

Messrs Jan Puhl, Tobias Rapp and Klaus Brinkbäumer

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Dear Mr. Puhl and Mr. Rapp,

Reading your article in Nr. 51/2017 one discovers some surprising elements of sensibility towards Eastern Europe. E.g., you refer to Mr. Schwarzenberg, according to whom „Zu oft noch würden die Osteuropäer in Brüssel von oben herab behandelt“ – although you do not agree with such a critique. Or, towards the end of your article you seem to acknowledge that East European countries' relatively new sovereignty may affect their view on EU developing towards a federal state.

However, you are basically not aware of the main features of the East European conditions and aspirations and I wonder how you dare to dwell on the topic in detail with such a deficient and biased knowledge. I shall write on the main reasons of this dispute then I go to some detail.

1. First, you should know that no levelling of the development levels takes place within the EU. Countries of the Southern periphery have not approached the EU average since their accession. The structure itself of the single market has been created in such a way that major economic differences prevail.
2. In case of East Europe an approach seems to take place but this should be evaluated with due caution. As a result of the systemic changes in the beginning of the nineties a transition to capitalist economies has given a big boost to these countries. This has nothing to do with the European integration! The more an economy was of a command one (etc. Poland or the Baltic states), the higher were the results of freeing formerly suffocated economic energies and capacities, and vice versa. (See e.g. Hungary, which was a socialist market economy – as a result, its successes have been very modest after the systemic changes because those energies had been freed earlier.)
3. The big economic upswings and levellings in the world economy of our age all took place on the ground of massive state intervention to the economy and autocratic political systems (Japan, South Korea, the small tigers and China). These were accompanied by the permanent devaluation of the national currency.
4. The developed Western countries present a significant economic help to the East Europeans – what an idiot idea! Vis-a-vis the day by day repeated transfers from the cohesion funds, consider the following:
 - the East Europeans opened their markets for the strong companies of the Western countries, causing by this severe handicaps to their own companies and giving

possibilities for massive exports by the Western firms, creating employment opportunities at home

- Western firms repatriate profits which roughly equal the transfers from the cohesion funds
- Western firms enjoy generous tax breaks and some other conditions (e.g. free or cheap land)
- they pay to the “aboriginals” 1/3, 1/4 wages of their own countries
- only Hungary sends almost half a million labour force to the West – causing serious shortages in craftsmen, doctors, etc. Without Eastern Gastarbeiters the Western countries experienced a serious crisis due to labour shortage. (Of course, the repatriated wages to Hungary are also considered in a balance of incomes and outlays)
- etc.

A detailed balance shows that it is the East which supports the West and not vice versa. But the minimum which could be said is that these economic relations are mutually useful.

5. The East Europeans acceded an integration which based on the cooperation of sovereign countries. If the Western members want a further, a stricter integration and the Eastern ones resist, this does not mean that they are nationalists, populists, non-democratic and especially does not mean that they are against the EU. They are pro EU, and they simply want an EU which they entered.
6. If the East Europeans are not enthusiastic about homosexual marriage, “socially eligible sex”, third sex, etc., this does not mean that they are homophobes. It simply means that they have a sane, traditional value set which has not yet been degenerated.
7. In these years West Europe renders itself to the Islam. A submission takes place. If East Europeans do not like multiculturalism, want to preserve their culture and religion, this does not mean that they are nationalists and racists. This simply means that they want to remain as they are.

And some additional details:

- “Der Beitritt der Osteuropäer zur EU war eigentlich eine Erfolgsgeschichte, wirtschaftlich, politisch und gesellschaftlich. ... Die staatlich gelenkten Ökonomien ... verwandelten sich in erfolgreiche Marktwirtschaften.” – No, this has nothing to do with the EU – see point 2.

- Besides, the structure of the East European countries is anything but “erfolgreiche”. It is bad and distorted. Big Western companies dominate the industry, national firms are only “outside workers”, market and technology are in the hands of foreign firms. Exports are made overwhelmingly by them.

- As concerns the “Bestätigung dieses Siegeszugs von Liberalismus und Kapitalismus”, - see point 3.

- Despite all the opposite statements, es gibt ein Soros-Plan. (True, it is an exaggeration that the EU realizes the Soros-Plan. The EU has its own fixa idea as well, without Soros.)

-“Orbán’s Machtsystem lebt davon, Feindbilder zu erschaffen und sie mit Leben zu füllen – die Flüchtlinge, die Roma oder eben Soros, der Jude.” As concerns the Roma, this is a lie, a nasty insinuation. Following your statement, does that mean that criticising a man of Jewish origin is antisemitismus? The migrant issue is much more complicated and of high importance just to state that Orbán uses it as part of his Machtpolitik.

- Concerning the CEU: you do not know the details; the law on high education refers to all institutions, the CEU is not discriminated. “Eine Regierung, die die beste Hochschule ihres Landes schikaniert” – this is blöd. I had been teaching in six universities, including the CEU – I have some experiences in this field. Before such a statement you should check high education international comparisons.

- Concerning the Flüchtlingskreise: Western liberals and socialists blame East Europeans of lacking solidarity. But as a matter of fact, by letting in great masses of migrants they deprive these very poor countries of their most valuable asset: an active, mobile working force. Maybe, massive migration helps the migrants individually but ruins future possibilities of the poorest countries.

- I mostly agree with the criticism that the Hungarian Government distributes state procurements on a friendly basis. Although creating a national capitalist class is of high importance, the present practice tends to nepotism which phases out healthy market competition.

- “The neue Populisten sind gegen den Euro” – this is unskilled demagogy. The introduction of euro in a middle-income country might be dangerous as well. A cautious balancing is needed. See point 3.

- The statement I completely agree with is that ‘Orbán ist einer der begabtesten Politiker Europas’.

Dear Mr. Puhl and Mr. Rapp, at one point you refer to Beziehungstherapeuten. You are right. Western politicians and journalists badly need Beziehungstherapeuten. They should understand that treaties among sovereign states equally bound. If some of them should like to change conditions and others not, the way to do it is not unfounded blaming and implementing legal tricks (as it happens concerning the Flüchtlingsfrage). Your position is of liberal intolerance. As concerns me, I prefer illiberal tolerance.

I regularly criticize Der Spiegel but no one of my letters have been answered, except one. (But that particular letter contained only additional remarks, not criticism.) I think this is also in line with liberal intolerance and feeling of superiority. Both lead to a false Wahrnehmung.

Wishing you all the best and a piece of healthy self criticism for the New Year,

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