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THE EUROPE OF TOMORROW – WHAT CAN WE EXPECT?

The International Congress, *Europe of Our Dreams. The Common European Good in Theology, Ethics and Economics*, held in Hanover, 24-27 October 1991, was organized by three academic institutions from three countries: Germany, France and Poland – Forschungsinstitut für Philosophie Hannover, Institut Catholique de Paris and the Catholic University of Lublin. Apart from representatives of these institutions, scientists, journalists and social workers from Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, and Great Britain also participated in this meeting. This was one of the numerous symposia about Europe which, in recent years, have taken place in Europe. In this period of ongoing rapid changes, the Europeans diligently investigate the identity of their continent and its inhabitants. And, as usual, the interested readers also received the fruits of their study in the form of a book.¹

TWO TURNING POINTS

October 1991, when the Congress was held, fell between two symbolic dates in the history of contemporary Europe. The first of these was autumn 1989 – the autumn of the nations of Central Eastern

Europe, the symbolic message of the breaking down of the Berlin Wall, the end of the era of Real Socialism and of the order of Yalta. And the second date: 1 January 1993, when – as P. Koslowski wrote in his *Introduction* to the aforementioned book – “the integration of Europe will become a reality and one common economic space will emerge, and because economics strongly affects everyday culture, a space of common culture will come into existence” (p. 9).

Which of these two dates is more important for the future of Europe? Is it the former, the unexpected, great in spiritual and socio-moral significance, and rich in consequences never before dreamt of in this part of Europe? Let us recall the words expressing this great surprise, the words with which the President of Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Havel, greeted John Paul II in Prague in the spring of 1990: “I do not know if I know what a miracle is, but I know that this is a miracle...” Or is maybe the date of full integration of the European Union – planned long ago in the congress halls and offices of Brussels and Luxembourg – more important for the future of Europe?

Many ask themselves the question whether the events which have taken place in both parts of our continent will have equally important influence on the future shape of – as it is sometimes named – the United States of Europe. Will Central Eastern Europe share the lot of the former GDR (with all its positive

¹ *Europa jutra. Europejski rynek wewnętrzny jako zadanie kulturalne i gospodarcze*, Peter Koslowski (ed.), Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, Lublin 1994, 370 pp. The book has also appeared in Germany and France, in these languages respectively.

and negative consequences), which has simply been "annexed" to the FRG?

The above questions spring from the differences between the experiences of the inhabitants of both parts of the continent. These differences found their expression in the slightly different emphasis made by the representatives of the institutions which organized the Hanover Congress, published in the reviewed book under the general title *Chrześcijaństwo jako pomost między narodami* (Christianity as a Bridge between Nations). In his presentation, Rev. Prof. Stanisław Wielgus, Rector of the Catholic University of Lublin, stressed that it is necessary for Europe to return to its spiritual roots, and particularly to the "Christian understanding of freedom which takes into account the superiority of the unchanging moral law given by God over all other laws – in opposition to the more and more widespread conceptions in which man is not a lector, but a creator of moral norms – that is, someone who stands beyond the Decalogue" (p. 200). Warning against the possibility of "transforming European Christianity into the dominance over the minds or into the almost political power which has at its disposal the means of pressure and constraint" (p. 206), Prof. Michel Quesnel, vice-director of the Catholic Institute in Paris, pointed to the meaning of the ecumenical threads in the Christian tradition: "Christianity really fulfills its task when it builds bridges" (p. 207). The practical problems (mainly related to nationalities and economics), which follow from the process of the unification of Europe were indicated by Prof. Peter Koslowski, Director of the Philosophical Research Institute in Hanover.

Despite the above-mentioned differences in experience, all the authors of the book *Europe of Tomorrow* have no doubt

that the new period in the history of Europe has begun. The task, then, of intellectuals is "to create together a Europe of the future, a Europe which will be not only a dream about Europe, but a Europe of dreams" (P. Koslowski, *Wprowadzenie. Wyobrażenie przyszłej Europy – The Picture of Future Europe*. Introduction, p. 28). This "historical optimism" of the editor of the book, P. Koslowski, can be also found in papers by many other authors. "Europe of Tomorrow" is not only a fact that should be recognized, but is primarily a fact in whose creation one should collaborate or should – in a way – serve. This requires the creation of a new ethos of Europe, the revision of many traditional concepts such as "sovereignty" or "nation", and the founding of new European institutions. "Therefore, the nations of Europe" – writes Koslowski – "should create Europe in their imagination" (*ibid.*).

"ENTANGLED WITH HISTORY"

"The history of my personal life is a fragment of the history of your life – of the history of my parents, my friends, my enemies, and many unknown people. We are literally «entangled with history»" (P. Ricoeur, *Jakiego nowego ethosu potrzebuje Europa – What New Ethos does Europe Need?*, p. 104). Despite the fact that the Congress participants, and the authors of the book, fundamentally "think towards the future," their reflection often turned towards the past and common tradition. In this light it is easier to answer the questions of what Europe is today and what are its current needs.

Europe – this is a neighbourhood, the interweaving of human ways, lots and interests. This was depicted in an interesting way by the historian Karl Schlögel

(*Powszechnie dobro w Europie po przewyciężeniu jej podziału. Poszukiwania w nowym obszarze doświadczeń* – The Common Good in Europe after the Overcoming of its Division. Investigations in the New Field of Experience). According to him, the history of Europe may be looked at through the prism of inter-human contacts which originated, for example, on an economic basis. The symbol of this is the map of Europe criss-crossed by trade routes going in all directions, often far beyond its frontiers. The period of the continent's division broke this natural mutual communication between people, which favoured the creation of Europe's welfare. At present we are entering the second *Gründerzeit*: "What today often seems a utopia has already happened once before. Students of Moscow and Kharkov in Heidelberg and Tübingen – we have seen it before. German engineers in the Donbas – they are not there for the first time. Fast trains between Berlin and Prague were once faster and more comfortable. St. Petersburg was an international city, a New York of Europe – maybe it will become so once again. Dubrovnik as the link between Bizance and Venice – maybe it will become one again, if it survives the bombing. A weekly ferry connection between Kiel, Riga, Tallin and St. Petersburg – maybe we will soon catch up with 1920. The Jagiellonian University as the intellectual centre of a universal Europe, unified by language, extending from Padua to Salamanca? Why not? At the end of the twentieth century we discover how far we have remained behind Hanza from seven centuries ago" (p. 149). In other words, we are on the threshold of the possibility of regaining wasted time. To realize this we need exchange in Europe. The principle of a new Europe should be, as Ricoeur shows, "the principle of universal

translatability" of languages and of cultures. It should be followed by the principle of the exchange of traditions, and, on this basis by "mutual help in liberating the vital and regenerative forces." All this should lead up to the "model of forgiveness." "It is true that forgiveness in the full sense of the word goes far beyond political categories; it belongs to a certain order – to the order of love – which surpasses the order of morality. Forgiveness pertains to the economy of gift, whose logic of superabundance surpasses the logic of mutuality" (p. 107).

POST-MODERNISTIC EUROPE

According to J. B. Metz (*Chrześcijaństwo i klimat duchowy Europy* – Christianity and the Spiritual Climate of Europe) and J. Van Gerwen (*Europa sensu i nonsensu. Szkic europejskiego obszaru społeczno-kulturowego* – Europe of Sense and Non-sense. The Sketch of European Social and Cultural Region), many traditional notions connected with Christianity should be interpreted in such a way that they could be included in the landscape of the Post-modernistic culture, characteristic of contemporary Europe. "When one hears the interpreters of sceptical humanism, such as Rorty or Glucksman, one is confronted with the ethics of negation, with the ethics of suspicion, which is defined through tolerance, through the critique of totalitarianism and dogmatism, the principle of non-violence, the desire to avoid cruel and criminal behaviour. It seems that there is nothing in this conception which could not be accepted by the Christian view. Even more, it is very useful to apply this post-modernistic critique to Christianity, stressing, for example, the mystical and non-discursive character of our relationship with the Highest Being.

This is right in the same measure as the critique of facile statements of universal ethics, indicating the concrete limits for identification of each of them with others, and suggesting the recognition of the unconditional ban on cruelty or on doing harm to life, as the foundation of social morality" (J. Van Gerwen, p. 297). The long quotation above renders well – I believe – the attitude of the great part of Western authors whose main intention is to adapt Christian tradition to the requirements of the "dominating" post-modernistic culture. In the opinion of Van Gerwen, and similar authors, the point here is not only to merge into this culture but also to participate in shaping it. The crisis of Europe is seen here as the actual measure of what it means to be European.

UNITED EUROPE: THE CONTINUATION OF SOCIALISM?

The history and the current situation of the Old Continent can be seen through the prism of the development of its characteristic institutions. Many authors stress precisely the fact that Europe owes its exceptionally dynamic development to big institutions, which it has successfully created. It is in Europe that institutions of market economy such as banks, stock exchanges, or modern industrial enterprise were born. Also in Europe, legal ideas were put into practice through a system of modern bureaucracy without which the state of law cannot exist. There is no doubt then, that what comes to the fore in the debate about the shape of the "Europe of Tomorrow" is the new shape of European institutions. The possibility of creating new European institutions is also often postulated or imagined in the book presented here. Among these postulates there is, for example, a "post-national

state" (P. Ricoeur), or a new type of national state – "the democratic power Europe" – whose sovereign would be "the nation Europe" (J. Rovan). In this context the ongoing cultural transformations in Europe (L. Dyczewski, *Kultura europejska a kultura narodowa* – European Culture and National Culture) and the historical necessity of these transformations were also considered.

While discussing economic problems, some authors such as J. Molsberger (*Europa otwarta czy Europa twierdzią gospodarczą* – /Open Europe or Europe as an Economic Fortress), indicated the necessity of setting the European market in order. This should be favoured by an appropriate customs law which would unite the "Region Europe" (which is the goal of the European Union), but which at the same time would not discriminate against the countries situated outside of it. However, the Molsberger proposal and a similar text by F. Furger (*Gospodarka rynkowa w Europie skoncentrowana na pracy, ekologiczna i odpowiedzialna przed światem?* – Market Economy in Europe, work-centred, ecological and responsible to the world?) give an impression that the realization of the future European economic order requires so many pan-European institutions, departments and offices – endowed with vast competence – that only some new variation of Euro-socialism would be an adequate system here. Because the difference between a market economy and the Socialist one consists in the fact that in the former the most important subject of economic life is an entrepreneur, in the latter, in turn – an official.

THE LOST GOOD – FAMILY

Perhaps the total absence of the topic of family (especially in those parts of the

book where European institutions are discussed) – a topic fundamental for Europe – is an unintended expression of the Congress' inclination to socialism. If we observe the spiritual crisis of Europe, it is, in the first place, the crisis of the family in Europe: of the family as a community of love between people and as a basic institution of social life. The Europe of a post-modernistic culture is in large measure, a Europe of a post-family culture.

If Christianity has something to offer to today's Europe, it is first of all the vision of man who is able to realize all his potentialities through life in a family. The family is the key to the proper understanding of a common European good, to a correct understanding of economy and of the purpose of all European social and political institutions. The new leader

of the Italian Christian Democrats, Prof. Rocco Buttiglione, has recently put forward a political slogan: "The crisis of the family is the crisis of the state's budget," indicating that an appropriate pro-family policy may create a chance to overcome current defects of the Welfare State. One should rather let people care for the welfare of each other within the family, supporting families with an adequate tax system, family salaries, etc., instead of placing citizens directly under the protection of the state, because the family is the first school of social and economic behaviour (to start with, a simple ability to save money). At the same time it is the special community in which everyone is accepted "for oneself" (see: *Letter to Families*, No. 9 ff.).

Translated by Patrycja Mikulska