

**Reflection group on
“The Spiritual and Cultural Dimension of Europe”**

**Public Debate in Warsaw on “The Borders of Europe”
May 29th, 2003**

Summary:

Introduction:

The public debate in Warsaw on “The Borders of Europe” was organised by the Institute for Human Sciences and the Batory Foundation within a project on the “Spiritual and Cultural Dimension of Europe”, initiated by the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, and co-ordinated by the Institute for Human Sciences. The debate was hosted by the President of The Republic of Poland, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, and took place in his residence, the Warsaw Belweder. Participants of the meeting included members of the reflection group on “The Spiritual and Cultural Dimension of Europe” (Kurt Biedenkopf, Bronisław Geremek, Will Hutton, Krzysztof Michalski); its expert guests Timothy Garton Ash and Charles of Schwarzenberg; representatives of the European Commission (Sandro Gozi, Jean-Claude Eeckhout, Bruno Dethomas, Giulia Amaducci); guests from Russia (Yuri Levada, Grigory Yavlinsky), Ukraine (Yaroslav Hrytsak, Mykola Riabchuk, Leonid Bilousov) and Turkey (Yasar Yakis, Candan Azer); Polish intellectuals and politicians (Danuta Hübner, Tadeusz Iwiński, Lena Kolarska-Bobińska, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Piotr Nowina-Konopka, Janusz Onyszkiewicz, Wanda Rapaczyński, Adam Daniel Rotfeld, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Jan Skórzyński, Aleksander Smolar, Jolanta Szymanek-Deresz, Jakub Boratyński); as well as journalists from leading western and eastern European newspapers and press agencies (“Gazeta Wyborcza”, “Magyar Hirlap”, “Novye Vremia”, PAP, “Polityka”, “Rzeczpospolita”, “Unia&Polska”, “Die Welt”, “Die Zeit”).

The main objective of the reflection group on “The Spiritual and Cultural Dimension of Europe” has been to grasp those aspects of European culture and values that might serve as integrative forces in the future enlarged European Union. Within this general framework, the main objective of the Warsaw debate was to reflect on the cultural affinities and differences between the EU of 25 and its eastern neighbours (Russia, Turkey, Ukraine), that could orient future EU policy towards these countries. Another purpose of the debate was to foster public

discussion on European Enlargement in Poland before the Polish accession referendum.

The debate was divided into two sessions, aimed at highlighting the problem of “The borders of Europe” from an “inside” and “outside” point of view respectively, by speakers representing current EU member states on the one hand (introductory statements by: S. Gozi, K. Biedenkopf and T. Garton Ash) and guests from the countries on the eastern border of the future enlarged European Union, on the other (introductions by Yaroslav Hrytsak, Yasar Yakis and Grigory Yavlinsky). The first session was chaired by Krzysztof Michalski (rector of the Institute for Human Sciences, chairman of the reflection group), the second – by Aleksander Smolar (President of the Batory Foundation). The confrontation of both the “inside” and “outside” perspective allowed for a more comprehensive view on the following topics: the inner cohesion of the future EU; new enlargement prospects, new patterns of cross-border relations, future European foreign and security policy, EU relations with the United States.

European borders – the central dilemma:

Two kind of European borders were discussed during the meeting: “the borders of Europe” on the one side and “the borders of the future enlarged European Union“ on the other. Timothy Garton Ash gave a critical introductory overview of the main criteria used for determining the borders of Europe and of the respective models of Europe: the geographic Europe; the Europe of Christianity or post-Christendom and the Europe of the Enlightenment. Some major drawbacks of the geographic (T.Iwiński, J.Onyszkiewicz, A.D.Rotfeld) and religious criteria (T.Iwiński, Y.Yakis) were highlighted during the discussion that followed. As for the Europe of the Enlightenment model, its constitutive values - such as human and minority rights, pluralism, democratic freedoms – were depicted not only as shared by people in various regions of the world but also having a universal vocation, and thus contradicting the very idea of borders.

The central problem that emerged with respect to the question of the borders of the future European Union was a major dilemma that the EU of 25 shall have to face, rephrased by a number of speakers as: “openness *versus* viability” (President Kwaśniewski’s address; S. Gozi); “diversity *versus* cohesion” (K. Biedenkopf); “the logic of unity *versus* the logic of peace” (T. Garton Ash). Both logics, pertaining to future EU policy towards its neighbouring countries, received in-depth consideration during both sessions.

Referring to the previous meetings of the reflection group on “The Spiritual and Cultural Dimension of Europe”, its representative, Kurt Biedenkopf, highlighted the importance of cohesion and homogeneity in the future enlarged European Union, as a condition for its inner stability both political and economic. On the one hand, he argued, the legitimacy of political decisions taken within the institutional framework of the enlarged Union will require a sense of common identity, that will encourage groups representing minority interests (national, regional, ethnic, religious etc.) to conform with majority decisions. On the other hand, a major growth of economic diversity within the EU will demand solidarity between its citizens, resulting in a willingness of the more prosperous countries to provide economic support for the less affluent ones. There have to be limits to the expansion of the Union for the sake of its workability (Ch.Schwarzenberg) and manageability (L. Bilousov). The logic of unity sets constraints upon economic and cultural diversity within the Union (K. Biedenkopf) and, accordingly, upon future enlargements (J.Onyszkiewicz).

The logic of peace, on the other hand, is inspired by Enlightenment universalism and the political goal of extending the area of stability and of the rule of law. In the case of European international policy this logic, as Timothy Garton Ash argued, followed by Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, is best served in the form of successive EU enlargements, since the Union is most influential abroad, when it offers membership prospects. It is difficult to set limits upon this process, since one enlargement naturally leads to another, and new member states become advocates of further enlargement. A reference was also made to some economic predictions in favour of continuing the process (A. Smolar), the fact that economic ties come to existence more or less spontaneously and it is difficult to control them politically (J. Saryusz-Wolski), as well as to the importance of cultural diversity, perceived as a richness and not a burden (Y. Yakis).

The “diversity *versus* cohesion” dilemma or the problematic relation between “the logic of unity” and “the logic of peace” was elaborated with reference to the main point of interest for the reflection group – the spiritual dimension of Europe. European values are universal in character and thus the borders of Europe have to be considered as permanently open and stretching beyond the borders of the European Union – a point which was stated with particular emphasis by the guests from the east, G.Yavlinsky, Y.Levada and Y. Yakis. Values constitutive of Europe cannot serve as instruments for exclusion from the EU

(B.Geremek). Yet, although the borders of Europe may be open, the borders of the EU as a complex political entity have to be determined by political decision (K.Biedenkopf, B.Geremek, J.Onyszkiewicz, T.Iwiński). This does not mean, however, that European values are irrelevant for the European Union. On the one hand, an openness towards others, a universalistic “logic of peace” is a fundamental European value and as such should inspire EU foreign policy (A.Kwaśniewski). On the other hand certain values can turn out particularly relevant for cohesion and homogeneity within the EU. (K.Biedenkopf, K.Michalski, J.Onyszkiewicz). The necessary compromise between openness and workability of the Union has to be determined politically, but it is culture that orients and heartens political decisions.

New patterns of cross-border relationships seen “from inside”:

An important topic of the discussion was introduced in the address of the Polish president to the speakers and elaborated by the representative of the European Commission to the debate, Sandro Gozi. The main goal of the EU of 25 with respect to its relations with eastern neighbouring countries is to establish new patterns of coexistence that could overcome a simple “in or out” alternative. The Union would thus be offering, Sandro Gozi argued, more than pure partnership but less than membership. In order to achieve this goal, the EU should provide new forms of substantial co-operation and cultural exchange with its neighbouring countries, as well as stimuli for their development - it should offer, in the words of Romano Prodi, “everything but institutions”. Sandro Gozi reminded the speakers, that an initiative of this kind has already been launched by President Prodi in order to create a “Ring of Friends” around the Union, from Russia to Moldova.

The issue of future EU strategies towards neighbouring countries unearthed a number of controversies. Some of the speakers expressed profound scepticism with regard to further enlargements in the nearest future (K. Biedenkopf, Ch. Schwarzenberg, J.Onyszkiewicz). The European Commission proposal presented by Sandro Gozi thus received a considerable amount of interest and attention (T. Garton Ash, K.Biedenkopf). Timothy Garton Ash pointed out the particular case of Turkey in this context. Breaking the promise of membership given to Turkey, he argued, could seriously undermine the democratisation process in Islamist countries. Bronisław Geremek proposed François Mitterand’s idea of a European confederation as a possible model for future EU relations with bordering countries. Timothy Garton Ash, on the other hand, warned against the weaknesses of this model. He insisted on

the need of establishing free trade areas with neighbouring countries as a condition for successful coexistence. Kurt Biedenkopf discussed possible dangers of such an arrangement, which might lead to a situation where neighbouring non-members would be taking advantage of the integrated EU economy, without bearing the costs of its maintenance. Jacek Saryusz-Wolski expressed an opposite view, referring to Polish pre-accession experience. It is not a convenient and hardly democratic a situation to be offered the market without having a voice in policy-making, he argued. Countries like Turkey or current candidate member states were ready to accept such a position only for the sake of future membership.

EU policy towards future neighbours seen “from outside”:

Guests from eastern Europe presented their view on future EU borders and their own expectations towards future EU international policy. Yasar Yakis ardently defended the idea of Turkish membership in the EU, justifying this position with reference to the effort Turkey has put into adjusting its economic and political systems to EU criteria, as well as to the tightening of economic bonds between the Union and Turkey. He pointed out Turkey’s geostrategic position and the secular character of his country, that matches dominant European trends with respect to religion. Candan Azer referred to the common historical experience of Europe and Turkey, arguing that in the era of globalisation we should emphasise commonness rather than differences.

Yaroslav Hrytsak described in his introductory statement the specificity of Eastern Europe from a historic point of view, as well as referring to the experience of communism and post-communism in this region. Both Yaroslav Hrytsak and Grigory Yavlinsky argued that even though political and economic conditions in Ukraine and Russia often fail to comply with European principles of democracy and the free market, these basic values are in fact shared by Eastern Europeans as a reality they strongly aspire to and strive for. Russia and Ukraine may not be part of the EU – now and possibly for a long time to come – but this does not mean that they do not belong to Europe. Moreover, the kind of attitude the Union assumes towards problems and dramas experienced by people in these countries is in fact an indicator of the condition and strength of European values within the EU itself.

Grigory Yavlinski expressed in this context some harsh criticism with regard to Union policy towards Russia. He pointed out its indifference towards the tragedy in Chechnya and the problem of visa

restrictions for Russians travelling to the EU. A chance to get to know Europe, he argued, could significantly contribute to the spreading of pro-democratic and pro-liberal trends among Russian citizens. Leonid Bilousov presented the official position of the Ukrainian government, which is not applying for membership but would like to have an accession prospect open for Ukraine. Both Leonid Bilousov and Yaroslav Hrytsak emphasised the fact that such a prospect would have enormous impact on the development of the reform process in Ukraine.

The challenge of America and the need for a new EU security policy:

A discussion on future EU international policy naturally led to the problem of its relations with the United States. Some of the speakers depicted America as a European superpower (A.D.Rotfeld, G. Yavlinski) and Europe's natural partner; others presented it as a major threat to European unity. Kurt Biedenkopf, Timothy Garton Ash and Krzysztof Bobiński ("Unia&Polska") expressed the view that America may no longer be interested in having an integrated Europe. Will Hutton argued that the sharpening economic crisis in the US can have dramatic consequences for European economy, the Eurozone in particular, which can undermine European unity, if not lead to the disintegration of the European Union.

The need for a major reorientation of European foreign policy was repeated several times. The European Union was described as a complex political organism (A.Smolar, L.Bilousov), requiring new international policy strategies. Adam Daniel Rotfeld argued, that the EU should constitute a pluralistic community of security; Grigory Yavlinsky opted for the formation of a European security system other than NATO, that would live up to the challenges and threats of the XXI century, as well as for the creation of a Russian-European missile defence system. Co-operation with Russia, he argued, is not only necessary for effective European security but also for the competitiveness of European economy against the threat of the domination of the United States and China. Russia needs both America and the European Union as its strategic partners, since they have been representing the same unipolar world of European values. However, Grigory Yavlinsky explained, if the relations between the US and the Union were to undergo a major transformation, this would lead to a reorientation of current Russian foreign policy.