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LET'S DUST OFF DEVELOPMENT TRACKS FOR EUROPE: DEMOCRACY AND CIVILISATION

Summary: EU strategies ought to be built with respect for the idea of a democratic society, which is one of the most valuable accomplishments of our Western civilization and united Europe. Democracy, which so often in the course of history has been threatened, effectively limited, and at times overthrown by different strains of totalitarianism and anarchy, has always required particular care from a society conscious of its values so that it may fulfil the expectations that it generates and not become a fig leaf for the misuse of power and manipulation of society. At present, the EU lacks a vision of its mission as well as strategy – the pursued goals are technical, integration without solidarity is doubtful and shared interests are rather seeming and shallow.

Keywords: real and formal democracy, development goal, development condition, strategy, offensive strategy.

1. Introduction

The initiative to organize a conference dealing with the development problems of CEE countries deserves praise in my opinion. In particular, the problems, which have arisen in the last decades, concern the whole European Union and their context is our entire modern world, which is not hard to notice today. These development problems of a socio-economic nature and the resulting dynamically growing threats are particularly harshly perceived in less developed countries – a group to which CEE countries belong. Therefore, Central Europe may be an easier place in which to articulate a credo *per se*, a developmental impulse reaching far beyond its own region.

Presumably, the main motivator for organizing this conference is fear. To put the statement more gently: the fear of less developed countries that they will be left on their own, that not only will they be unable to catch up with the European forefront, but that they will soon even lose the sight of it.

Let this justified fear serve as *casus belli* for overcoming the false conviction that we have entered a world of post-politics, leaving behind us, once and for all, the big questions regarding the shape of society, national and supranational unions. These

settlements are still ahead of us and hence in this paper I will attempt to present a critique of “prevailing views” and indicate directions in which they can be revised.

2. Fear and hope

A fear of the EU actually disintegrating, as mentioned earlier, is understandable in light of experience with the way the EU has been functioning to date. Namely, countries that are in the forefront are strengthening their competitive positions in comparison to less developed countries, which find themselves having increasing difficulties despite received financial support. Huge funds from the pockets of Old Member Northern States seem thus wasted.

Furthermore, The European forefront has certainly had enough of “saving” countries that are not coping (PIIGS) and investing in new members (CEE). Along with the need to tighten the belt in wealthier countries, the readiness to make sacrifices for the sake of the countries that are less fortunate, often culturally distant, and not always liked or respected, is decreasing. At the political level, the EU concept of “two-speed Europe” is being more firmly realized; at the level of society’s emotions, there is a growing unwillingness to give funds to weak countries and their incompetent governments.

The “cohesion” of EU countries only constitutes a value when it is a result of accepting the principle of solidarity by and for all members, which would have to be ingrained in society in order not to be just a slogan. For this reason, we need to formulate and accept shared EU goals. Without meeting these paramount conditions, further European integration is merely an administrative and technical exercise, free of political content and social value.

The myth of the magic effect of the Eurozone, one of the most important instruments of economic integration, propagated as a panacea for all economic problems, has fallen victim to the economic crisis. Observing the fate of the Eurozone, some countries either do not show any desire to enter it or are consciously delaying their joining.

An additional but a very important source of fear is the dimension, direction, and tempo of global changes: the weakening position of the United States, which for almost 70 years have led the modern world, opposed the most dangerous totalitarian regimes, set directions of economic development and, last but not least, shaped trends of social development. The positions of China, India, Brazil, and also Russia are increasing at a stunning pace. We are slowly learning to understand what this means in the spheres of production and trade. We can only imagine what will follow the increasing economic power of these nations: a change in the distribution of political power, new cultural patterns, and development trends.

Our fear of the future is fully justified. The fear of those who feel economically strong today but are afraid of losing their privileges and acquisitions, and the fear

of the weaker members, who were hoping to make the dream of a comfortable and carefree existence come true by joining the European Union. Fear can serve as an impulse, a trigger for our battalion, but it cannot become the determining factor in our strategic planning.

Fear is a bad advisor! The emotional foundations of fear independently reduce the amount of time that we dedicate to conducting an in-depth analysis of a given situation and elaborating a rational strategy. In rationally constructed development strategies, we search for opportunities for development and ways of limiting threats. When we act under the influence of fear, the focus is to reduce real or imagined threats or even threats that have been carried to us intentionally by outside sources, greatly reducing the effort put into searching for opportunity developments.

What we “lose” by thoughtlessly realizing a “fear strategy” is presumably obvious. However, we cannot end with this note, just with this kind of conclusion; fear has a preference for applying remedial means and solutions of a tactical-operational character rather than strategic. Moreover – and this is most dangerous – it raises doubts regarding the very sense of strategic thinking. An offensive strategy as opposed to a defensive strategy usually activates social energy (activates and integrates) and is formed because of recognizing concrete opportunities for development and not in isolation from them.

3. Opportunities for development

An approximation to revealing our development opportunities requires the answer to a question of fundamental importance: Can the European Union, in its current form, be considered complete and able to shoulder and solve our (EEC) development problems? Unfortunately, my response to this query is negative.

Although, the European Union is built on the acknowledgement of the primacy of the democratic system and all its members have nominally equal electoral rights and may freely use them, the real mechanism of taking the most crucial decisions for society is in fact, not transparent: it is difficult for society to see the content of these decisions, to recognize the influence certain stakeholders have on these decisions, to learn the objective facts and rational arguments. An undisrupted formal democracy ensures the influence of society on the choice of political parties, the constellation of the ruling elite. Crucial choices – the true political content – are intentionally blurred by different stakeholders operating in society for *ad hoc* goals, power plays, and financial benefits.

One can therefore say that in the EU there is a dummy democracy, elegantly constructed and so good at imitating democracy that we take it to be a real thing. This allows for not fully recognized “forces” to, outside the realm of society’s control, take over the decision process itself, which constitutes the core of power.

A paradox that hardly stirs up any reactions anymore is the fetishisation of GDP as the imperative development goal, while for a society an efficient economy and

GDP at a certain level are merely means of raising the level of the quality of life. Life, which is led in accordance with certain values held, life that – also in the political sense – does not solely revolve around production and ensuring comforts for oneself. This disseminated wonderful “reshuffle“ of development goals and means ought to be considered an achievement worthy of a Nobel Prize and its author or authors should be made public [Kiełczewski 2004]!

The ethical meaning of society's existence should not be overlooked or underrated. With this, the world of values connected to the system of democracy disappears. The justice system becomes “flexible”. Education, culture, sport, and health care become commercialised. The standard message becomes that of generational selfishness – a contemporary *carpe diem*.

CEE countries should most definitely strive towards a shared position with regard to their presence in the EU and its shape: a strategy for civilisation development in the EU area, mechanisms of political functioning of the Union (with a particular focus on the importance of a broad, democratic base for setting goals and making decisions), accepting new members, managing relations with countries outside the EU, etc. Issues pertaining to the European nations group (EEC) ought to be considered in their entire global context, not reduced to questions and problems concerning the current political game being held in our, unfortunately, peripheral EU zone.

4. Managing the state

The image of socio-political reality carried to us is full of internal inconsistencies and contradictions. If, on the one hand, we hear the postulate “less government in the economy” and, on the other hand, we observe an increase in administration concerned with the economy at the levels of local government, national government and the EU, these two facts are not really reconcilable.

The secret of this incompatibility lies in the fact that, whereas decision processes and distribution of the consequential benefits are appropriated, the state is charged with administration of the decision effects, thus all tax payers are fully “democratically” treated. After all, those who carry out tasks for us must be paid and it is better that this is done by the citizens out of their taxes, rather than by the real decision-makers. Therefore, the possibility of reducing administration is not noticed when searching for ways to cut costs. The permissiveness supported nationally and supra-nationally seems at odds with a care for the demography: Who will care for those future elders in a society without a strong family position?

To these system paradoxes, I would also like to add the scientific paradox, which in the last quarter of a century has produced an avalanche of papers on the subject of strategic management – which naturally should be noted as positive – however, all public institutions and structures have been excluded from the range of interest and predominant paradigm of the discipline in these works. Is this just an oversight or is

there a deeper-thought process behind this? In any case, it does not seem to awaken any particular concern in the circle of management specialists [Kielczewski 2010].

5. Conclusions

To sum up, the democratic system in the European Union urgently needs to be made real; its developmental goals and the indispensable measures needed to reach those goals must be defined – absolutely in this logical order. EU citizens should have a real influence on the choice of development goals and ensured access to objective information about the realization of these goals. The role of public authorities ought to be firstly responsibility for the realization of development goals defined in the democratic process and organising strategic co-operation. The EU development strategy could redefine the significance of the European Union and its global role.

6. Final comments

These short comments, which I have decided to present to the initiators, organizers, and participants of the conference are not – as one might think – an expression of disapproval for their initiative and effort. I have only put forth the opinion that the situation in which we the Union and CEE find ourselves is more serious than we may be aware of at first glance and, being conscious of this, we ought to mobilize us to search for a development strategy worthy of the challenges ahead of us.

This is not time to make small repairs to the boat we are all sitting in, it is time to durably rebuild the vessel. Our ability to strengthen and deepen democratic mechanisms in each Member State and in EU institutions will reinstate and return the respect that other nations have had for us and will raise our prestige and attractiveness on the global arena.

In my own personal opinion, heavily influenced by the observed dynamic of changes taking place on a global scale, there is no time to lose. Therefore, I believe that attempts to extract some small concessions for EEC states are, at this point, both very difficult and not very promising. Thus far, these helpful concessions have proven to be sometimes very costly for the beneficiaries. I propose an escape forwards – an offensive strategy.

Literature

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ODŚWIEŻMY TROPY ROZWOJOWE EUROPY: DEMOKRACJĘ I CYWILIZACJĘ

Streszczenie: Strategię Unii Europejskiej należy budować z szacunkiem dla idei społeczeństwa demokratycznego, która stanowi jedną z najcenniejszych zdobyczy naszej zachodniej cywilizacji i zjednoczonej Europy. Demokracja, która tyle razy w historii była zagrożona, skutecznie ograniczana lub okresami „znoszona” przez różnego rodzaju totalitaryzmy i anarchie, wymaga zawsze szczególnej troski świadomych jej wartości społeczeństw, po to żeby niosła pokładane w niej oczekiwania, a nie posłużyła za listek figowy dla nadużycia władzy i manipulacji społeczeństwem. Dziś w Unii Europejskiej brak jest wizji misji i strategii. Ponadto stawiane cele są techniczne, integracja bez solidarności wątpliwa, wspólnota interesów przeważnie płytka i pozorna.