

Europe, European Union, Hungary

What Use Is the European Union for Us?

I. Geographic, cultural and political Europe

The European Union is a unit of territorial administration. At the same time it is a political organisation. It is neither more nor less. “Political Europe”, the Union will never be identical with Europe in the *geographic sense of the term*, nor with Europe in the *cultural sense*.

Europe in the *geographic sense of the term* extends up to the Ural Mountains. The Union presumably would not extend that far. The current leaders of Ukraine though do their best in the various expert committees of the Union to have their state admitted to “political Europe”. The leaders of the Union set an “active neighbourhood policy” and good contracts rather with the state formations that have evolved in the eastern part of Europe as a long-term aim. Presumably the Russian state wants to remain an Asian power, for there is no Russia without the Asian parts. And, to be frank: it is only the Russian state that may be able to link the huge area extending from the Urals to Vladivostok into world civilisation – at least within a foreseeable period of time. At any rate, it is repeated at the sessions of various European committees almost each year that Turkey is not “European” either in a geographic or in a cultural sense. Once and ultimately it should be stated that the candidacy of Turkey for the EU is the product of the Cold War and of the power policy of the United States. The Cold War considerations of the United States played a significant role in the prehistory of the European Union. The aim was to encircle the other great power of the Cold War, the Soviet Union. This policy helped the integration of the states located on the “Eastern” territory into the Union, the admission of Greece and the “pre-admission” of Turkey. Just as the remnants of this world strategy promote the integration of Romania into NATO and the Union.

Europe in a *cultural sense of the term* is a disputed concept by itself. It is a concept of changing content. If “European culture” is identified with the set of daily customs based on Christianity, its influence is totally separated from Europe in a geographic sense: it crosses over the geographic borders. The sphere of “European culture” extends over the so-called “white man’s” zone of the globe, but definitely up to Vladivostok and even to the American continent. For

the time being there is no sense in talking about the accession of those areas to the European Union. (The common grounds of "European culture" that extended from the geographic Europe to Latin America and Siberia in the 16th to 20th centuries would become visible when and if the Far-Eastern cultures strive to achieve hegemony. Then the threads keeping us living in European culture and other peoples of the different continents together would grow stronger.)

The only standpoint that is acceptable by all for the time being is to restrict the European Union to areas where peoples following the Western Christian (Roman Catholic) and Christian (Protestant) principles of faith live. At present, however, it is not seen what factors would become stronger in world politics, and how the technical and informatics tools of humanity would develop. These factors, however, may fundamentally determine the extension and borders of the units of territorial administration in the coming decades. These factors, further on, will influence the delineation of the Union borders, too. The expansion of the Union to the east and southeast would also be influenced by what the internal structure of the Union would be in the coming decade. It is already a permanent topic of discussion in the various European expert committees what changes are demanded by world politics in the structure of the European Union (see the problems of an autonomous armed force, or of direct taxation, etc.), and what further changes would be required by eastern enlargement?

One thing is sure: there does and would be existing societies following the "European set of values" outside the EU...

II. What is the Meaning of the European Union? What Do We Expect from the European Union?

Citizen's competitiveness and a better quality of life

The European Union is an organisation of territorial administration *offering better conditions to its citizens living on its territory* for life that can be lived only once, than *the administrative systems of nation-states*. The administrative system of nation-states has become obsolete in the age of informatics. This system is opposed to the demands of industrial mass production and hinders the satisfaction of the consumer needs of people. It also hinders the free flow of persons and cultural goods. It hinders the management of natural processes not adjusting to state borders. Our assumption is that the movement of persons and *intellectual and material products* would be totally free on the territory of the European Union, and last but not least the movement of expertise would also be free. The advantage of big space in the economy is that labour freely flows following the demands and investments, and goods would freely flow to consumer demands and to the market. At the same time *competition* would grow among employees and would encourage the citizen to achieve higher levels of self-education.

It means that the competitiveness of citizens living on the territory of the Union would grow. It is all the more necessary for the old and future citizens of the Union to be competitive with Far-Eastern and American people in the 21st century. The new industrial and technical revolution and the age of the chip elevate each village and job to be parts of global competition. And it is not states any more that would compete in this global-level competition but *production units and individuals*. The Union has to promote stamina in this competition. (The area of the Union as an administrative unit would be 370,000 sq km and the number of its inhabitants will be above 400 million. In other words, it may be the strongest economic and cultural power of the world in an intelligent organisational system. Only it should not occur to anyone to utilise this *power for violence* for the spread of his own set of values as it was the will of the Soviet Union and of the United States!)

Parallel to all this human freedom to move brings along the movement of *cultural values* as well. (This is why I consistently support the freedom of migration and I repeat: the EU is worth nothing if restrictions on migration are introduced among states within its territory.)

New cultural values develop. The different orders of tradition are getting mixed, the old orders of tradition are being modernised and adjusted to the new conditions.

Harmony of man and nature

The European Union promotes the institutionalisation of a *new relationship between nature and man*. The administrative borders of the Union are adjusted to the natural unit that is to the European peninsula, thus it offers an opportunity for the emergence of a new strategy of coexistence between the human community and the natural conditions of the habitat. The Union offers an opportunity for the harmony of the processes of natural as well as human history. The borders of the nation-state do not only limit the movement of culture, labour and goods but hinder the understanding of the interrelationships between cross-border natural processes, the study of the self-determining regularities of nature, the mutual effects of the changes of climate, air, water, and soil and the effects of technical development and the building activities of man on nature. The European Union allows for a new type of environmental economy (including food production) and it may be a means to the education of the human factor (a citizen caring for his/her environment) of sustainable growth.

Peace on the continent

The Union makes peace on the continent. The Europe of the 20th century was destroyed by two world wars. The productive and cultural communities of the

United States could take over the European ones because the two world wars took more than ten million *victims*, destroyed cities and the *best technical apparatuses*. And national animosities decimated or, in some areas, exterminated the middle classes of the continent.

Peace means social peace as well, in other words, ensuring democracy and human freedoms first and foremost. Peace also means the dissolution of national animosities, the elimination of the three centuries-old national and ethnic, dogmatic and religious Cold War of Europe.

Regaining European pride

The European Union may return our human pride and future-oriented thinking. The European citizen is blamed daily by Americans, Oriental people or by himself: two world wars in the 20th century, genocides in the 16th to 19th centuries on continents outside Europe are associated with the history of our ancestors, as it is said. The European citizen therefore is not unjustly past-oriented, and looks at his/her own culture with constant self-criticism and self-reproach, while the American and Chinese cultures are future-oriented and proud ones.

The EU may be a federal state eliminating wars and of a return to the principles of classical democracy, and may create a new European identity. This new European identity rests on a self-critical view of history but contains pride as well: pride because European culture, technology and community organisation led the development of the world for five centuries and had been its driving force. It proudly states that it utilises the European historical values, such as the Judeo-Christian *order of tradition* and the Greco-Roman *political organisation* in a future-oriented way and, if needed, confronts them with the culture of other continents.

Representation of the European set of values in the world

The European Union may contribute to ensuring the presence of the Judeo-Christian set of values that has evolved on the continent to a globalised culture of the 21st century. It does not mean struggle against cultures existing and gaining strength in Asia and Africa. On the contrary, it may contribute to the avoidance of armed clashes with them. We, European intellectuals, though only a limited team of us, have already learned: *that our own European set of values must not be demanded from cultures outside Europe*, we must not force our set of values on the whole world with the help of our wonder weapons. Not even if our superiority in technology and community organisation would make it possible and permit it as it could be seen in the 16th to 20th centuries. Apparently some of the

American intellectuals and politicians have not yet drawn this conclusion. We imagine a new symbiosis of the different cultures in the 21st century. It would be promoted by the industrial and technical revolution, by the revolution of transport and communications and a further expansion of the radius of man's thinking and mobility, manifest in the growth of the exchange of goods and individual migration as well as in a cultural mix.

III. A Europe of States, Nations or Citizens?

We are in quest of our place in Europe. We are in quest of our place as a *community of citizens*, as a *national and cultural community* and we are in quest of our place as individuals.

The citizens of the European Union do not feel the major change for the time being that would be represented in their life by the emergence of the Union. First of all because the inhabitants of the current Member States of the Union have simply grown into the current framework of the European Union during the past centuries. It can be easily demonstrated on the maps: The so-called Hallstatt Culture of the 8th century BC was essentially the culture of the peoples currently living within the framework of the European Union. In other words, the current Union unity is the result of a development for more than 2500 years. The states currently waiting for admission, the peripheral areas of the so-called Western Europe from the North Sea to the Adriatic were just as well the border regions of the Hallstatt Culture.

Loosening of citizenship identity

Presumably our *citizenship* attachment would be reduced. Currently our citizenship identity practically squeezes out any other identity. This excessive weight would end. It would, however, survive for about a century on the micro-level of life, only with a different accent. After several millennia the power of states would decrease because the *states* would transfer a large part of their military, foreign affairs and financial functions to the Union. Yet, the states would remain units of local administration for several decades, only the state of authority would become a state of service provision. State administration will have to operate first and foremost health care, school education, local administration and safety, and the social net. Naturally it is a separate question: *what would happen to the extremely large number of employees of the nation-state?* In Hungary too one of the reasons of permanent budgetary problems is that the taxpayer community is unable to produce and keep the wages on appropriate level of the approximately 800 thousand state employees (administration, health care, education, etc.).

Strengthening of national identity

Presumably *national communities* would be stronger than citizens' communities. A basis of that growing strength is that the significance of local languages and national cultures would survive within the Union.

The problem of communications by languages inside the Union should be separately discussed. As elsewhere in the world, presumably three levels of language communication will stabilise in Europe as well. In the 21st century there would be several local lingua francas besides the global level one (English). (In Europe surely it would be Spanish, German, Russian, and French). And side by side all this the national languages will be alive on the third level.

It cannot be excluded either that the European Union would split into two parts socially and culturally on the basis of the knowledge of languages: the part of society speaking foreign languages would fill certain occupational branches and would rise fast, whereas the other part would constitute a social stratum experiencing a *socially and culturally lower level*.

Lots of discussions would be still carried on the "existence as a cultural nation", stressed by me for decades, that would unfold in the Union. Surely the "state-nation" of French type would weaken as the Union develops and the nation would live as a cultural entity. There would be lots of discussions however on what institutions would be the carriers of that existence as a cultural nation? The one definite element is language. One may have only assumptions as to how far the mother tongue would survive as the basic language of the education system. Surely much broader space should be ensured for education in foreign languages and that too out of the EU budget. It is also unknown how many languages an average individual is capable of learning. Particularly if the European school system continues to build the blind alley adapted from the American education system. It is also sure that those who have poorer talent for learning foreign languages or make a wrong decision and do not learn foreign languages, the lingua francas should not be allowed to socially sink because in that case social tension will erode the productive capacities of the European societies.

IV. Creation of a Citizens' Europe

We are going to join Europe as individuals

In order to interpret this statement one should survey the levels of European integration. The first level is *economic* integration (lasting from 1950 up to 1999, when the euro was introduced.) The second level is the *integration of states* (that

would progress from 1992 perhaps up to 2030.) The third level is the *integration of nations* (began in 1963 and accelerating currently). The fourth level is the *integration of citizens* (beginning in 1992 and presumably it would take decades).

The aim is the creation of a *citizens' Europe*. To be a *citizen of the European Union* means that I have free movement in a multicoloured production and cultural market within the large space of the Union. To be a citizen of the European Union means that I am able to determine my aims in life within the broad geographic borders of the Union and better find my success than before. The rural or small-town craftsmen just as well as the office-bearing intellectual do not think in terms of the nation-state but within a continental radius of knowledge.

The West European societies have reached the European Union as a unit of territorial administration as a result of organic development. Similar aims in life and similar institutions of daily routine have created the community of legislation and administrative principles of the states brought together in the Union. The citizens of the French, German, Dutch, etc. states experience *European Union citizenship* as something natural. More over, they may justly feel that nothing else happens since 1992 but the standardisation of their own set of values and their generalisation in the western part of the continent.

The situation is different in the Central-East European candidate and new Member States. The comprehensive study of the readiness of Hungary for the European Union began in March 1998. The level of the agriculture, environmental protection, legal system, etc. of the candidate countries was surveyed along the articulation of public administration, and studied profoundly how far they aligned to the respective regulations of the European Union. It has become apparent only now that membership in the European Union is going to be a *forced modernisation* in many respects for Hungarians. Hungarians getting into the Union would not only sense the presence of the EU by the currency to be introduced, and by the presence of even more international enterprises in their environment, but also by the fact that white and coloured glasses would have to be selected, that waste water would have to be rigorously conducted into systems of treatment, that a certain percentage of packaging materials would have to be produced from recycled substances, etc. Further on, Hungarians living in the EU would have to rediscover the success of *diligence and endeavour*, which the Soviet system institutionally tried to make them forget about.

In other words, the citizens of the new entrant states should be told what it meant to be a citizen of the European Union regarding their living conditions. The tiller of the soil *should* just as well *be told* what may expect in the vegetable market, or in the market of pet breeding and big farm animals, as one should be able to explain to the craftsmen or entrepreneurs what opportunities are offered by integration.

V. The European Union and our politicians and intellectuals

Who would tell the citizens of acceding countries what living conditions and conditions in general are awaiting them in the Union? Only those can tell *who possess knowledge about it*. They can be the *intellectuals* (scholars, teachers) and *politicians*.

A new type of political practice would be necessary in the acceding countries. The *relationship between the politician and the voter* should not only consist of persuading the latter one to support the programme of his/her political party so that they may be seconded to parliament or to the local organisation of representation. The politicians should carry on activities of imparting information in their constituencies, too. But, is this expectation a realistic one?

It should be sincerely stated that a change of outlook of life at least as large-scale would take place in Hungary in the coming decades as the one experienced for the last time by Hungarian society between 1948 and 1951. There would be, however, differences in the nature of change. One of the differences is that this *change of outlook of life* would not be forced by political administration and not by violence exercised on the inhabitants, as it was done after 1948, but it would be the conditions inside the economy, the regulations and incentives of the economy and legislation that would force them. It is not excluded that at least as big *intra-social upward and downward mobility* would take place on family level in the coming one or two decades as it had happened at the time when the dictatorship of the proletariat was introduced. Another difference is that this time *it would depend on the decision of individuals, on their abilities and cleverness whether they would belong to the group of those moving upward or sinking*. Therefore one may make a good or a wrong *decision*. One may lay the foundations of the *upward mobility of a family for decades*, provided we make our children learn an occupation that is Europe-compatible, if we arm them with Europe-compatible skills. And individuals or families that currently have a good livelihood and belong to the middle class may easily become declining ones if their *qualifications are adjusted to the norms of the old system* and they are unable to utilise their labour force according to the new norms.

For the time being massive unemployment and the sinking of personal existence manifest themselves only in the labour market of large-scale industries and agriculture. The first ten years of the EU, however, may already shake the fundamentals of the *present middle class of administrators, too*. Neither the professor nor the local administrator would succeed if he would not have *European skills* (if *he does not speak foreign languages*), if he is not prepared for international competition.

To tell all this to the voters may *not* be "*expedient*" to a politician, for people may leave a meeting of the electorate pondering on what they have heard with bitterness.

It would be a major bravery to dare put the question how well informed our politicians are in matters of the European Union? Essentially, how far does the party politics of multiparty system educate so-called *specialist politicians*? Just as well we have no courage to state that a large part of our *politicians*, similarly to the West European ones, are actually not *specialist politicians*, but *party activists*. The culture of specialist politicians is missing from the majority, consequently they also lack experience in European specialised politics. Do we have the courage to put it on the agenda of discussion at home and in Europe that what is called politics today is, to a large part an activity squeezed into intrigue and the building of personal interest groups? Therefore it is difficult to expect official politicians to speak about European future awaiting citizens, the tillers of the soil, craftsmen and administrators, authentically.

In this situation the responsibility of intellectuals is even greater than in general. They should take up much more of the programme introducing "European skills" domestically! Much more of European skills should be acquired particularly by the intellectuals who are teachers from the lowest level to university education. Not speaking about intellectuals who are writers and editors...