiration of the Visegrad project. /

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The abbreviated version of the text appears in the forthcoming book *V4 – 25 years*, edited by Vít Dostál, Wojciech Przybylski, Tomáš Strážay, and Zsuzsanna Végh.



*Are the ideas on which
the Visegrad
Group was
founded still relevant
in today's European politics?*

DANIELA SCHWARZER

The Visegrad-group was formed in the 1990s with multiple objectives. One was to eliminate the remnants of the communist bloc in Central Europe, another to overcome the historic animosities between Central European countries. But policy makers also believed that it would be easier to accomplish a social metamorphosis and to join the European integration process as well as NATO in a joint effort. So, two years after the end of the Cold War, the Visegrad group was as much about the transformation towards Western liberal democracies and functioning market economies as it was about enhancing the security and long-term stabilization of the region by integrating it with the existing Western structures. While geography and joint history was one factor driving regional cooperation, another one was the proximity of ideas of the then ruling political elites which were determined to drive their countries' transformation.

Today, with the four founding countries being EU and NATO members for more than a decade, Western integration has been formally achieved. For a long time, the achievements of the post-1989 elites to transform their countries and integrate them with supranational and multinational structures, despite only just regaining their full national sovereignty, were hailed as historical successes. With regards to Hungary in particular — and more recently Poland — suspicions have surfaced whether these new democratic and liberal societies have indeed planted roots deep enough into the soil of the former communist states; indeed, doubts have been cast on their very stability and continued existence. While the founding idea of Visegrad — to stabilise Western liberal societies and democracies — remains an important and fundamental value

in itself, a dispute has arisen whether the current governments of these two Visegrad countries still fully subscribe to their own former goals and to what extent the citizens follow their leaders' questioning of the basic principles of Western liberalism. Although there is a proven record of the transformative power associated with EU accession, the Union is so far not effective in bringing member governments that deviate from these principles to re-engage in the process. This also shows that in some societies the consolidation of democratic norms and institutions is a much lengthier process than in others.

In terms of geostrategic orientation towards the West, the current Hungarian government does not seem to be aligned with the other three partners of the Visegrad group. While the EU and their transatlantic partners have entered into a conflict with Moscow over its efforts to undermine the Western rule-based security order and its violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, Budapest still entertains a close relationship with Moscow though it does uphold the sanctions against the regime.

With regards to the migration crisis, the Visegrad countries' decision to close national borders and refusal to join the quota system for the relocation of refugees has brought about the question of whether the V4 understands itself as a regional subgroup that functions to strengthen the EU and its values, or whether it undermines the core principles and joint solutions of the union. The lack of involvement of the Greek government in the decision led by Austria and involving part of the Visegrad group to lock-off the Balkan route demonstrated a low-level of awareness for the fragile nature and strategic importance of regional cooperation. As Greece was invariably going to carry the burden of the decision to lock-off the Balkan route, the basic principles of mutual responsibility, solidarity and fairness seemed to be set aside under the perceived pressure to find quick national solutions.

Thus, the migration crisis has highlighted the need and importance for all EU member states to revisit and rebuild a shared understanding of their joint principles, to exemplify European solidarity, to define which expectations are acceptable and which too burdensome for our European societies and to underline when it is necessary to take external action as well as to support internal mechanisms.

Cooperation between small groups of countries, such as the Benelux, the Nordic Council, the Baltic Sea Cooperation or the Franco-German cooperation, can be effective. Fostering cooperation with a more limited scope between countries at regional levels is likely to gain importance in a European Union, a union that is becoming more and more differentiated. It is most effective when policy makers share norms and interests. When regionalism has had a broader, more positive impact on the EU as a whole, it has been necessary for the participating countries to develop wide-ranging initiatives to gain traction with a larger group of countries, or at least to not violate their interests or undermine the principles which the EU is based on.

Currently, when challenges from the outside as well as within are on the rise (e.g., Russian initiated destabilization, terrorist attacks, and the growing inequality that may undermine societal cohesion), the importance of any effort to strengthen the EU and mutual understanding of member states cannot be overemphasized. The Visegrad group can play an vital role in sharing Central European perspectives in a constructive trans-European dialogue that has yet to be fully developed. /

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KRZYSZTOF SZCZERSKI

The European Union fails when it starts being ruled by either a coalition of empires or by one dominating central body. Indeed, the strength of Europe should come from embracing different opinions and mentalities. Provided that the model of the EU is consensus based, it is in many ways obvious that the perspective of the Visegrad Group should play an important role in moulding the European point-of-view.

The first reason is that today Europe needs the opinions of countries and societies like Poland, which on one hand is pro-European since the Poles want to actively be part of the EU and support the notion of European unity, and on the other hand, are sensitive about preserving their right to make decisions which reflects a more traditional vision and concept of their national identity. In this Central European country, there is a layering of ideology — Poles believe their pro-European stance can be combined with the maintaining of one's own identity, that the two are not mutually exclusive. This is the phenomenon currently at work in Polish society; a lesson which, if learned, can have numerous benefits especially with regards to the vying ideologies at work nowadays in Europe.

Secondly, the Visegrad countries need motivation to encourage social cohesiveness and the still much needed development. At the same time, they present a political challenge for Europe as it exceeds and shakes up the traditional north-south division where the latter are more socially integrated and the former more monetarily driven, each having their own areas to develop in.

Thirdly, the central part of Europe is naturally obligated to make the rest of the continent familiar with the situation beyond the eastern border of today's EU. Without the V4 countries, Europe would still be discussing the migration situation on the southern border but perhaps not the equally ignitable situation to the East. Our role is crucial as we need to show Europe how to observe and understand our larger environment. Therefore, the more competent the V4 is on eastern matters, the more opportunities we should have to

V4 has opportunities to mould European views

mould European views, and such competence simply comes from territorial proximity and our feel for local ecosystems.

And finally, our part of Europe should mutually cooperate instead of block provisions or policies based on our own individual interests. We will only be able to support European unity once we create one regionally. Sadly, Central Europe today is much too divided and lacks integration. One way to achieve this would be focusing on shared financial perspectives; the last cash injection from the EU should be invested in building and broadening the networks between our countries (e.g., transport and telecommunication) as well as coordinating efforts on environmental and energy policies. These functional collaborations would most likely spur an ideological one as well, and only then will we be able to have something to contribute to Europe, the unity we have not yet developed.

When looking at European policies within the European Union, it is rare for a group of countries to share similar views in many areas. It cannot be said about France, nor Germany, nor Italy. But when the issue was clear, say regarding energy security, the countries of the V4 agreed that the needs were the same for everybody. That being said, admitting that we all should diversify our sources of energy supply is one thing, but having each country focus on regional capabilities and not their own specific resources is another. This is why I have been discussing combining our energy infrastructures. Such a move could aid in social modernization, a bonding which could have a similar power to the Internet. All of these initiatives should be implemented for the progressive develop of Central Europe.

As a barometer for our current sense of togetherness, I will put forward a few questions: who do we call first when there is a problem in Central Europe? Do we call each other or the countries of the West? Or maybe the countries of the East? The answer tells us much about the political proximity and trust of the region. Then there is also a question of economic migration within the EU. Why does the migration always happen from the East to the West? Why do such flows practically never happen between our countries? The obvious answer is that the western reality is better than our own, which is also why short distance migration is not massive in the re-

gion of the Central Europe. To be succinct, we find it difficult; there are little to no transport connections, pay is lower and we generally tend to see each other as economic competition rather than a single market of Central Europe. When Poles hear stories that a German person is moving to Slovakia, they say Poland lost and Slovakia won. Nobody thinks that Central Europe has gained a potential investor. We are unable to think through the perspective of a Central European (i.e., when considering the labour market or industrial production). We need to urgently foster this mentality as it would create a more comfortable and advantageous position for us in the overall European market. /

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ILLUSIVE INTERMARIUM

Why Jarosław Kaczyński's
borrowed dream of a neo-imperial political project
is memorable, but remains unattainable

HENRY FOY

Jarosław Kaczyński, the most powerful man in Poland, has not one but three busts of Józef Piłsudski in his simple, whitewashed office in a drab-looking commercial building in central Warsaw. From there, he pulls the strings of the European Union's sixth-largest economy.

Maps, paintings, Polish iconography, and a photograph of Pope John Paul II draw the eye, but it is Piłsudski's image that lingers — an historical Polish hero and strongman respected and admired by a modern political titan with an impeccable knowledge of history.

And so it is perhaps not unexpected to see Kaczyński's government embark on some historical re-enactment with Piłsudski in mind.

It has been just over eight months since Poland's then newly-elected President Andrzej Duda — hand-picked by Kaczyński — began his tenure as head of state with a proposal lifted straight from the inter-war leaders' playbook.

"We should care for the improvement of the relations that became difficult, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. This is a big task to be fulfilled by us. I would like to take an active part in it," Duda said.

"I am thinking about [the] creation of the partner bloc starting from the Baltic Sea, and ending at the Black Sea and the Adriatic. We already have signals from the heads of the CEE countries that there is a will to meet all together and start talks about this idea."

Duda was not thinking, he was remembering: Piłsudski's intermarium — or Międzymorze in his native Polish, literally a geopolitical union 'between seas' — is not a new idea. Neither is resurrecting it. But Poland's government, led by the anti-Russian and eurosceptic Kaczyński, reckons now is a good time to dust it off once more.

His reasoning is not wholly incorrect. The explosion of the European migrant crisis over the past year and Brussels' botched handling of it has fired up anti-EU feelings across the continent, but most markedly in central and eastern Europe, creating a temporary sense of unified injustice and anger across the region.

Existential threats to the EU, such as the looming Brexit vote, the rise of eurosceptic political movements in core countries like France, and the still unresolved 'Greek issue' lend themselves to feelings of communality in the relatively homogeneous region. In times of strife, better to circle the wagons, so the thinking goes.

And the perennial threat of Russia — Piłsudski's original motive — still lingers on the eastern frontier of Europe. All good grounds, Warsaw reasons, for another shot at the idea.

The reaction from around the Visegrad Group and beyond has been lukewarm, and with good excuse. As with many past attempts by a member to drag the others in one direction, it raises more questions of divergence than points of unity.

And in this case, as ever, the region finds itself divided by the pushes and pulls of both Brussels and Moscow, Visegrad's

own Scylla and Charybdis with too narrow a space between for a competing bloc to navigate.

All around the region, diplomats complain that Kaczyński and his conservative Law and Justice party fail to grasp the two crucial aspects of Poland's value to its smaller Visegrad partners and allies in the wider region.

Firstly, its others are happy for Poland to be the region's point of contact, but not a domineering leader. Negotiating with Britain on shared concerns such as migrant benefits, for example, is acceptable; taking the helm of a defined CEE 'intermarium' caucus on the other hand is beyond the pale.

Secondly, and more importantly, V4 relies on Poland to be a powerful representative in the rest of the EU — Visegrad's mouthpiece and listening ear at the top table.

Warsaw's influence in Brussels, its clout in Paris and London, and most importantly its access in Berlin are hugely important to Budapest, Prague, and Bratislava.

While Viktor Orbán in Hungary, and increasingly Robert Fico in Slovakia, snipe at Brussels and attempt to stir up rebellion, they do so safe in their knowledge that on the major issues that matter, Visegrad remains in the loop thanks to the Polish connection.

As such, moves by Poland to neglect or even shun its EU relationships in order to strengthen and promote its CEE bonds are counter-productive.

"The value of Poland is in the volume of the voice it has in the major European cities," says one senior Visegrad diplomat, who declined to be named.

"[Law and Justice] do not seem to realise that turning away from Brussels and trying to make Visegrad a more powerful block could have the opposite effect," the diplomat said, adding that Prague in particular has begun developing other channels through which it could strengthen its communication with Berlin since Kaczyński's party came to power in November.

At the same time, Poland's stance towards Russia, and the inherent anti-Moscow narrative of the intermarium, raise further objections in today's central and eastern Europe.

True, when faced with a stark choice, such as in the years preceding the fall of communism in 1989, in the EU accession that led to membership in 2004, and recently with the decision to unanimously support sanctions against Moscow over the invasion of Crimea, the region has turned west. But many are not prepared to fully turn their backs.

Orban's Hungary enjoys the economic fruits of their leader's warm relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Czech President Miloš Zeman's pro-Russian bent and Fico's sympathy on certain issues with Moscow are incompatible with what Warsaw's foreign policy dreamers propose.

And while the Baltic states would rally behind a Polish initiative to strengthen the region's resolve against Russia, how would a Piłsudski-esque intermarium in 2016 deal with the Ukraine? Leaving Kiev out in the cold would seriously undermine the intentions of the scheme, but inviting it in poses all number of complications.

Certainly, aspects of the intermarium dream make sense, and are already showing promise.

On the military front, Visegrad countries already cooperate in weapons purchasing, training, and exercises. LITPOLUKRBRIG, the joint Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian brigade, became operational earlier this year.

Initiatives such as the Polish-Slovak-Croatian project of national train companies to create a Baltic-Adriatic trade corridor are commendable, and the region has rightly embraced the intentions of the EU energy union to create cross-border pipelines and join up its energy markets.

Poland is right to be irked by some of the EU policies towards Russia. Berlin's insistence on pushing ahead with Nord Stream 2 and doubling its reliance on Russian gas is troublesome, as is Brussels' current stance of waving through the Gazprom-led project.

Germany's resistance to new NATO bases in Poland or other eastern countries predated reluctance in Washington, and is a constant irritant in the Ministry of Defence in Warsaw.

Yet Berlin is counter-intuitively Poland's best chance for making some form of intermarium possible. It is with German, and by extension European, support that Warsaw can make sure that the priorities and demands of the extended region are heard.

Kaczynski may think that Poland alone has enough clout to attract others to form a bloc around it. He may also think that a more strongly bound V4 protects it from both the east and the west. He is mistaken on both counts.

His personal grievances against Berlin — and to a lesser extent Brussels — are partly due to his party's domestic agenda of drawing on historical injustices to fuel its powerful nationalist message. They cloud his judgement.

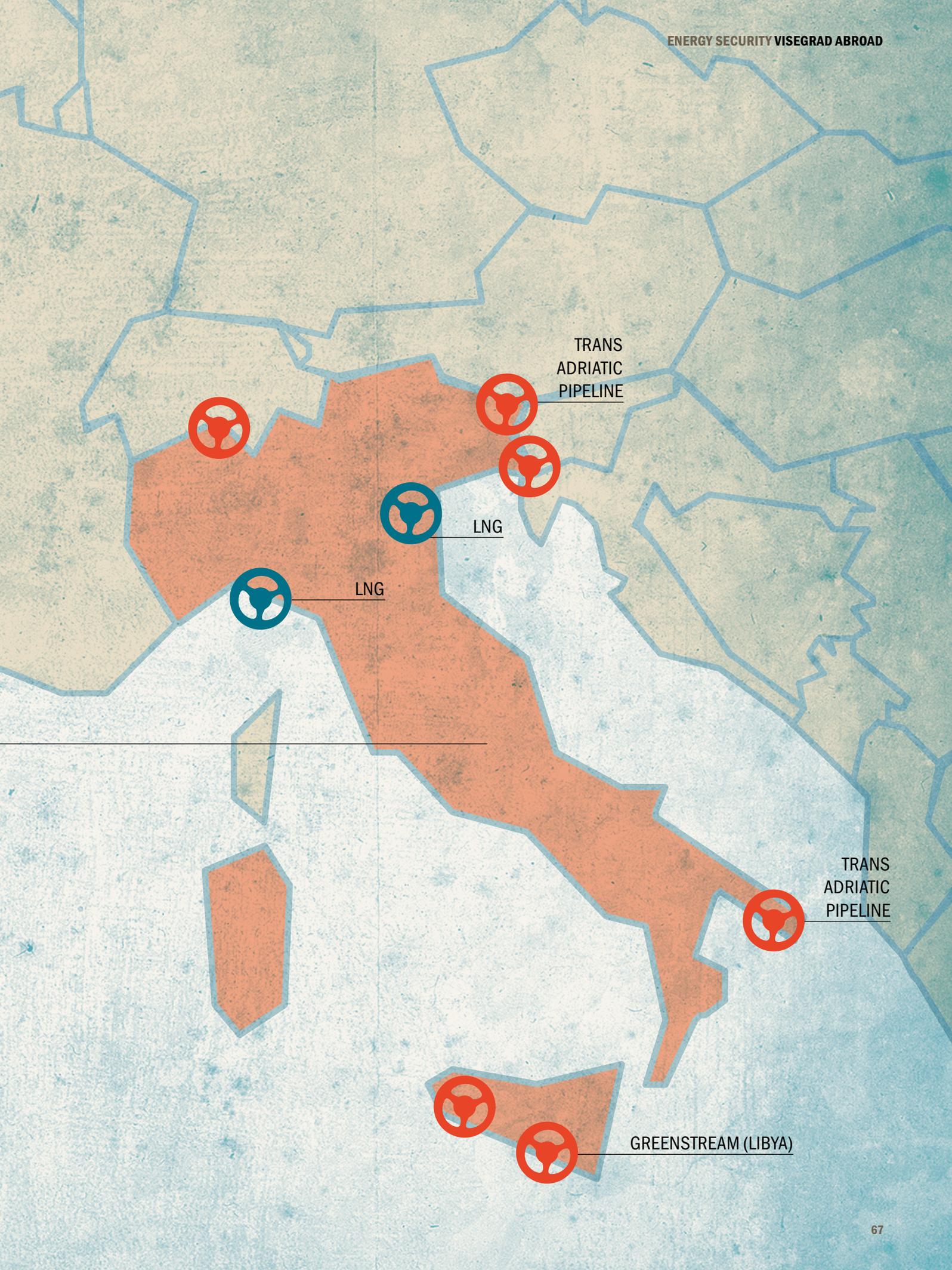
Poland should understand that snubbing the EU and its western neighbour makes it more, not less, vulnerable. Just as Hungary and Slovakia understand that throwing themselves into an anti-Russian bloc gives them fewer, not more options.

Just as Piłsudski's intermarium fell apart in 1920, Kaczyński and Duda's will fail today. Visegrad's 25 years of success has in part been due to its flexibility and ability to adapt. Most in the region still understand that. /

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THE ITALIAN ALLY IN THE V4 GAS SECURITY BATTLE

The Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi has aggressively challenged Angela Merkel's European economic policy.



TRANS
ADRIATIC
PIPELINE

LNG

LNG

TRANS
ADRIATIC
PIPELINE

GREENSTREAM (LIBYA)

MATTEO TACCONI

Flexibility, banking union, and Eurozone governance are the main friction points between the two leaders. Renzi claims that Europe has to cease its austerity period and focus on growth. While Merkel continues to believe that budgetary discipline is still key to recovery, her stance is increasingly less firm.

Among the instruments Renzi is using to influence this disagreement, the Nord Stream 2 — the doubling of the Nord Stream pipeline which passes through the Baltic Sea to carry Russian gas to Germany — is receiving the most attention from the media. Italy is against the project, which Moscow and Berlin backed in September 2015, but Renzi’s objections are pointed at Germany rather than at Russia.

THE HIDDEN SIDE OF ITALY’S FIGHT AGAINST NORD STREAM 2

As seen by the Italians, Nord Stream 2 is incompatible with the Third Energy Package of the EU which regulates the foundations of the European energy market and competition. The new gas pipeline may go against the rules set by Brussels, but the Italian critiques of it are also bound to Italy protecting its national interests, even though this is admitted publically. “Italy aims at becoming a big European hub for gas distribution and is afraid that, thanks to Nord Stream 2, Germany could overtake it”, argues Nicolò Rossetto, an energy expert at the Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) a think-tank based in Milan.

When it comes to importing gas, Italy has a very multi-branched network. Authorities are currently investing funds so as to make entry points for gas imported from Russia, the Netherlands, Algeria, and Libya junctions to ensure reverse flow towards Central and Northern Europe. Among these interconnections, the one in Tarvisio, where the Russian gas arrives from the pipeline crossing the Ukraine, has increased its capacity and strategic role over the last few years, due to lower imports from war-torn Libya and Algeria, which both need to update their infrastructures. Between 2013 and 2016 Italy imported through the Tarvisio entry point between 26 and 30 bcm of gas each year out of the 55–61 bcm imported per year

in the same period. Since both Nord Stream and the doubling of the pipeline downgrade the role of the Ukraine, a traditional link between the Russian gas producer and European consumers, Italy sees them as detrimental to Tarvisio and the country’s ambition to become a European hub for gas distribution.



A DIVERGENT CONVERGENCE BETWEEN ROME AND V4

Italy and the V4 countries share a similar view of Nord Stream 2. Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia also contested this German-Russian project, which they saw as contesting the rules set by the Third Energy Package. In mid-December 2015, the V4 group expressed a common position on Nord Stream 2, asking the European Commission to ensure “full compliance of any new infrastructure with EU legislation”. A further criticism shared by Italy and the V4 countries concerns the usefulness of Nord Stream 2. “With the current demand of natural gas in Europe, which decreased during the economic crisis, there is no need to add more infrastructures to the existing ones”, stresses Rossetto. However, Gazprom claims that Nord Stream 2 is essential due to the reduction in gas production unfolding in Northern Europe.

Just as happens in Italy, Nord Stream 2 undermines some national interests in the V4 countries. Hungary and Slovakia, for example, do not want to lose privileges related to the pipelines connecting the Ukraine with Europe which pass through their territories. However, Poland does not make such calculations. For Warsaw, Nord Stream 2 is a huge blow to the strategic role of the Ukraine, thus leaving Central Europe under the Kremlin’s influence, compromising the European balance.

The Italian objections to Nord Stream 2 seem more aimed at Germany than at the Kremlin and Gazprom. In this respect, an additional criticism Renzi addresses to the German chancellor is that doing business with Moscow is now unfair. Renzi claims this is due to many countries in Europe being adversely affected by the Kremlin retaliation to the sanctions against Russia affecting European agribusiness. In other words, Italy views the Baltic pipeline as a way for Germany to bypass the European embargo, which Rome would like to revoke. The Italian business community is exerting pressure

on this point, complaining about the downfall of its export to Russia (since 2013, 10 billion € were lost in the Italian-Russian interchange). Although Renzi knows that there is no chance of reaching this goal now, he still asked Brussels to have a serious political discussion about it.

Italy's position could be shared by two V4 countries, Hungary and Slovakia, which are uncertain about the current business impasse with Moscow as well, but not by Poland, which is ready to accept the economic consequences of the embargo against Russia in order to block any Russian revanchism. In Rome, the Russian matter is less crucial. Moscow is perceived as an essential economic partner rather than as a strategic menace. To summarize, Italy and the V4 countries are in concord about opposing Nord Stream 2 on technical and legal levels, but in regards to the Russian-Ukrainian war and the overall approach to Russia, some differences emerge.

WITH EUROPE, RUSSIA OR ON ITS OWN? WITH WHOM DOES ITALY STAND?

Italy also wants to stop Nord Stream 2 in retaliation for the economic damage it suffered from the ditching of South Stream, a Gazprom gas pipeline that was supposed to transport Russian gas at Vienna's doorstep by passing through the Black Sea via the Balkans. Eni, the main Italian energy group, was one of the business partners of the consortium in charge of the offshore part of the pipeline. After the shelving of the project, many business deals vanished, among them those of Saipem — a firm owned by Eni and specialized in building energy infrastructures — which is now facing a financial crisis.

The Italian press published reports about a phone call between Renzi and Putin in which the Russian president would have offered some contracts to Saipem within the Nord Stream 2 project as a form of compensation. "It looks like journalistic ins and outs. This is not the way you let your country firms win tenders and I do not think Renzi wants to exchange a 'yes' to Nord Stream 2 with a contract to Saipem", states Alessandro Minuto Rizzo, a former Italian diplomat and Deputy Secretary General of NATO who is currently the head of NATO Defense College Foundation, a research centre in Rome.

To summarise, Italy challenges the Third Energy Package to emphasize how Nord Stream 2 is against the European common good, but when opposing the pipeline, it is clearly pursuing its own national interest. Rome was a supporter of South Stream, a project that also went against the EU vision on energy. At the same time, the country is currently involved in the development of the Trans-Atlantic-Pipeline (TAP), a gas pipeline that will bring Azeri gas to the South-Eastern shores of Italy and which is included in the Brussels plan to diversify gas import in Europe. These positions encompass everything and opposite views.

On what side does Italy stand? "By and large, Italy is in favour of Brussels politics on diversifying import and creating a European energy market, even though it is not working towards this goal with perseverance", says Rossetto. "Italy, just like any other European country, looks at its interests of the moment. On Nord Stream 2 it has a position similar to the one Central European countries have, but it does challenge their view on the refugee crisis. At the same time, Renzi clashes with Berlin on European economic governance as well as on Nord Stream 2, but Italy and Germany have a similar approach towards Russia, even though Renzi is not a supporter of the sanctions while Merkel is. However, the German chancellor does not see any contradiction between the embargo against Russia and Nord Stream 2 since she views the latter as a private project and not as something promoted by the German government. "All of these inconsistencies are hardly surprising. After all, we live in a liquid society", reflects Alessandro Minuto Rizzo. /

The author is an Italian journalist writing on Central Europe and the Balkans.

ENERGY SECURITY

– what has been accomplished,
and what remains
to be done?

Illustration: Jagna Wroblewska



The Visegrad countries recognized the importance of decreasing their dependence on Russia for oil and natural gas and diversifying their supplies several years before their larger European allies.

MATTHEW BRYZA

While this thinking harmonized with Washington's strategic calculus, it was often at odds with the conventional wisdom coming from Berlin, Paris, and Rome. In the end, the EU energy security policy evolved toward that of the Visegrad Four's; but this shift occurred only after nearly a decade of belligerence from Moscow that included three cut-offs of natural gas to the Ukraine and the EU, and Russian military invasions of Georgia and the Ukraine.

When Russia cut natural gas supplies to the Ukraine and the EU on January 1, 2006, the Czech Republic's government and energy companies had already been working for ten years to reduce their dependence on Russian energy monopolies. The MERO-IKL oil pipeline, whose construction was inaugurated in March 1996 and completed in 2003, provided Central and Eastern European countries with access to global oil suppliers via the Transalpine Pipeline to the Italian port of Trieste on the Mediterranean Sea. Czech diplomats, during the Czech Republic's EU presidency, subsequently played a crucial role in negotiating an agreement to restore natural gas flows to Ukraine and the EU after Russia's second winter cut-off in three years, this time in January 2009.

Similarly, representatives of Poland's government and energy companies strategically worked together to reduce vulnerability to Russian energy supplies, even as larger European powers found it more convenient to view Russia as a "reliable energy supplier". In 2006, shortly after Russia and Germany announced their

Nordstream natural gas pipeline, which was to connect the two countries via the Baltic Sea, the then-Polish Defence Minister Radek Sikorski dubbed the project the "Molotov-Ribbontrop Pipeline". Beyond this tough rhetoric, Warsaw explored concrete countermeasures to protect against further strategic decisions on energy supplies taken above its head by Berlin and Moscow. Numerous theories were considered such as buying into a Norwegian natural gas field and extending the Norway-Denmark pipeline to Poland; however, this did not materialize. Another option was realized though which involved the building of a liquid natural gas (LNG) terminal in the Baltic Sea port of Swinoujscie. Meanwhile, with regard to oil, the Polish refining company PKN Orlen thwarted a hostile takeover bid—by a Russian entity—of its Mazheikiu refinery in Lithuania in 2008, against the backdrop of a suspicious fire and indefinite cut-off of Russian crude supplies.

In Slovakia, the government resisted a similarly hostile takeover of the Transpetrol oil pipeline by allies of Russian President Putin who had gained control of the major Russian oil company, Yukos, following the arrest of Yukos founder and CEO Mikhail Khodorkovskiy; the Slovak Government paid \$240 million in March 2009 to buy back Yukos's shares in the pipeline, following a protracted legal battle. More recently, Slovakia has been playing a crucial role in providing "reverse flows" of natural gas from the West to the East, supplying the Ukraine in an attempt to counter any threatened Russian cut-offs.

Finally, in late 2007, Hungary identified a strategic vulnerability that is only now becoming the focus of an EU energy security policy: insufficient north-south

interconnections of natural gas networks in Central and Southern Europe. Hungary's state-affiliated energy company, MOL, proposed the New European Transmission System (NETS) as a solution by unifying the regions' natural gas transmission systems to enable more liquid trading of natural gas, and thereby provide competition to Gazprom's monopoly. More recently, Hungary has joined Slovakia in establishing reverse flows of natural gas into the Ukraine.

These efforts by all four Visegrad countries laid a firm foundation for the EU's current efforts to establish a single and unified European energy market via the Third Energy Package, the Connecting Europe Facility, Projects of Common Interest and the Junker Fund.

However, more work remains. Strategic visions have blurred in recent years in the Czech Republic and Hungary. West-to-east flows of natural gas to the Ukraine via Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland must expand. And, Poland's new LNG terminal should become a centerpiece of a grand North-South natural gas supply network connecting the Baltic and Adriatic Seas to keep in-line with the NETS philosophy. This North-South corridor can help the Baltic states connect with the EU Allies' natural gas networks and end their status as energy islands, while replacing Russia with their key ally, the United States, as a major supplier of natural gas in the form of LNG. /

The author is former United States diplomat and Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council.

The abbreviated version of the text appears in the forthcoming book *V4 – 25 years*, edited by Vít Dostál, Wojciech Przybylski, Tomáš Strážay, and Zsuzsanna Végh.

A call for “multi-levelization”

Taking stock of Visegrad after 25 years

VÍT DOSTÁL AND ZSUZSANNA VÉGH

Anniversaries often bring contemplation about the *raison d'être* of an institution or cooperation: does it still have its initial drive or has it already faded away? They also serve as a good occasion for stocktaking and prompt us to see how far we have come. This question is no less burning on the 25th anniversary of the foundation of the Visegrad Group. If we can rely on the findings of the “Trends of the Visegrad Foreign Policy” project, a V4-wide survey conducted among 430 members of the four countries’ foreign policy communities, then the verdict is: not far enough.

The data gained from the survey tells us at first sight that the V4 is faring pretty well. The participation in the group is viewed as important (91% stakeholders agreed with such statement) and beneficial for pursuing national interests (87% thought so). Moreover, it seems that Central Europe is witnessing historically unprecedented harmony. Bilateral relations among the V4 countries are considered on average very good. On the other hand, the Czechs, Poles, Slovaks and Hungarians see as their primary partners mainly the global players — Germany and USA.

Despite this positive evaluation of the Visegrad Group, the stakeholders do not think highly of the actual achievements of the V4. In areas that are typically considered as core interests of the Visegrad cooperation, the general judgment of the surveyed experts is that the V4 has not been rather successful overall. Only 51.7% of stakeholders opined that the group has performed successfully in the area of energy policy, 43.6% held such a view about defense cooperation, and just 37.8% concerning the Eastern policy.

The Visegrad Group has built up its image thanks to cooperation in these areas. As new member states, the four countries were able to come up with interesting proposals at the EU negotiating table, since they utilized their unique experience and were driven by a strong determination to influence European politics. However, it seems that this consensus is

being shaken, as the post-enlargement togetherness is getting less relevant in the above-mentioned policy areas.

Energy security may serve as a good example to illustrate this. It is still high on the agenda of all four countries, but they have very different ideas of what it constitutes for them. Subsequently, it is very hard to develop strong regional positions, which could resonate in Brussels.

Indeed, the surveyed stakeholders consider the diverging national interests as the main obstacle to progress in the regional framework, as 62.5% of them answered so.

Thus, it seems that the original foci are gradually fading away. The Visegrad cooperation still binds us emotionally, but a closer look into individual policy areas does not offer a very rosy picture. Therefore, we have asked stakeholders, whether there is an openness to reform the framework and the content of the cooperation.

Stakeholders seem to be quite satisfied with the former. There is very low support for expanding the membership of the V4 and the foreign policy community does not consider institutionalization, which might (or might not) increase the effectiveness of the framework, desirable either — just 28.6% opted for the enlargement and 43.5% for the creation of a single secretariat.

Concerning the content of the cooperation, the picture is not clear. While a strong majority (77.5%) is in favor of opening up to new areas, stakeholders keep on returning to the same old policy sectors when thinking about the future focus. Energy still tops the proposed common agenda and, perhaps except for migration, no fundamentally new sectors have been suggested as focus areas of the upcoming years. Furthermore, apart from energy-related issues, views have been seriously divided on areas deserving more attention. Czechs favored energy policy, migration and security, Hungarians energy policy, Poles eastern policy and energy policy, and Slovaks energy policy and energy security, to single out only those which gained support from at least one fourth of the respondents.

All in all, despite the declared openness, it seems that stakeholders do not quite know what could be the new entry points for the regional cooperation. Could it be that over the last decade EU agendas influenced the V4 to such an extent that it limited innovative thinking among the main stakeholders?

If the desire is there to open toward new areas of cooperation but the communities that currently shape the agenda lack ideas, it is only logical to look for inspiration elsewhere. The starting point could be those NGOs, CSOs, schools, artists or students benefitting from Visegrad grants and scholarships who have been involved in the field of culture and education, the only sector of Visegrad cooperation that the majority of stakeholders (65.7%) actually deemed successful.

While cooperation among these actors does not bring immediate returns at the level of high-politics, this is where new ideas and messages, which could give a fresh impetus, are brewed. In fact, connections formed thanks to the success of this field contribute to good neighborly relations, strengthen regional identity, and in the end might be the very reason why the Visegrad cooperation is still perceived as an asset in all four countries, despite its low delivery in other sectors.

In this context, the main task of stakeholders in the higher echelons of the Visegrad Group should be to further increase support for the non-governmental dimension of the cooperation. Should we want the Visegrad Group to have several more years of meaningful cooperation ahead, the multi-levelization of the cooperation is now necessary.

Thanks to the activities of the International Visegrad Fund (IVF) in the past 15 years, good foundations have been laid for developing non-governmental cooperation in the region. Some core networks, e.g. in the field of policy research, have been established, and facilitate mutual understanding across the four countries. Nevertheless, there is much room for the encouragement and empowerment of a wider variety of actors to engage regionally in so far unexplored and unexploited fields.

While maintaining support in existing areas, more attention should be paid also to businesses (first and foremost SMEs), labor unions, young politicians, R&D centers, start-ups, social entrepreneurs and grassroots organizations. In short, to those who were so far not

V4 EXTERNAL PRIORITIES MIND MAP



Source: most frequently used words to describe V4 external priorities as appear in the upcoming book *V4 – 25 Years*, edited by Vít Dostál, Wojciech Przybylski, Tomáš Strážay, and Zsuzsanna Végh.

among the typical targets and beneficiaries. Supporting this dimension by helping them to find and create opportunities for cooperation could both give a new momentum to the V4, and could ground it in the societies while embracing ideas coming from bottom up.

Naturally, the IVF should play a key role in the effective multi-levelization of the Visegrad Group. In reaching out to actors belonging to more formalized groups, like trade unions or young politicians, the Fund's task would be easier and could even involve current stable partners to popularize the cooperation. At the same time, in order to attract actors beyond this scope, the Fund should increase its local outreach activities and maybe even expand its toolkit. For example, it could establish new fellowship

and exchange opportunities for young innovators or social entrepreneurs in the region.

By stepping up support for creative thinking and innovative cooperation at the non-governmental level, the Visegrad Group would not only be renewed internally, but would be more empowered to channel constructive and forward-looking ideas into the European debate, as well. After all, sending out a positive message from Central Europe is something we urgently need right now. /

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On the POLITICS of SLOVAKIA AHEAD

On the Politics of Slovakia ahead
of the EU Council Presidency and Possible
Scenarios for 2016–2017

INTERVIEW WITH VLADIMÍR BILČÍK

What will determine the EU Council Presidency of Slovakia that will begin on 1 July 2016?

Vladimír Bilčík: The biggest defining moment for the EU Council Presidency that we can anticipate so far, will be the UK referendum. There might be other issues and we should always be ready for the unexpected; things might happen in migration related issues; things can happen in our neighbourhood; Ukraine is very fragile. When it comes to external challenges and security issues what happens to Ukraine is of course very crucial, because it is our largest neighbour. We could see further problems with stability in the Middle East and North Africa, which can spill over into the Union at the time when we will be chairing the EU Council.

What may change in the Slovak strategy depending of the result of British vote?

There are basically two scenarios. It is going to be a tight schedule: we have the

UK Referendum on 23rd of June; on the 27th and 28th, we will have the European Council meeting in Brussels; and the Slovak government will adopt its priorities for the EU Council Presidency on the 29th of June. Depending on what the UK result is, you will have different dynamics in the European Council and further decisions.

If the UK says yes, we will go with original plan A and policy priorities that we can already identify. One of the greatest ones will be the EU budgetary question. The revision of the current financial framework until 2020 concerns all member states, but especially the ones that tend to receive more money than they put in, so it is an issue for Slovakia, for Visegrad countries. EU Council Presidency wants to cut a good deal, and create good atmosphere for negotiating a strategic outlook for budgetary issues post-2020. In terms of technicality, and also in terms of internal EU politics, handling this issue will be crucial.

If the Brits say no, and we should be ready that they may say no, then we'll have very different dynamics inside the EU. Just take negotiating budgetary questions which would of course go alongside negotiating a British exit. You would have to be very careful in terms of numbers. Should the Brits not be in the EU a few years down the road, you would have to account for specific amounts of money, which come from the UK and a number of British people who are in EU institutions. While these are technicalities, they have important political implications. In that sense, if the UK says no, you are going to have two European Council summits at the end of June. One is going to be: the Brits come in and say: we said no and we sit together for a little while and we acknowledge that, and of course 27 other countries meet together to discuss how to react.

On the day of a Brexit decision, we would begin to negotiate the terms of the exit. You would suddenly have a huge dividing line inside the existing Union. And this would of course be part of the dynamic of the EU Council Presidency.

How important this Presidency may be in terms of the process the whole European Union is undergoing right now?

The playfield is open in terms of what the Presidency's role would be after the UK referendum but a possible Brexit will not just affect Presidency's negotiation on EU budget but also on other policy priorities, like the deepening of the eurozone. Effectively, you have two camps in the EU — one camp especially in the Commission says if the Brits say no, it is a chance for the rest of us to push with deeper integration. Yet, the member states are much more divided. They may say, if the Brits say no, let us try to bring ourselves together and the 27 remain together but this is not the time for deeper integration. Politically, this latter camp probably holds an upper hand. If you don't know how to handle a Brexit, then other agendas are going to be overtaken by the focus on dealing with the Brits.

Another big external relations issue for the Slovak EU Council Presidency is giving China a market economy status. The EU has set a December deadline to decide. It is a very divisive issue. Even in the UK you have several camps, and the UK has been fairly open to granting China the status. Italy, however, is very tough on this. Increasingly, in the Visegrad coun-

tries there are problems in the steel industry that question a new status for China. Issues like this, which are strategically important for the external role of the EU, are probably going to be put on a backburner if the UK leaves. We are not going to touch them; we are not going to deal with them.

An interesting issue will be the TTIP negotiations. What do you expect?

Right now the ball is more in the Americans' hands. And the question is whether or not we will receive a deal by the end of President Obama's term. The TTIP is much more in the hands of the Commission than the Council Presidency, because that is a trade issue with a specific negotiating mandate for the Commission.

In contrast, granting a market economy status to China is a more an issue, which concerns the EU Council Presidency. Now, there will be agendas that I think Slovak Presidency will be able to handle, regardless of what the Brits say, like the digital single market, certain decisions on energy union, which is a security issue and concerns increasing energy efficiency and decisions with regards to pipelines. Here we have some sensitive issues, like Nordstream 2. But still the defining moment for the EU Council Presidency will be the UK decision. Coming back to security question for instance, a Brexit would also affect what happens to the EU Global Strategy on Unions's foreign and security policy. If the Brits say no, I think that the 27 should push it ahead but many member states may not share this view.

This will be the first time we will be addressing the question of possible EU shrinking. We always dealt with enlargement and deepening; we have never managed a [possible] shrinking of the Union. One of the basic reflexes of the Union in that case may be to try to be tougher; certainly with the Brits. There is likely going to be a strong sense of "let us preserve what we have among the 27".

Let's turn to the question of Slovakia's credibility in the EU — after the refugee crisis Bratislava's position has been criticised by many western partners.

Credibility is going to be very important. Much of the past few years have been defined by the public debate on migration, and the red line taken by the Visegrad countries has been tough, and perceived by some degree across the EU, across the institutions in Brussels. Also, in Germany, where the dynamics of the German-Slovak relationship have changed.

Migration is by now known as the main thing on the agenda of the Council Presidency. It is an agenda to which we kind of come to, without necessarily clear strategies how to deal with it. In the past reflexes have been very different across member states and, ultimately, it has been up to Germany and German decisions to lead on migration. However, the Visegrad countries have not been alone in their more self-centred reflex: let us try to protect what we had achieved — that is the Schengen especially — and let us try to protect the rules that we had agreed. The issue of migration became politically

sensitive in different societies, not just in Slovakia.

Now, it is good that we have just had elections in Slovakia; it is a good thing we have a new government. There are a couple of relevant things in the new governmental manifesto. One is Germany mentioned as a key strategic partner for Slovakia in the EU, apart from the neighbouring countries and the Visegrad group. There is a clear message here that all of us understand — the way we interact with Germany will be defining, not just for the future of Slovakia's position in the EU, but also for the future of the EU itself.

The second thing is the makeup of the government as a broad coalition. This is a coalition of centre-left parties with centre-right parties, plus you have the Slovak nationalists and Hungarians there, so it is really a very broad set of forces, but I guess what unites the parties is the traditional commitment to EU membership. And to prove this, it will be very important for Slovakia and Slovakia's credibility to show signals of a more positive attitude vis-à-vis migration in a run-up to the Presidency. /

The author is the head of the EU program at the Slovak Foreign Policy Association.



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BRAIN BAR



photo: Jędrzej Sokolowski

▲ Gergely Böszörményi Nagy at Res Publica Festival in Warsaw in June 2015

Design Terminal is a non-profit agency established in Hungary to support design, urban development, and innovation.

Situated in the very heart of Budapest, it offers a year-round business and cultural program for young challengers and entrepreneurs and was highlighted by Brain Bar Budapest, a festival of ideas. In 2014, Design Terminal was awarded the European Enterprise Promotion Awards by the European Commission.

INTERVIEW WITH GERGELY BÖSZÖRMÉNYI NAGY

What is Design Terminal?

Personally I consider it to be an experiment; a non-profit initiative to promote Central European, entrepreneurial talent at home and abroad. With both of our professional practices and transparency policy, we're always trying to become a benchmark for other hubs and offices.

In what ways have you influenced other institutions?

A few years ago, incubation of early-stage enterprises in design and technology was relatively rare and novel in Hungary. Now it's become a commonplace. There are market actors, academic institutions, and even state agencies with their

own accelerators, something unheard of until recently. Sharing good practices is especially important in our local Central European context, where entrepreneurial thinking is not so widespread. Having a positive impact on the institutions we interact with on a daily basis is certainly an inspiring development.

How important is Brain Bar Budapest in your activities?

We aimed at creating a long-haul intellectual journey and introducing a new quality of event in Central Europe. Design Terminal is only one of the founders; we have a wide range of friends, allies, and contributors behind the operation. It is truly a festival by the ecosystem, for the ecosystem.

How does the Brain Bar Budapest discussion impact the city?

Budapest is a human scale European metropolis. I believe its size, architectural heritage, and cultural density as well as its geographical location present opportunities for experimentation, which put it on the forefront of urban innovation. And this is crucial as the continent needs platforms for thought-provoking discussions. Debating ideas is a starting point for stimulating all that surrounds us.

What ideas from Central Europe are channelled through Brain Bar Budapest?

We will debate Earth and Space, robots and creativity, natural and artificial intelligence, economics and biology, knowl-

edge and information, the relationship between war and video games and, most importantly, the chances and challenges of a future-proof Europe: ideas and solutions to topics as far ranging as entrepreneurship to geopolitics and migration to gentrification. Perhaps a certain Central European outspokenness may result in bringing new solutions to the table with Budapest becoming a hub for fearless discussions.

Who is the Brain Bar Budapest target audience?

It is a festival, which implies that it should be enjoyable for many. We would like to create a sphere where different people can mingle: optimists and sceptics, geeks and nomads, statisticians and capitalists, industrialists and environmentalists. We want to create a space when we can form informed judgments about their colliding visions.

Who are your speakers?

This year our guests will include Chris Hadfield, the world's favourite astronaut and former Commander of the International Space Station. With us will also be the world-renowned British economist

Brain Bar Budapest is held in June in Budapest. New Europe 100 and Visegrad Insight are partners in the event.

and bestselling author Tim Harford, Santieri Koivisto, the creator of the legendary video game Minecraft, Californian philosopher Virginia Postrel, Future of Life Institute founder Viktoria Krakovna, and enfant terrible of the Republican Party Grover Norquist, along with another fifty extraordinary personalities. We're especially happy to welcome many of the New Europe 100 challengers in the program.

Do you plan to venture outside of Central Europe?

It's definitely one of our longer term plans, to make Brain Bar a format, a platform for community building, direct inspiration and knowledge exchange for talent, starting first in the neighbouring European borderlands, the continent's less privileged regions, from Belarus to the Ukraine, from the Balkans to the Caucasus. /

Gergely Böszörményi Nagy is the director of Design Terminal and New Europe 100 challenger.

NEW EUROPE 100



BEING CYNICAL THE ONLY WAY PATRIOTIC

IVAN KRASDEV

The first problem is the restriction of national sovereignty, and the simple solution would be to return to a sovereigntist view of politics and the state. In the beginning of the transition to the EU, people trusted Brussels much more than their own governments because they believed that Brussels was the ally of the people against the local corrupt elite. What changed is that Brussels is now perceived as the ally of the corrupted elite against the popular will.

The following two issues (the burgeoning resentment of the populous and migration and the unsettled and unequal position of the second generation of migrants) are linked, however indirectly, as Visegrad is not as homogenous a place as many pretend it to be.

Evidently, Poland has once again become an important country, and herein lies the problem—the success has incentivised people to give up more and more power to politicians while, paradoxically, still maintaining a general mistrust of politicians as a whole. Why are people not afraid that the government is going to dismantle, for example, judicial review?

I think the reasons behind this behaviour is a general resentment — people have started to believe that the separation of power is an excuse for politicians not to deliver. Accountability becomes nearly impossible because when shortcomings or missteps occur, politicians use a myriad of excuses (judicial, market, or larger European institutions) which they argue block their attempts at making effective progress.

From this point of view, the separation of powers, instead of being regarded as an instrument in the hands of the people against the elite, transforms into an alibi for the elites' inaction or ineptitude. This results in a strong anti-institutional sentiment, and therefore, people become uninterested in parties. This combination of factors has a unique influence on a much more active citizenship, based on participation (e.g., social networks); an influence which can lead to supporting the idea and desire for a strong leader.

This notion seems to be prevalent in the Visegrad, but even beyond the longing for a strong leader, the populace seems to want someone brazen, someone who is ready to cross borders and take a stance against political correctness. In fact, this very affronting nature is becoming something essentially important in itself.

Part of the resentment fostered by the above circumstances then spills over onto the new inhabitants of the country, specifically the second generation of migrants. What happened in Eastern Europe is that the transition came as two different forms of migration. One was individual — many people went there, but the other was the migration of the countries or cultures.

We are facing the classical problem of the second generation of immigrants, which basically sees the limits of integration. They start to become extremely sensitive since they are being treated like second-class citizens; regardless if there is a discourse about equality, they do not feel equal enough. So what was hope for the first generation turns into frustration for the second.

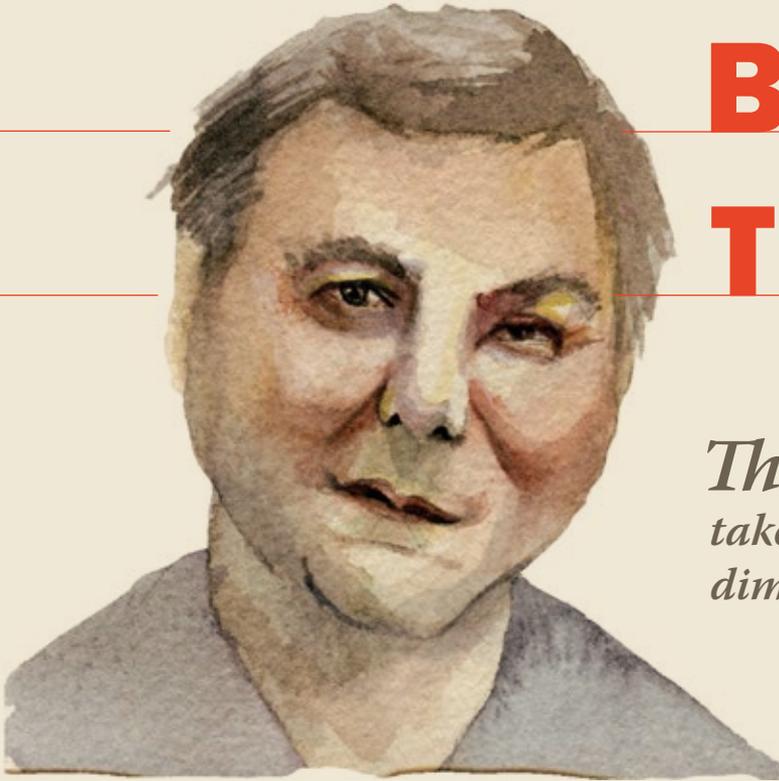


illustration: Jagna Wróblewska

BECAME TO BE

*The crisis, in my view,
takes form in several major
dimensions.*

A recent study "The Happiness Gap in Eastern Europe," a recent study made by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, shows, as a result of these collective feelings in Eastern Europe, we have what is called a "happiness gap". Central Europe is where there is a major gap between the economic performance of societies and the happiness of the people. I do believe that this type of understanding of the crisis is going to give an idea of what we are facing today.

I also believe it can be useful to compare crises in both Central Europe and Western Europe. The first one to consider was in 2003 when millions of people flooded to the streets in Western Europe protesting against the American military operations in Iraq. Here stemmed the idea to build Europe on an anti-American base, and it had a very strong moral leverage at the time. Linked to this notion was the growing democracies of Central Europe, and that our unique experience (dealing with communism and transitioning peacefully to democracy) afforded us a distinctive and at times better understanding of the world.

When the refugee crisis came — this is the second crisis — Central Europe thought and acted differently. Instead of striving to form bonds with their neighbours, they stressed a more individualistic approach. Concepts like solidarity were abandoned as if they were marred by the notion and discourse during the Soviet time. Being cynical became the only way to be patriotic.

Nevertheless, there are certain people in society, members of the cosmopolitan elite, for which this type of democratic promotion is still extremely important because preserving

the legacies of their own democratic effort is of the utmost importance. The situation in Central Europe is now closer to a union of states; however, these bonds would be more accurately called anti-solidarity than solidarity when it comes to this crisis.

We are going to go through a period in which to show your pragmatism you should show that you are narrow-minded and provincial because this fear of the cosmopolitan elites is an important aspect of our modern identity. It has both a historical and fearful basis since, in the past, these cosmopolitan elites used to be a part of foreign empires, where they were perceived to be the imperial elites. These were the elites of Vienna, Moscow, and Istanbul, and being referred to as "cosmopolitan" was part of their pride. /

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MARCHING DEMO

MATEUSZ FALKOWSKI

Shortly after the breakthrough of 1989 and the fall of communism
Grzegorz Ekiert and Jan Kubik, two
researchers studying civil society
in post-communist countries,
noted the emergence in Central
and Eastern Europe of “rebellious
civil societies”.

For these societies, public protest was perhaps the most important form of civil political activity. The elites of these countries feared street demonstrations, viewing them as a threat to reform, and the protesters were dubbed - particularly after Józef Tischner introduced Aleksandr Zinovyev’s term into the Polish language - *Homo Sovieticus*. However, rather than being a threat to reform, participation in protests was at the time an important factor in consolidating democracy.

This was so due to the fact that, as citizens, we had roughly two ways of influencing those in power: conventional ones that involved institutions, and non-institutional ones. The first way included participation in elections and referendums or activity in political parties or social organizations. The second meant responding to unsatisfactory government policies by participating in protests and social movements.

Right after communism, during the first decade of the Third Republic of Poland, Polish society was eager to protest and marching in the streets was the most natural form of civic engagement. But later these attitudes waned. Thereafter, social engagement remained relatively low, except of course for pockets of resistance that formed, for example, among the increasingly professionalized NGO sector. However, in general, Poles withdrew from the streets and grassroots social movements declined.

CRACY

Today, we may venture the thesis that in the last few years we have witnessed the reappearance of “protesting civil society”. In Poland, we saw discrete movements against lowering the school age and against ACTA. Further, there were conservative mobilizations after the presidential plane disaster in Smolensk, feminist mobilizations both pro life and pro choice and annual demonstrations, the nationalist march of 11 November and the Equality Parade, as well as a certain renaissance of urban movements — all these protests (very diverse and frequently advocating opposing stances) are testimony to the existence of more or less grassroots movements, which can be interpreted as proof of changes in politics and the relationship between society and the government.

However, it is also worth considering another aspect of the relationship between society and government expressed on the streets. Participation in demonstrations is after all not only a form of communication between society and government, or one possible response among others to government policies, but also a way for the government to communicate with its (potential or already convinced) voters. Today political parties, including those in power, are increasingly eager to utilize the forms of the activities that social movements practice, not least in order to capitalize on the inferred legacy of the eighties.

Trade unions (which in the past were the most important organizers of demonstrations) no longer dominate the landscape of Polish protest politics, and the transformation of society and wage demands for which they used to campaign have ceased to be the main points of reference. In recent years, marches have become institutionalized — popular, repeatable, and considered as a normal, acceptable form of political ex-

pression — to the extent that a growing number of political and ideological circles and groups try to channel the anger and support of their partisans into this particular form of activity.

PARTIES AND PROTEST MOVEMENTS

Rallies in various Polish cities after the autumn parliamentary elections attest to an increase in the political temperature and a change in parties’ mobilization strategies. On one December weekend in Warsaw in 2015, we even witnessed a sort of competition between the demonstrations of critics and of supporters of the new government. This should not be surprising. In Central Europe for some time now, different types of extra-institutional forms of political action have been gaining importance. People express their anger in the elections, voting for “protest parties”, but they also do so in the streets by demonstrating under the slogans of Pegida in Dresden, in the March of Independence in Warsaw, or “for bread” in the Bosnian city of Tuzla. Parliamentary politics has become more strongly intertwined with the politics of street protest.

In Poland the populist rock singer Paweł Kukiz, soon after scoring a very good result in the presidential elections in May 2015, introduced over 40 MPs into the Polish Sejm. His alliance with the nationalists is easier to understand when we note that five years ago the singer was a committee member in the increasingly popular March of Independence, which is organized by nationalists and gathers tens of thousands of participants every year. Another politician of the new kind, this time associated with banks and the political establishment, Ryszard Petru, also builds support for his party Nowoczesna by encouraging street protests.

Even more interestingly, mobilizing supporters through street protests is not a strategy that is confined to opposition parties. The same strategy was pursued by Fidesz in Hungary, and by the ruling Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice) in Poland. On both sides of the political spectrum we see attempts at mobilization in the form of marches and demonstrations, as well as politicians attempting to use these protests for their own ends. After the period of transformation from communism to market economies and democracy, and after the accession of Central and Eastern European states to the European Union, we are seeing a new dynamic emerge across social and political spheres.

Both conservative parties, Fidesz in Hungary and PiS in Poland, used similar means to retain their supporters during long spells in opposition.

An ostensibly extra-institutional politics of protest appears to complement the procedures of traditional political institutions. Sometimes elections themselves start to visually resemble street demonstrations. In November 2014, during the Romanian presidential election, crowds stood for many hours, queuing before Romanian embassies in western capitals in order to cast votes of protest against president Victor Ponta. On the same day, the Czechs protested in the streets, holding red cards in protest against the politics of Miloš Zeman. There came a point when it was hard to tell which press photographs portrayed the election and which portrayed the demonstrations.

Meanwhile the elites often openly attacked street politics. In November 2010 professor Marcin Król, a philosopher of politics from the University of Warsaw, one of the most active commentators on Polish political life, went as far as to suggest hauling politicians before the State Tribunal for organizing street demonstrations. “In parliament, MPs have the right to say what they want. But now Jarosław Kaczyński has taken the political dispute into the street. This is an utter transgression of the rules of democracy. Parliament was invented so that disputes would be held in parliament, not in the street”, commented Król.

OPPOSITION IN PARLIAMENT AND IN THE STREETS

Poles however did not want to limit disputes only to the Sejm and instead started to participate in street politics. In autumn 2010, the March of Independence organized by the nationalists attracted more than a close circle of activists: it managed to gather around 10,000 participants, a number that has risen by thousands more in subsequent years, including people from outside the nationalist-right organizations. The nationalists thus made an attempt to institutionalize their ideological movement not through a classical political party, nor through their Młodzież Wszechpolska (All-Polish Youth) organization, but through shifting the weight to the Association of the March of Independence, established specially for this purpose, and the annual 11/11 demonstration.

Marches also became an important mobilizing tool for the parliamentary opposition. Monthly rallies commemorating the Smolensk disaster attracted many people. In 2011 the main opposition party, seeing the mobilizing effect of these actions, came up with the idea of another march. In a move undoubtedly intended to rival the efforts of nationalist circles that had dominated the 11 November proceedings, the PiS organized the March of Independence and Solidarity on the anniversary of the introduction of martial law. The march went ahead on 13 December 2011 under the slogan “There cannot be a just Europe without an independent Poland”.

At the same time, PiS started building a network of civil society organizations around the party, among which the most important role was played by the clubs run by *Gazeta Polska* and the Catholic broadcaster Radio Maryja, both of which sympathized with the party. These conservative civil society organizations close to the political Right enabled the party to survive some difficult moments and mobilize supporters.

From that moment on, marches evoking the memory of martial law victims, and referencing the tradition of the anti-communist demonstrations of the 1980s, became an important identity-building element for PiS. In one of his speeches at the March of Independence and Solidarity, Jarosław Kaczyński reminded his audience of “the basic values of our community -- liberty, solidarity, and independence”; the crowds before him responded by chanting “Ja-ros-ław, Ja-ros-ław!” The march grew and it became larger than just one group. A year later the appeal of marching in the cold through the snow was discovered by those campaigning on particular issues: opponents of proposals to build a nuclear power plant in Gąski, for example, and the anti-GMO movement.

In 2014, a march “in defence of democracy and media freedom” was called following irregularities in local government elections, the results of which were seen as rigged. Jarosław Kaczyński criticized the then-ruling Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform), claiming that “the government and the president are terrorizing the courts”. Paradoxically, PiS’s slogans from December 2014 were repeated in almost exactly the same place and exactly the same form by its opponents a year later.

After the 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections and PiS’s rise to power, the annual march that was so important for the party while in opposition might have been expected to lose its significance. But on Sunday 13 December 2015, the fifth March of Liberty and Solidarity took place almost spontaneously. Despite the rain and cold, tens of thousands of people demonstrated their support for the government and the president. The decisive factor that led to the march going ahead was the demonstration for the defence of democracy and rule of law held the previous day by Komitet Obrony Demokracji (the Committee for the Defence of Democracy) and opposition parties. The crowd that had protested against the government chanted “This is Warsaw, not Budapest”, indicating they did not want PiS to follow in the steps of Viktor Orbán.

Leaving aside the differences between Hungary and Poland, which are many, the mobilizing strategies of PiS and Fidesz are intriguingly similar. Almost parallel to the rallies organized by PiS from 2012 to 2014, Fidesz (at that time already in power) organized six “Peace Marches for Hungary” (Bekemenet) in order to mobilize its supporters and legitimize Orbán’s politics.

HUNGARIAN DIVIDES

Hungary is experiencing divides that are probably even deeper than those in Poland. The left-wing sociologist Pál Tamás tells me that in Budapest the two social camps read different newspapers and use completely different arguments that are oblivious to the perspective of the opposing side. To a certain extent this resembles the situation in Poland when the conservative *Gazeta Polska*, which sympathizes with PiS, encourages its readers to participate in one march while the left-wing/liberal *Gazeta Wyborcza*, which is closer to PO, advertises the other march — and the readers of the two publications do not find any common ground for dialogue. These divides often cut across families, friendships, and professional circles. In Poland they became stronger after the presidential plane disaster in Smoleńsk; in Hungary this occurred during prime minister Viktor Orbán's second term.

Fidesz, which now rules Hungary, started as an illegal protest movement in the era of János Kádár and has preserved this “underground” aspect of its identity. Even as a ruling party it was eager to appeal to its old dissident movement identity, shifting it towards mobilizing populism.

When confronted with criticism of the changes in the constitution and media law voiced by the West and the liberal Left, Fidesz decided to win additional legitimacy for its actions. On the evening of 21 January 2012, 100,000 people showed their support for Orbán by marching on one of Budapest's main boulevards. At the front of the march, conservative journalists carried a banner saying “We won't be a colony”. The calm crowd waved Hungarian flags and signs that equated the EU with the USSR, sang patriotic songs, and chanted “Viktor, Viktor”.

Subsequent marches were organized, every few months, partly in reaction to the founding of the left-wing-liberal opposition platform Milla. The opposition started organizing its first larger protests about a year after Orbán's second government came to power. It took much more time for Hungarian liberal-left opposition to mobilize street response to government than in Poland. Hungary's “One Million for Press Freedom” movement, Milla, began with grassroots protests in defence of freedom of expression on 15 March 2011. Slowly, from an initiative centred around a single theme, it was transformed into a more institutionalized opposition platform, filling the void caused by the great weakness of the Left after eight years in government.

Viktor Orbán dealt with these challenges quite effectively, and the government did not limit its actions to parliament. While the Left was still in power, Fidesz had gone back to its roots and, in 2002, began building a social movement (*polgári körök*). Over 10,000 local cells were set up, political debates were organized and the opposition's morale revitalized.

Mihály Gyimesi, a political scientist researching social movements in Hungary, claims this hybrid strategy of combining a political party with a social movement was intensified under Orbán, once he gained power again in 2010. Pro-government marches started to be organized not directly by the party, but by quasi-governmental NGOs close to those in power, like Civil Összefogás Fórum. These marches took place on the dates of important historical events: 15 March, the anniversary of the beginning of the 1848 revolution, and 23 November, the anniversary of the 1956 revolution. Like in

Poland, supporters were mobilized around values represented by the heroes of those historical events.

FIDESZ, PIS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT STRATEGIES

Politicians in Poland use the example of Hungary not only in relation to concrete examples of public policies (like the bank tax), but also to political strategies. In both countries, sections of the deeply divided societies can be mobilized as conflicts arise. Both Fidesz and PiS draw on the legacy of the eighties, referencing the anticommunist social movements. They mould this legacy according to their own needs, such that both parties become increasingly similar to social movements, especially as regards their methods of mobilization.

The parties rely not only on MPs, but also on activists and organizers who are not formal party members. In Hungary, conservative journalists played an important role for Fidesz. In Poland, the ruling PiS also has similarly unaffiliated support at its disposal, including the organizers from Klub Ronina (a right-wing political discussion club in Warsaw) and Ruch Kontroli Wyborów (a social movement that functions as an electoral watchdog). During a meeting with *Gazeta Polska* clubs in May 2015, the head of the party, Jarosław Kaczyński, spoke directly of the social movement strategy: “without social support expressed also in the streets we won't make it”.

Both conservative parties, Fidesz in Hungary and PiS in Poland, used similar means to retain their supporters during long spells in opposition. In Hungary these were *polgári körök*, in Poland organizations like *Gazeta Polska* clubs. Just as Fidesz organizes marches in response to the protests of the liberal-leftist coalition Milla, PiS organizes them in reaction to the actions of the Committee for the Defence of Democracy. Left-wing liberal parties are learning strategy from these conservative parties. In Poland Platforma Obywatelska has just announced the idea of forming a network of “civic clubs” that would be a liberal counterpart to the conservative ones, in symbiosis with social movement parties.

In both countries the conservative side currently has the edge in terms of mobilizing support in this way, partly because it was the conservative parties that reached for the arsenal of social movements when in opposition. Finally, both in Poland and in Hungary, we are witnessing the clash of two ways of interpreting democracy — a more populist and a more liberal vision. The conflict arising from these two interpretations is what now drives the current dynamics of protest. /

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BRNO

There were two Hungarians on the Brno team: Lajos, my father's best friend in the goal, and my father in midfield, which is to say as a centre forward playing further back.

GYÖRGY SPIRÓ

Miklós was the brains of the team," Lajos would tell us later. It was a famously tough league, the Czechoslovak, and they destroyed my father's ankle at least seven times — everybody knows you have to target the leader. They offered him a place in the Czechoslovak national team, but he refused: he would have had to give up his Hungarian citizenship. He didn't tell me any of this — I heard it all from Lajos, later.

It was a good team, the Brno team, I looked it up. Two years after my father came home, SK Židenice turned professional.

In '34, Czechoslovakia won the silver medal at the World Championships in Italy. Plánička, the Czech goalie, was voted man of the tournament. The papers say that Puč, the legendary left-winger who scored the Czech goal in the final, was a very big star indeed — he must have been something like Potya Tóth for us. The referee, Ivan Eklind, a Swede honoured with a personal interview with Mussolini in his box before the final, allowed an off-side goal by Schiavio (affectionately known as Angiolino) in the fifth minute of overtime after a one-all draw. This gave the Italians their first football World Championship title.

The Czechoslovak league was a good one, then, though a few years later they did get an 8-3 walloping out on Hungária körút. I'm sure my dad was at the match. Zsengellér scored

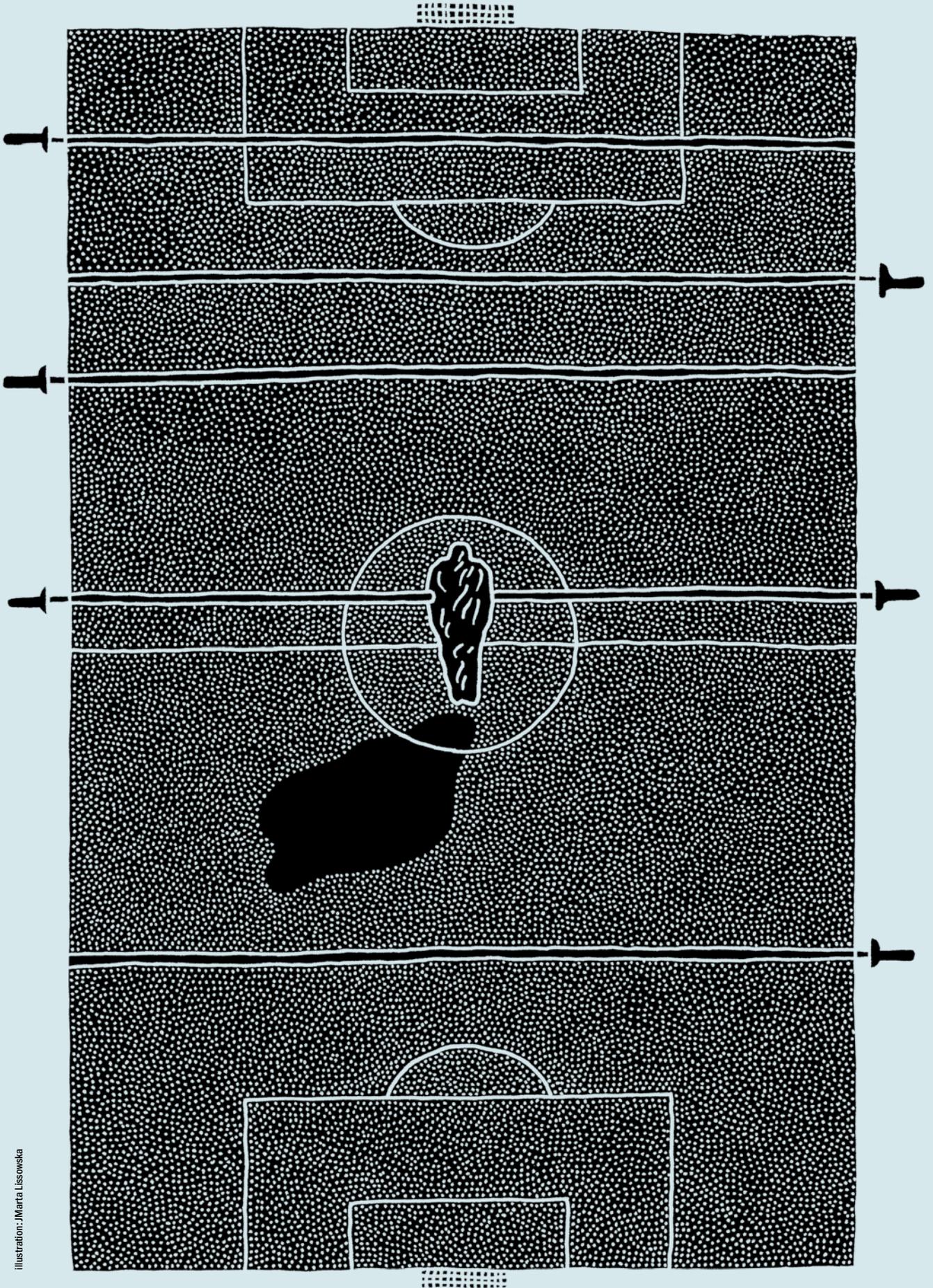


Illustration: JMarta Lissowska

one and Sárosi seven. If my father could have gone to university at home, he might have been on the team with them.

There were the following categories of students at the German University in Brno: German, Czech, Jewish, Slovak, and Hungarian. Those students who could not attend Hungarian universities because of the racially motivated laws then in effect at home were welcomed at the university in Brno and were all classed as “Hungarian”, irrespective of their religion. The “Jewish” category was only for Czechoslovak citizens. There’s another reason the yearbooks of the German University in Brno are interesting (having recently got a chance to look at a few): even in the late ’20s, they were full of adverts with swastikas in them.

It was a good team, the Brno team, I looked it up. Two years after my father came home, SK Židenice turned professional.

I did wonder sometimes why my father didn’t want to take Czechoslovak citizenship. I know that he considered himself Hungarian no matter what, and I’m also sure that he wanted to be there for his parents. But what awaited him at home was years of unemployment; for a long time he worked with medical instruments on a voluntary basis, which is to say unpaid. It was worse in Hungary than it was in Czechoslovakia. The love of his life was from Brno, Ilse Červinková, and it was probably she who took the photos of his matches, the ones I saw when I was a boy, before my mother destroyed them all. Ilse, with her native German, didn’t want to leave prosperity in a civic democracy for racist Hungary and could hardly understand why my father, a talented engineer, didn’t stay as well.

They would have made an attractive couple. I met Ilse and her family in Bratislava when I was thirteen. Ilse was still attractive at fifty, with her piercing grey eyes; she was a psychiatrist and practised hypnosis. In ’68, Ilse, her husband, and the children emigrated to Israel, but they didn’t like the atmosphere and went back to Prague six months later. Neither leaving nor coming back turned out to be good decisions, especially the latter; they were left without jobs or a flat, and the children — Martin and Milena — were barred from university.

Martin made the youth Ice Hockey team later — the sporting world was less didactic. “What sport would I have played, if they’d stayed together?” I used to wonder every time I thought of Martin. The last time I saw him was twenty years ago at the premiere of one of my pieces in Bratislava — he’d grown into a portly, bearded fellow by then.

My father, had he stayed there, would certainly not have emigrated to Israel. He most likely would have become a Communist reformer and would have ended his days as a menial labourer in Husak’s Czechoslovakia — that is if he’d lived to see ’68 at all. Tens of thousands went to prison in the Slansky trials (their version of the Rajk trials) and two thousand people got executed — many more than in Hungary. The war would have been easier to survive in Czechoslovakia, but the peace would have been much harder.

My father was left with tennis. Even at 65, two and a half months before his death, he played a championship match on the Honvéd second team against a thirty year-old, losing by a hair’s breadth. I was there, I saw him. The courts were on Margit Island, opposite the Protestant church in Újlipótváros. I passed them recently, they’ve gone to pot. On the Pest side, on the empty plot beside the church where we used to play football, they put up a building for the State Privatisation Office; that’s where they divided up the State’s possessions. It would have killed my father, had he lived to see it. He would have hated what’s become of Hungarian football, too. Not to mention Czechoslovak football, which is to say Czech and Slovak. And the industrial and economic decline of the entire region.

A few years ago a handsome elderly woman came over to me at a book signing. She told me that my father had been the best teacher she’d ever had, and that she’d even commuted to Csepel for his classes after he’d been reassigned there. “He was a good-looking man,” I said. “Better looking than you,” she noted matter-of-factly.

I asked her what my father was teaching at the University of Economics from 1946 to 1949 — he had never said. “Accounting,” she replied. I was dumbfounded — another thing he was good at!

Last year about twenty of us went to Brno, a mixed assortment of children of sixty or seventy now, taking with us to the Czech city a plaque in English marking our gratitude to the former German University there.

A guide showed us the buildings of note, among them the Synagogue our fathers, being good Communists, avoided like the plague. There were people whose parents had ended up in South America, coming home after the war so they could be locked up pretty much straight after they arrived, and others whose parents had been given high office (some of whom later committed suicide, some not).

In the two days we were there, I didn’t see a single sports facility. /

Translated by Mark Baczoni

The author (born 1946) is a Hungarian dramatist, novelist, and essayist.

The **END** *of*
The **WORLD**

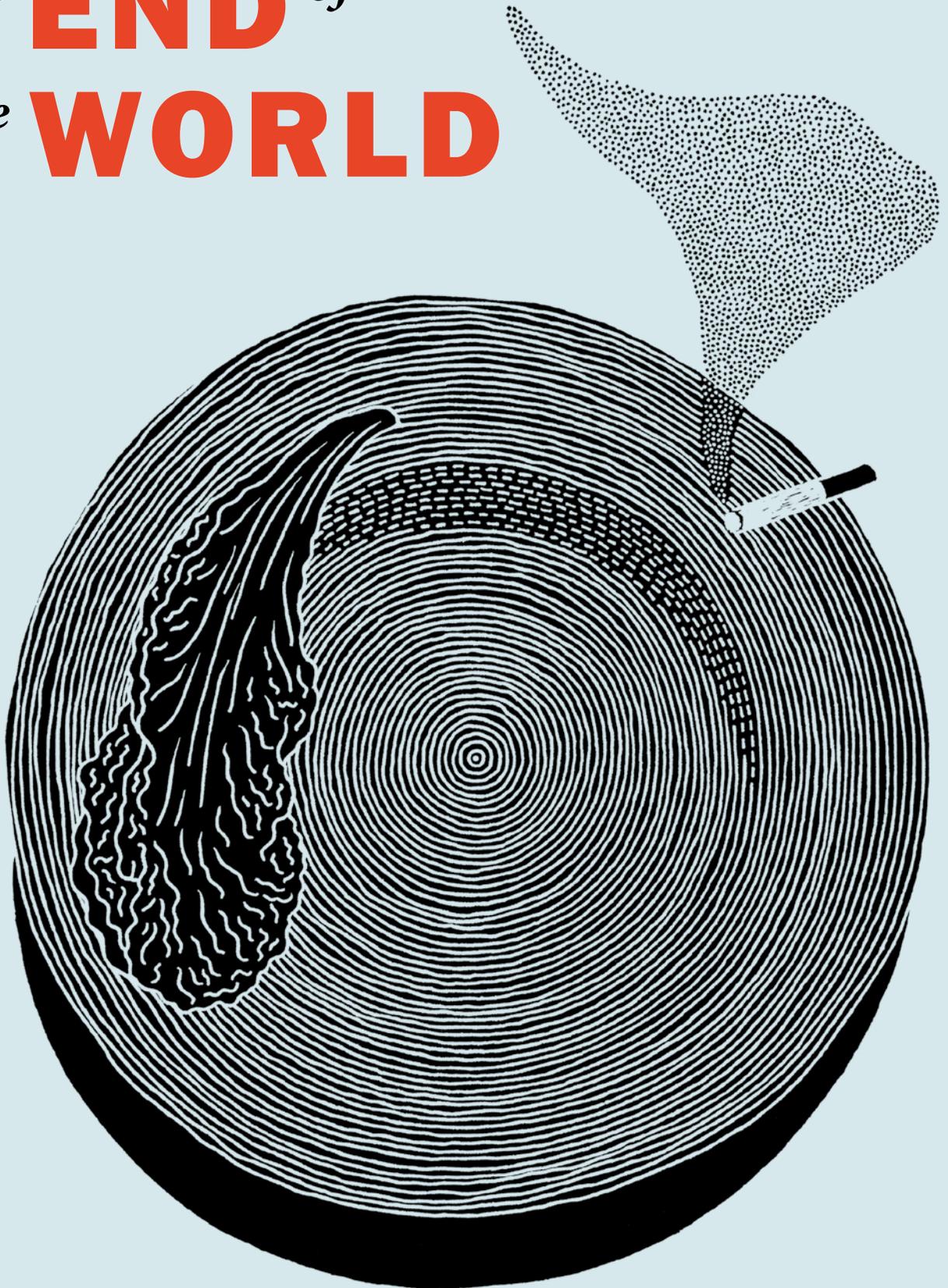


Illustration: Marta Lisowska

When I enter the elevator I see an older man, around sixty, wearing only a shirt. He has grey hair and a grey beard, like Santa Claus.

NOÉMI SZÉCSI

It's cold," I tell him, trying to break the ice before we begin our ten-floor journey downwards.

"Yes, we have frost during the day already," he replies, noticeably proud of the accomplishments of the Canadian winter. I pull the polar coat even tighter around myself and inspect his summery outfit.

"Won't you be cold, wearing only that?"

"Oh, I'm just going dancing at the bar around the corner," he explains with a delightfulness that goes well with his grey hair.

It's either the pull of the elevator, or my East European subconscious hiding under the cosmopolite superego that starts to twitch in alarm: is he allowed to do that? But the twitching lasts only a few seconds, just like all those other times when I had seen carefree and cheerful people doing the things that made them happy. I regain self-control and we reach the ground floor. We both put on a polite smile and walk silently towards the exit. Every time I go out to buy milk after six o'clock and glance at the shop-window to the left of our high-rise I see the backs of beefy men wearing silver spangles, with their muscular calves flexed over their high heels as they stand in front of a crowd.

After my fellow-traveler from the elevator disappears into a transvestite bar, I continue walking down the main street of the local gay community, past the many bars and sex shops and rainbow flags and sexy police men or buff girls painted on the walls, stepping into the hangar-sized supermarket where I can pick from hundreds of products that are either lactose-, gluten-, sugar-, flour-, or energy-free, that are either vegan or vegetarian, organic or whole grain, brought from every possible corner of the globe to be used for all those dishes which seem exotic to me. I mingle with the shopping crowd, the gay couple with their adopted baby, the trans-men still wearing traces of make-up, the old Asian women, the students with Indian and African backgrounds, and at the end I pay the ethnically mixed, reliably polite, and cheerful cashiers.

No doubt about it: there's an end-of-the-world feeling in the air.

Because here, in downtown Toronto, the dominance and superiority of the white, heterosexual middle class of European origins and of the traditional family has definitely ended. I am not nearly as shaken by the discovery as I should be.

Because I am a "stupid bitch" — as the internet trolls would immediately point out in such cases — who has "lost even the will to live." However, that's not the main reason. If you were born in East Europe, yet failed to become susceptible to compensational nationalism, then you ended up feeling like the scum of the earth by default — it was something you internalized as you were sipping that disgusting Socialist chocolate drink. To top it all off, I am also a woman, and have gotten used to not belonging to the club that rules the world.

Nonetheless, I dared to ride a bicycle. Since women, as it happens, reached emancipation on bicycles. I came to understand this thanks to the satirical cartoons attacking feminists in the nineteenth century. Here's a stereotype — that is, a pair of near identical images printed in a way as to appear three-dimensional when seen through a special lens — from the year 1895, bought at the Toronto flea market: kids are playing on the dirty floor, plaster is falling off the walls, but the woman goes cycling instead of tidying the place up. What's more, before she runs off into the world, she still has the nerve to ask the husband — the poor soul is just about to do the laundry — to clean her shoes... Here's another one: the man is doing housework while the woman rides her bicycle to work... And a third one: the man is washing the dishes while the woman is reading a book, with the bicycle unflinchingly parked behind her...

Of course, it is especially bizarre to read that back home conservative politicians have ordered women off the symbolic bicycles while I am living in the gay neighborhood of a North American city, next to a transvestite bar. A friend of mine is telling me that one of the TV channels — those who have eyes shall see, and those who have ears shall hear — is airing a commercial about the importance of siblings. Being a woman in her late thirties and, through no fault of hers, single and childless, she finds this somehow disturbing — which is most probably what that particular public announcement was designed for.

I also find it disturbing. I failed to fulfill my patriotic duty and gave birth to only one child. And what's worse: it happened quite haphazardly, without any previous social or national deliberation. In Hungary, the shrinking numbers of middle-class children can be complemented with the help of sizable Roma families, and in Western Europe this is possible with the help of immigrant communities. Because these societies cannot count on the likes of me any longer: I hopped on my bicycle, rode to the edge of the abyss, and now I am staring into the gaping void. Yet, in spite of the old-fashioned remorse drilled into me, I simply cannot ride backwards anymore.

Although, it must be a truly uplifting feeling to do something for the benefit of humankind. A few days ago I saw one of those Joker-faced American women on TV: the excess of botox and plastic surgery had brought her into an almost non-human state, since there's no way a sixty-year-old woman would look like that. She, however, attributed her ageless look to the benefits of vegetarianism and — as if giving herself a self-congratulatory pat on the back — declared that by refusing to eat meat she is actually saving the planet.

It is hard for me to imagine that the lifestyle of such a luxurious lady campaigning for the bright future is in any way economical, or that the vegetarian foods that are produced in enormous American quantities are only a light burden for the Planet. Although, back in the day, when vegetarianism — this odd hobbyhorse of Tolstoyan adepts with bushy beards and Muzhik shirts — was still a public laughing stock, the only argument that could silence the ridiculers was based on the low cost of the diet. That is why Marxist social reformers at the turn of the century were preaching to workers about the need for a puritan and meat-free regimen. And that is why not eating meat became the sign of a quiet rebellion, since the middle class meal was simply inconceivable without the meat ingredient — seen as the source of “strength.”

Let's face it: there are no social habits which can be independent of politics! In the early 1930s one could read about how the supporters of the German far-right were searching for potential wives among the long-haired, fair-skinned, and vegetarian followers of Wotan. And that their Führer, Adolf Hitler, owed his exceptional energy to his alcohol, nicotine, and meat-free lifestyle. Later, however, in 1938, the German association of vegetarians was dissolved and incorporated into the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Lebensreform, created in order to harmonize the national activities of the Party and the State... Why the dissolution? Because they maintained strong connections with the international Esperanto movement! We might be tempted to laugh at this fervor, but we know how the story ended... We also know that socialism brought an end to the vegetarian movement: although they could not organize themselves freely anymore, as a consequence of the serious food shortages of the 1950s in Europe, being a clandestine vegetarian was the easiest thing in the world.

To take a case in point, being a clandestine smoker today is much more difficult. The Santa Claus from the elevator is now shivering in his summery shirt outside the bar, keep-

ing the necessary distance specified by the law and remorsefully blowing his smoke into the liberal air. I am walking home from the store. I ended up buying almond milk because it was cheaper than regular milk — to which, as an overly civilized person, I developed a lactose intolerance.

I step into the tenement house that houses immigrants, gays, seniors, disabled people, and foreigners like myself because it is a non-profit building and the owner can deduct his expenses from his taxes. No one here is a multigenerational “Canadian” — they are Brazilian, Chinese, Hungarian, Lebanese, Portuguese, and so on. Here I am also a small detail

Because here, in downtown Toronto, the dominance and superiority of the white, heterosexual middle class of European origins and of the traditional family has definitely ended. I am not nearly as shaken by the discovery as I should be.

in the clichéd liberal postcard in spite of the fact that I do not feel at home within this utopia.

How can such a place — where I regularly receive gay newsmagazines in the mail, where I encounter same-sex couples pushing baby carriages, where a trip to the store takes me walking down streets decorated with rainbow flags, and where I see men wearing silver spangles dance in the shop-windows — be part of reality and not a utopia? But, more importantly, what connection to reality does my own time-travelling East Europe still retain in its fervor to protect Christian values from Arab terrorists and vegetarian cyclists? What did it turn into? A ridiculous antifeminist burlesque? The sound of the alarm bells warning of the West's decline makes it difficult to hear: are they really trying to persuade the middle class white population to procreate?

One thing is certain: our world has ended. And it's too early to tell what the new one will be like. /

Translated by László Szabolcs

The author (born 1976) is a Hungarian writer and translator, recipient of the EU Prize for Literature 2009 for a novel *Communist Monte Cristo*, and contributor to *The New York Times*, among others.

VISEG-

Back in the 1990s,

RAD IN

literature from Central

TRANS-

and Eastern Europe

LATION

was highly fashionable.

 ÁGNES ORZÓY

People in the West were excited to read books about life behind the now-defunct Iron Curtain, and a number of English-language publishers catered to this need. The most impressive series of literature from ex-Communist countries was Northwestern University Press's "Writings from an Unbound Europe", issuing sixty-one titles in less than two decades. Tellingly, the series was discontinued in 2011 due to a significant decrease in sales as interest in ex-Communist countries had subsided.

Lamentable as it is to witness the demise of such a series, there is no need to bemoan the current state of affairs. Even as translated fiction accounts for a few percents than one percent of all the books published in English, there is still a steady (perhaps modest) flow of titles translated into English from Central Europe. The most compelling books are often those published by small presses which are willing to take a chance and commit for the long run—publishers like Jantar, Contra Mundum and New Vessel Press, which do amazing work maintaining quality and literary merit, in the hope that financial success will follow in the future.

In this section, we feature reviews of eight books written by Visegrad authors, and published (or forthcoming) in English in 2015 or 2016. Some of them are by contemporary writers; others are the first English translations of works by major authors who are no longer alive.

The only book reviewed here that was published by a major press is *Dancing Bears*; Witold Szablowski's volume of literary reportage, forthcoming from Penguin in 2016. (Szablowski signed a contract with Penguin for another, as yet unwritten, volume as well.) True to the vein of the literary reportage, a popular genre in Poland, Szablowski reflects on how the regime change affected individual lives through the account of the now-banned tradition of bear dancing in Bulgaria.

Daniela Hodrová's novel, *A Kingdom of Souls*, takes the reader to the Prague district of Vinohrady where historical events mingle with the present just as the living consort with the long dead, all of this converging in the mind of a woman suspended between life and death. The dead have a strong – in fact, tangible – presence in *Killing Auntie* as well, a morbid and absurd skeleton-in-the-closet story of Andrzej Bursa, the "Polish James Dean." For more of the macabre, look to Balla, the "Slovak Kafka," whose grim novella entitled *In the Name of the Father* is one of the few Slovak books to be published in

English in 2016 (another being an anthology of contemporary Slovak writing, also reviewed here). A stifling atmosphere and an oppressive presence of the past characterize these works, populated by characters who are dissatisfied with the pettiness of the present and are profoundly insecure about the future. Sándor Tar's *Our Street*, the first book published in English by this major Hungarian writer, is similar to the above-mentioned books in its bleak outlook, but different in that it is written in the realistic vein, depicting those for whom the regime change ended in their ultimate demise. Among the fiction books in our collection, György Spiró's *Captivity* is the odd one out: a spellbinding historical novel written with a vast encyclopaedic knowledge; it takes the reader back to 1st century Rome, Jerusalem and Alexandria.

From literary reportage to fiction, our journey ends with an academic project that grounds and lays bare the idea of transformation, an underlying theme of these books, in theory and scholarship: *Thinking through Transition*, a collection of articles published by Central European University Press, is centred around the political ideas that shaped (and were shaped by) the experience of transition in the region.

Whether in the language of journalism, fiction or scholarship, these books seem to be occupied with the same questions: the debilitating effect of a haunting past, the hardships of adapting to a world that is fundamentally different from what it used to be a few decades ago, and the challenges of reaching social adulthood and finding creative answers for the future. /

The author is a literary critic and editor at *Visegrad Insight*.

JULIA SHERWOOD

— ON —

A Kingdom of Souls by Daniela Hodrová

The work of the acclaimed Czech novelist and literature scholar Daniela Hodrová has been translated into several European languages but was largely unknown to Anglophone readers until Jantar Publishing took it upon itself to bring out two of her books in English.

The first, published in David Short's translation as *Prague, I See a City* in 2011 and reissued in 2015, was originally commissioned for a French series of "alternative" guidebooks, and presents the city as a magical, labyrinthine place. 2015 also saw the publication of Hodrová's first novel, *A Kingdom of Souls*. Written in 1974, it first appeared in 1991 as *Podobojí* (literally "in both kinds", referring to the use of both bread and wine in holy communion, a key tenet of Czech Protestantism) and forms the first part of a loose trilogy entitled *Trýznivé město* (The City of Torment). The story of this translation by Véronique Firkusny and Elena Sokol spans almost a quarter of a century and is deserving of a novel in its own right.

The trilogy, like most of Hodrová's subsequent books, is set in and around the Prague district of Vinohrady. Instead of a traditional, linear narrative, *Kingdom of Souls* develops in a spiral motion, as a hypnotic layering and interweaving of micro-stories linked to a tenement house in Vinohradská Street, which overlooks the Olšany Cemetery. Some of the stories are clearly linked to historical events, such as the Holocaust or St Bartholomew's Night, while readers familiar with Czech history will also recognize allusions to the Stalinist terror, the Prague Spring, the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion, and the period of so-called "normalisation", a grim time of repression that followed the invasion.

A Kingdom of Souls begins with Alice Davidovič, a young Jewish woman who commits suicide by jumping out of the fifth floor window of her flat in order to escape deportation. The recurring cast of characters consists of her tenement house

neighbours and the people living in the surrounding streets; rendering their symbolically-laden names in English was just one of the many challenges posed by this demanding book to which the translators have overcome with admirable inventiveness. Some characters—like Alice at the moment of jumping—are suspended between life and death; others have died

and their souls are now wandering about the cemetery or venturing beyond its confines. Among the dead souls, we encounter historical figures buried in the cemetery, such as the writers of the 19th century Czech national revival or Jan Palach, the student who set himself alight in 1969 in protest against the creeping normalisation, as well as former residents of the house. The traditional omniscient narrator alternates with narrators including inanimate objects, such as the pantry in Alice's flat, a muff, a melancholy stone angel, and Olšany Cemetery itself. The latter is the eponymous kingdom of souls, a place where "the dead seem to be coming to life and the living struggle along as if dead. And no one is able to tell where life ends and death begins." The cemetery, indeed the entire city of Prague and its genius loci is, in fact, the central character, not just in *The City of Torment* trilogy, but in all of Hodrová's fiction. It is hoped that

English-speaking readers will soon get the chance to read the other two books in this remarkable trilogy, *Kukly* (Puppets, or Cocoons) and *Theta*. /

Julia Sherwood is a freelance translator based in London and editor-at-large for Slovakia with the international literary journal *Asymptote*.



Daniela Hodrová:

A Kingdom of Souls, trans. Véronique Firkusny and Elena Sokol (London: Jantar, 2015)

DÁNIEL DÁNYI

ON

Captivity by György Spiró

If only rarely, ancient history can be discovered to be fresh and relevant to the contemporary world, and Captivity, set in the 1st century, is one such rare story. From Rome to Jerusalem and Judea to Alexandria – a vivid and varied cross-section of those Biblical times of cultural advance and political turmoil.

In his masterpiece, Hungarian novelist György Spiró undertakes the immense task of bringing an era to literary life in the most realistic way imaginable. This historical novel of meticulous detail is rife with research and hard factuality, amounting to a historical travelogue that has been compared to *Ben Hur* and *I, Claudius*.

Embarking on a comprehensive journey into what is known of the era's history is a most unlikely Everyman, a myopic and bookish Jewish boy named Gaius Theodorus (Uri). Uri steps forth to act as our unwitting guide through his life and times. It is a period full of ups and downs, brushing shoulders and interacting with some of the key figures of the pre-Christian scene: Pontius Pilate and Philo of Alexandria, among others, yet these encounters are never so pointedly historical in their focus as to compromise the main character's plausibility. In fact, it would seem that wherever Uri goes and whatever his wayward fate brings him an ambitious courtly career, intellectual explorations, glimpses of bliss, exile, misery, a brush (or two) with death and the second to — they are all unavoidable contingencies of his historical reality. It is not just a matter of being in the right place at the right, or indeed wrong, time.

Captivity carries out a skilful balancing act between a coming-of-age Bildungsroman and a historical travelogue. Spiró's humour and Uri's perceptive overcompensation of his on-setting myopia achieve a chemistry and dynamic that keep the action on track. Almost miraculously, the voluminous book fails to lapse into a self-indulgent tour guide of exhibitionism while keeping up an unflagging onslaught of facts and erudition. A whole array of social and political issues is addressed in sophisticated detail, from slavery and debt, poverty and corruption, through prostitution to Talmudic interpretation; however, these are all in organic accord with Uri's person, his own life, aims and problems, resulting in a panorama from

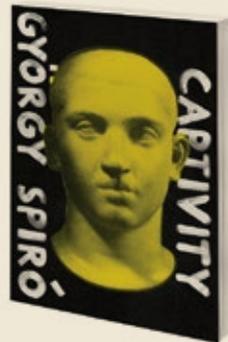
a frog's view. This sense of genuine involvement lends another level of reality to the reading experience, a true triumph in the historical genre.

To stick with the premise of a genuine, unassuming protagonist, Spiró has Uri just barely miss the main event of his lifetime. Though one would expect a front seat view of the trial and execution of Jesus, it is all subtly present in a somewhat understated manner. Uri is utterly unaware of the significance of sharing a cell with some random strangers, including a middle-aged man about to be crucified. Cameo appearances for later celebrities, while real life lumbers on obliviously, is certainly an original approach to historical realism.

While Uri does have his own struggles as a Jew in the Roman Empire, as a belittled son and hapless father, uprooted and perpetually exiled, all through his struggle he keeps on learning and getting thoroughly lost along the way. Coming to terms with his own personal agenda is an intense matter, but quotidian enough to provide a narrative nonchalance that knowingly borders on disenchantment. As for the hindsight granted by our own times, the political intrigue and

social upheaval are as readily recognizable as foreboding to the more recent developments in Jewish and Central European history. However, it would do no justice to this rich and authentic book to be read as a mere commentary on our times. Uri's story stays as unfinished as history itself, and his encounters with the forces that shape the future, our present, leave no discernible marks. Except for this massive story. /

Dániel Dányi is a literary translator from Budapest, Hungary. His translations include Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* and Brené Brown's *Daring Greatly*. He has also blogged and performed poetry in English, and has a book of poetry to his name, published in Swedish translation.



György Spiró:

Captivity, trans. Tim Wilkinson (New York: Restless Books, 2015)

DIÁNA VONNÁK

— ON —

Our Street by Sándor Tar

Lives as dead-end streets might not be the most inventive motif, but Tar takes his metaphors seriously, and follows them through. His figures do not feel like stock characters; rather, they maintain their individuality thanks to a tone that is careful to avoid tragedy, satire, or sentimentalism.

The novel is set in one of the many forlorn corners of the Hungarian post-1990 countryside, namely Crooked Street, which is at the tail-end of a village. That being said, the exact location is of no consequence, exemplified by the lack of numbers on the houses and further hinting at the fact that no strangers would happen upon the place by chance. At first sight, one would think that *Our Street* is yet another chapter in the long history of Hungarian sociographic writing: a close-up on rural deprivation, on people pressed to the margins of a stagnating society and caught somewhere between the sad and the absurd. However, Tar has an unexpected and refreshing voice and a stronger loyalty to his material than to any literary school.

The thirty-one vignettes that constitute the text are portraits juxtaposed against one another, spelling out the daily dread of the street's inhabitants. Each story looks at the shared-but-separate lives from varying angles. They open onto one another like a kaleidoscope of neighbouring windows. Here, people's lives are intertwined and yet always lonely, and this apartness is so mundane that it shocks the reader only rarely—a few sharp sentences here, a moment of pain there. An illustration of this comes from a court scene during a divorce proceeding where a man and his wife argue over the last time they had sex. The woman is up in arms saying the last time did not count because it was rape. Another instance involves a sick father who has, for years, not been touched for fear of infection. As it turns out, he died from cancer rather than the presumed tuberculosis. After the pub owner gets drunk with the priest, who visits him in the middle of the night lost and restless, he charges the priest for the drinks, just not immediately. After all, they are friends.

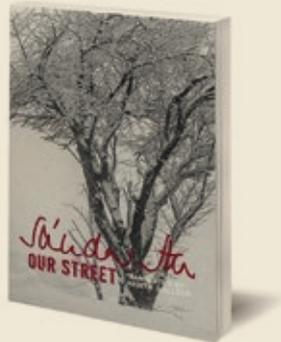
The chapters follow a spatial rather than a temporal sequence: time progresses slowly, if at all, circling around the same fragments of events. The characters are distinct, but eventually their faces fade into a shared isolation and hopelessness. Lives as dead-end streets might not be the most inventive motif, but

Tar takes his metaphors seriously, and follows them through. Although readers may find thematic similarities with László Krasznahorkai's dystopian villages, Ádám Bodor's countryside, or Szilárd Borbély's anatomies of violence — to mention a few contemporary Hungarian examples — it is the unique behaviours and personalities Tar presents which display his originality. His figures do not feel like stock characters; rather, they maintain their individuality thanks to a tone that is careful to avoid tragedy, satire, or sentimentalism.

Tar once described sociography as a genre that too often becomes an “exotic travelogue read by white people in grave shudder.” His efforts not to colour his portraits with drama or irony is what keeps the otherwise nearly proverbially Eastern European stories of aggression, alcohol, and self-reflection realistic. Descriptions melt into monologues seamlessly; words remain just words rather than vehicles of a social or moral message. When reading *Our Street*, it feels like we are looking at these people directly, as if we were passing them by and could somehow hear their thoughts. Crooked Street does not lead us further than any remote street could, and not much more happens than what such a short

journey could accommodate. Yet it is a journey through dozens of life stories — short passages spanning decades and containing all the life within them. This is what makes Tar's words so lasting. The book takes the reader right into its world, so much so that by the end we feel as if the author's voice has melted into his characters. *Our Street* is a refreshingly minimalistic read about an unfamiliar world brought close by careful attention and empathy. /

Diána Vonnák is a PhD candidate at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Germany, working with cultural politics and urban heritage in Ukraine.



Sándor Tar: *Our Street*,
trans. Judy Sollosy
(New York: Contra Mundum, 2015)

MAGDALENA MULLEK

— ON —

a forthcoming Anthology of Slovak Literature

“Do you know any Czech authors?” When I ask people this question, they usually name Kundera or Havel, and the really adventurous ones may come up with Kafka or Čapek. Then I follow it up: “Do you know any Slovak authors?” People rack their brains. Some give a blank stare, and come up with... nothing.

I have posed these questions to many English speakers, the list of which includes professionals, well-educated and well-read individuals, and a number of academics, including some specialists on Slavic languages and literatures. The response has always been the same.

While Central European literature, as a group, does not enjoy the kind of popularity in the English-speaking world that, for example, Latin American literature does, Slovak literature, as one of its members, is all but invisible. Over the last decade or so, a handful of translators have been working to change this situation. In the latest attempt to increase the visibility of Slovak literature to English-speaking readers, I have teamed up with my fellow Slovak translator Julia Sherwood to edit and translate an anthology of contemporary Slovak prose. The book is due to be published (under a yet to be determined, snazzy title) in November 2016 by Slavica Publishers as part of their new series, *Three String Books*, with support from the Slovak Centre for Information on Literature. It will feature the best of what Slovak literature has to offer today. The sixteen authors presented in the anthology have all been shortlisted for, and many have won, some of the most prestigious Slovak and European literary awards. They represent the Slovak literary scene across the lines of gender, age, style and subject matter. Most importantly, all of them are living authors, engaging with today’s world and carrying on conversations with other contemporary writers and readers.

*TBD: Anthology
of Slovak Literature,
ed. Magdalena Mullek
and Julia Sherwood
(Bloomington, IN:
Slavica Publishers, 2016
– forthcoming)*

Here are just a few examples of the authors and the selections you will find in the anthology: Víto Staviarsky offers a fly-on-the-wall view of contemporary Roma life; Pavol Rankov takes a look at life in the gulags from the perspective of a mother who has had to give birth and raise her son there; Marek Vadas takes us into the heart of Africa and its many mysteries; Lukáš Luk reminisces about an idyllic past and concludes that it is impossible to return home; Ivana Dobráková reveals the struggles of expat life in Italy; Pavel Vilikovský ponders the meaning of art through the eyes of a mature photographer; Uršuľa Kovalyk’s heroine wanders into a night circus, which turns into a nightmare; and Zuzana Cigánová reflects on the burden of being ugly. These, and many other exciting stories, plus illustrations and cover art by the up-and-coming Slovak artist Ivana Šáteková, await you in the anthology of contemporary Slovak prose. Look for it in print and as an e-book in November, available for purchase directly from Slavica Publishers and on amazon.com. /

Magdalena Mullek translates from her native Slovak. Her translations have appeared in *The Dirty Goat*, *Alchemy*, *Asymptote*, *Ozone Park*, *TWO LINES*, and *Words Without Borders*. She was one of the translators of the *Dedalus Book of Slovak Literature*.

JULIA SHERWOOD

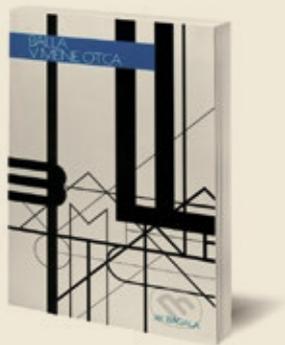
— ON —

In the Name of the Father by Balla

Balla's stories are typically populated by a gallery of lonely, mediocre, often malicious and creepy individuals unable to relate to other human beings; dramatis personae who often find themselves in bizarre or surreal situations as they try to escape from the numbing banality of their everyday life.

Initially focusing solely on Czech authors, the London-based Jantar Publishing has recently decided to broaden its range and cover literature from all four Visegrad countries. The publisher's first venture into Slovak literature will be *V mene otca* (*In the Name of the Father*), an award-winning novella by Balla, to be translated by myself and my husband Peter and due to appear later this year.

Balla (who goes only by his surname) has been called the "chief alchemist of Slovak literature," "the Slovak Kafka," and "the uncrowned king of Slovak outsiders and misfits." Balla made his name with a short story collection, *Leptokaria*, in 1996, and has since published nine further books, mostly of short fiction. His latest novella, *Veľká láska* ("") appeared in 2013. Balla — who has a day job in the local council at Nové Zámky, a provincial town in southern Slovakia, a region with a sizeable Hungarian minority — has been gradually gaining recognition in Slovakia: *In the Name of the Father* was voted Book of the Year by the daily SME in 2012, and, in the same year, he won both the Anasoft Litera Prize, Slovakia's most prestigious award for an original work of fiction, and the Tatrabanka Foundation Art Prize for literature. He is increasingly being recognized in neighbouring countries as well: his works have been translated into Czech, German, Hungarian, Polish, Slovene and Serbian.



Balla:

In the Name of the Father,
trans. Julia Sherwood and Peter
Sherwood (London: Jantar,
2016 — forthcoming)

Balla's stories are typically populated by a gallery of lonely, mediocre, often malicious and creepy individuals unable to relate to other human beings; dramatis personae who often find themselves in bizarre or surreal situations as they try to escape from the numbing banality of their everyday life. The narrator of the bleakly humorous novella *In the Name of the Father* is a particularly nasty character: an unnamed pensioner whose professional ambition had been fulfilled by rising from shop assistant to manager in a hardware store where he pursued a string of sordid sexual escapades. As he reflects on his life, in a series of sketches of varying length, he displays a spectacular lack of insight, forever blaming others for his failed relationship with his parents and two sons, his serial adultery, the breakup of his marriage and his wife's descent into madness. His rant is set against the backdrop of the sti-

flingly grey provincial lives that the narrator and his neighbours live as well as the mysterious forces emanating from the cellar of the house he has built with his brother. This devastating picture of small-mindedness, misogyny, and ignorance, a life bereft of any firm moral reference points, can be read as a parable of the country's propensity for conformism and lack of ambition. /

Julia Sherwood is a freelance translator based in London and editor-at-large for Slovakia with the international literary journal *Asymptote*.

VIKTÓRA VAS

— ON —

Dancing Bears by Witold Szablowski

What, after all, is freedom the thing that so many people put on their banners, and so many more just dream of? Does it come by after a learning process, like other skills and forms of behaviour?

This book from Polish author Witold Szablowski, who earned fame with his reports on Turkey, reflects upon the lessons to be learnt from the period that has passed since the regime change of 1989 by using the powerful metaphor of dancing bears. Szablowski's method and style recall those of Ryszard Kapuściński and other Polish classics of literary reportage — mixing fiction with documentary prose — a trend that emerged in the 1960s and 70s and which has enjoyed a recent surge in popularity in Poland.

At first sight, it seems as if Szablowski's book was a volume of reportage on the final hours of bear dancing, a millennium-old trade of Bulgarian gypsies. However, the reader realizes fairly soon, after reading the subtitle on the title page, that the fate of the dancing bears and their former owners is seen within a much wider context.

The book consists of two parts: the first ten chapters are located in Bulgaria, in the period after the country joined the European Union. This was a turning-point in both economic and political senses, which also put an end to the practice of bear dancing. After lengthy negotiations and symbolic compensation, the bears who had been forced to “dance” and perform various tricks, often by using brutal methods, were taken from their owners by an animal rights organization, and relocated to a park specially established for these animals, where their needs are attended to and their physical and emotional wounds are cured. The staff working with the bears tries to resuscitate the suppressed instincts of the animals, and meanwhile, they constantly keep watch over the behaviour of the bears as the animals try to cope with the often terrifying challenges of their new situation. It turns out, however, that freedom has its limits, and it must be doled out carefully, in small doses. Otherwise, the bears are unable to adapt to the changed situation, and they eventually perish. In any case, probably none of them will ever be able to go back to the wild.

Szablowski's reportage shows the other side of the coin as well, giving a voice to the former owners of the bears. The sto-

ries of Gypsy families whose livelihood was based on dancing bears show that the new situation in Bulgaria after the regime change is just as challenging for people as it is for the bears that had been confiscated from them. The similarity between their predicaments foreshadows the subject of the reportages in the second part of the volume.

The second part contains nine reportages originally published in the weekly supplement of *Gazeta Wyborcza*. These relatively short, fast-paced pieces take the reader to various locations, from Cuba through Georgia to the Balkans and Eastern Europe. Speed is a key motive in some of these texts: in Cuba, the author rents a car, takes more than a hundred hitchhikers, and enquires about Fidel Castro's health condition and an eventual change of regime; this is then juxtaposed with he himself hitchhiking all over Kosovo. All through, Szablowski remains in the background, letting his interlocutors speak, providing only the most essential facts, and rounding off his reportages with brilliant technique and in a very lively tone.

Although the book clearly focuses on how Eastern European regime change affected individual lives, the transformation alluded to in the subtitle can be given a more general interpretation as well. Heroes of stories about various transitions usually have mixed feelings about their situation. Great expectations are followed by disappointment as many people cannot fit into the new situation and react to it as they had learnt to do in the old times; similarly to the dwellers of the Bulgarian bear park, who, whenever they experience stress or an event that reminds them of their old life, start to dance on their hind legs as they were trained to do by their former owners. /

Translated by Ágnes Orzóy

Viktória Vas is a PhD student in literary studies at Pázmány Péter Catholic University. Her research interests focus on modern and contemporary Polish literature and culture.



Witold Szablowski:

Dancing Bears. Reportage from the Transformation Era, trans. Antonia Lloyd-Jones (London: Penguin, 2016)

ZSUZSA MIHÁLYI

— ON —

Killing Auntie by Andrzej Bursa

Andrzej Bursa is usually labelled as a poète maudit, an angry young man, who is sometimes referred to as the “Polish James Dean.” This novella is the only long prose work of the poet who died at the age of twenty-five.

Indeed, his short creative life was characterized by a constant, impatient search. That period roughly coincided with the years of “thaw” after Stalin’s death, when cultural life was palpably coming alive. Bursa became an important figure in the literary life of Krakow—working for clubs, journals, cabarets and theatrical initiatives. Within three years, he broke in quick succession with his parents, his studies, the Party, the Church and finally even with journalism which had provided his livelihood. However, the productive period that started with Stalin’s death was soon over, and censorship became unbearably stifling again in 1957. When Bursa died suddenly in November 1957, it was rumoured that he had committed suicide, but in fact, he died of a congenital heart disease. His first volume of poems was published a year after his death and was immediately awarded a posthumous prize for “the most exciting poetic debut.”

Killing Auntie, this morbid novella written in a spare style and with deadpan humour, came out twelve years after Bursa’s death. The most important event of the story is already told in the title: one day, Jurek, the protagonist—a twenty-one-year-old student who is fed up with the tedium of everyday life that weighs upon him—murders his warm-hearted aunt with a hammer. There is no explanation for this act, except the general situation, masterfully described in the first pages. Jurek is walking in the all-too-familiar streets of his bleak hometown (as he is wont to do every day), suffering from this aimless rambling, a metaphor for his own young life which lacks meaning and perspective and which he can see no end. It is perhaps then that he comes to the realization that his aunt, who encroached upon his life, is the reason why he cannot live his life as an adult. In any case, he walks into a church, and, like a reversed Raskolnikov, confesses the murder he had not even committed yet, but refuses to accept the absolution the priest eagerly offers him.

Then he goes home and commits the murder. He is not at all plagued by remorse; rather, he experiences it as a real liberation. At the police station, he confesses to his crime, but nobody takes him seriously — they take it as the rant of a drunkard. However, the energy that was released by the murder is soon

gone, and there is a new task ahead which spoils Jurek’s days: the corpse must be disposed of. He has ideas worthy of his dreamy, awkward self: he tries to burn the corpse in the stove in small chunks (the thick smoke makes the neighbours gather around his apartment), then he considers sawing auntie into pieces and sending the chunks by post to fictitious addresses, or mincing her in a machine and taking her to the dump to be eaten by stray animals. However, all his efforts come to nothing: he is incapable of solving the problem and getting rid of the corpse. There are some suspicious details: no one notices the dead body, though several people enter the apartment, with some of the guests even having a bite of it.

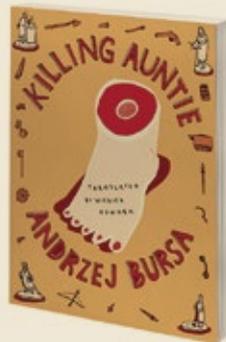
Soon after, we have a glimpse into the lyrical side of Jurek’s personality when he finds an ideal love. Luckily, the girl does not mind the body parts scattered in the bathtub; she endorses Jurek’s view that childhood dreams must not be nullified by the hell of monotonous everyday life and the oppressive atmosphere of their grey town. Together, they make romantic plans for the future: to flee to Argentina or retreat into the woods, close to nature.

Finally, the situation is solved by someone else as the realistic narration becomes more and more dreamlike. A nameless Girl turns up and, after a surreal journey, leads Jurek to a zoo where, at last, he can get rid of the remnants of his aunt by feeding the chunks to lions and tigers. At last, our hero has made it, “we are a family now,” Jurek says to himself somewhat ominously, promising a new set of bloody adventures. In the end, it turns out, however, that the great deed was useless — his life has not changed: he continues his bleak, vegetative existence.

Though the novella was written sixty years ago, it never fell into oblivion. Besides new editions and translations, it was adapted to film, with a protagonist vaguely reminiscent of Patrick Bateman. /

Translated by Ágnes Orzóy

Zsuzsa Mihályi is a freelance literary translator. She translates contemporary Polish literature into Hungarian.



Andrzej Bursa:

Killing Auntie, trans. Wiesiek Powaga
(New York: New Vessel Press, 2015)

SZABOLCS LÁSZLÓ

ON

Thinking through Transition

The obvious question potential readers will have upon encountering the thick volume of Thinking through Transition will no doubt be: Do we really need another book analysing the “transition” in East Central Europe?

By now, entire libraries could be filled with articles and monographs bearing this once popular term in their titles (or its variations) including the era of “Europeanization,” “post-communism” or “post-socialism,” the period of “neoliberal hegemony” and “capitalism-building,” or even “post-Soviet post-colonialism.”

Yet, it was precisely due to the proliferation of such scholarly literature and the ambivalence of its results that the need for a renewed approach to this topic became one of the main concerns driving the academic project which took shape in the present volume. As with quality scholarship in general, the underlying justification is both well-founded and straightforward. The editors of the volume, Michal Kopeček and Piotr Wciślik, rightly point out that *Thinking through Transition* is the “first concentrated effort to explore the development of post-socialist political thought in East Central Europe from the perspective of locally sensitive and simultaneously comparative intellectual history.” (15).

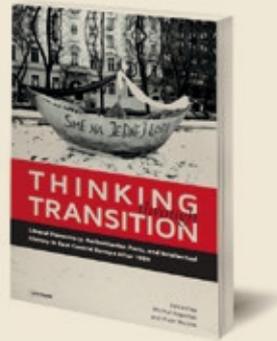
On the one hand, this effort was prompted by pragmatic considerations: as our present era is nearing another paradigmatic shift due to which the region is likely to witness significant political changes once more; there is an urgent intellectual need to examine the events and the political thought of the past decades through the lens of historical analysis. On the other hand, it was also rooted in theoretical insight. As the existing academic knowledge on the period was, and to a certain extent, still is, involved in either facilitating the “transformation” (like the ominous “transition studies” of political science) or critically reflecting on the policies being implemented (the “post-socialism studies” of sociology and anthropology), the detached approach offered by a hermeneutic discipline like intellectual history is most certainly welcome.

Grounded in empirical research sensitive to local and regional contexts, the contributors aim to analyse how political ideas worked in the post-socialist period, and how they originated, migrated, behaved and were transformed within the public sphere of East Central Europe. Focusing mainly on the Visegrad Group countries, but also on Romania and the ex-Yugoslav territories, the studies intend to present political thought in a long-term perspective, revealing a history of multiple genealogies, creative adaptations, entanglements and unintended consequences. The five sections each address a central aspect of the region’s political culture: the liberal tradition and its moment of dominance in the 1990s; the development of post-socialist conservatism and its hypothetical “counter-revolutionary” character; the rise of populism as the principal challenge to democratic politics; the post-socialist “new” Left and its transnationally convergent critical discourse; and finally, the politics of history and conflicting memories which pre-determine the dynamics of the public sphere in East Central Europe.

Based on the richness and merits of the volume, the readers are invited to discover that *Thinking through Transition* is not “just another” book on an old topic, but essential reading for those who wish to understand the period in question. Furthermore, the novelty of the approach and the scholarly — and also public — usefulness of such a col-

lective effort give ground to the hope that this volume is the first attempt in a series of historical reflections on our recent past and troubled present. /

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Thinking through Transition Liberal Democracy, Authoritarian Pasts, and Intellectual History in East Central Europe After 1989 eds. Michal Kopeček and Piotr Wciślik (New York - Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015)



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