

**Address by H.E. János Martonyi :**

**The EU at the Crossroad: Views from Central Europe**

Budapest, 5th July 2012, delivered at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends, Mr. Chairman, Dear Radek,

You have quoted in Hungarian the very famous saying, which, for most of us, is more known in Polish: „Polak, Węgier, dwa bratanki, i do szabli, i do szklanki.” I learnt it myself in the early sixties when my generation embarked on hitchhiking trip up to the Polish seacoast, and we had received an unbelievable, unimaginable amount of friendship, affection, and sympathy. I will never forget that of course. You have just ignited my memory also by reference to the statue of Bem, because I still have in my ears the strong shouting of students in the second half of October 1956, in Szeged, my hometown, where we are just about to inaugurate an Honorary Consul by the way, so I still have it in my ears when these young students shouted “Magyar–lengyel barátság” (Hungarian–Polish Friendship). That was the number one slogan at that time. That is how all that story started.

Now we all know that the story went on, with the strikes in Poznan, the intellectual movements, the Lenin shipyard, and Solidarność. I think we should never forget that.

So, in the meantime, this has been translated into a very thick, fabric of political-economic co-operation. I fully agree with you that this is now based upon common values, but it is also based upon fundamental common interests. It is often said that we have had a common fate, which is true, but we also have now a common destiny. And that is what can be said now about Polish–Hungarian relations: it is a huge success.

Now, what we have to add immediately is that while we maintain this special Polish–Hungarian touch, in the framework of other co-operations, we now put it in first and foremost a Central-European framework, in a European framework and also in a transatlantic framework. And we work side by side in all these frameworks and institutions. We are now celebrating of your taking over the V4 chairmanship, which is of course an extremely important development. We all know that the V4 has achieved many-many successes and results in the last couple of decades. What happened in fact is exactly what you referred to,

that this kind of spiritual concept of Central Europe has thereby been transformed into a political and economic phenomenon, a political and economic reality.

I think you demonstrated very eloquently and correctly the achievements, you also identified many of the reasons why these achievements have been possible. Now I just would like to try to say one or two words about how to go on.

We have to increase trade and investments, also in a bilateral and multilateral sense. There is still a huge potential for that. We have to increase co-operation in the field of energy, we have to increase our energy security, reduce our dependence. Therefore we have to develop significantly all kind of interconnections, be they highways (we still have no highway between Warsaw and Budapest by the way), railways, pipelines, but we also have to increase interconnection between people. We should send more students to each other's countries to study, to learn each other's language, so these kinds of people-to-people and youth-to-youth contacts have to be significantly increased. We have some ideas in this regard as well.

We have to develop co-operation with the outside world and this refers not only to the neighbours. What we have particularly in mind here is the Eastern Partnership and also our neighbours in the Balkans. But we also have to develop close co-operation with the rest of the world: also the V4 countries should be a little bit more open towards the global issues. And we have to increase thereby our outreach. I know very well that the Polish presidency also has some ideas in this regard.

Whether we have to enlarge the V4 is another question which we can discuss any time. What we fully agree with is that we definitely have to diversify and deepen the different techniques and forms of co-operation with third countries.

Now I would come to my last and important point today, and I would like to speak about it a little bit more. I see the main function of V4, and also Central Europe in a wider sense, exactly the same way you do: we have a very special task and responsibility to become the new source of energy, the new source of dynamism for the process of European integration. Europe needs us. Indeed our contribution is vital and indispensable. While you referred to some of the reasons, we do have a special heritage, with all its difficulties, and therefore we also have some special assets. By the way, even the title which is now frequently given to lectures, speeches, books, essays that is 'Quo Vadis, Europe' comes from a very famous

Polish writer, Henryk Sienkiewicz, the book of whom I believe most people in this room have read. So, we do have something special to offer and Europe needs it, because now Europe, and especially the Eurozone is in crisis.

How to get out of that? Of course that would be a subject too long for this morning, but one preliminary remark perhaps is that I would not advice to get involved in the ideological discussions of the 50s and in the 60s. In many Member States now this debate seems to come back. Whether we want a federal Europe or a more intergovernmental Europe based upon traditional international co-operation schemes? I think this debate is basically behind us, because now we have urgent tasks to do. Two things which I would like to mention: both of them are so-called 'musts'.

First: we definitely have to strengthen, deepen and take forward the economic and monetary union. There is no other way. There is no way back. In that sense the Eurozone or the common currency is irreversible. So if this is the case then of course we have to go on with the establishment of a financial framework, a budgetary framework, an economic policy framework. If we do want to establish all these frameworks, we have to increase substantially and qualitatively the democratic legitimacy and accountability of the whole system. We may call it political union, but we all know that without these mid- or long-term institutional changes all the economic challenges cannot be properly met. This is a must and it is indispensable, because the possible alternative might be an implosion. But this is certainly not a way Europe can go along.

The second thing which is also a must is that we have to increase and strengthen Europe's role on the global scene. Again this is well-known, we speak a lot about the tectonic shifts and Europe's having lost weight in the last years and decades. This is all true, but Europe has still a huge potential. For instance, if you look at our common commercial policy, we know very well that we are a great power, we are giants, so that is more or less the same what we should do in the field of foreign and security policy. Again a point where we fully support the Polish position: we have to develop a common security and defence policy with all the necessary consequences. So these are the two areas where we have to go on: one is to avoid chaos and to develop the economic and monetary union; the other one is, no doubt, to be a respectful but strong actor in the international scene.

Central Europe's role in this exercise is crucial. I just would like to add one more qualifying element. While we have to move on in all these areas, we have to be aware of the fact that Europe will never and never become a monolithic and homogeneous empire. No one wants it. European people would never accept it. We all have our own historical, cultural, and spiritual heritage. This heritage now boils down in what is referred to our constitutional identity. This is now more and more recognised, not only by the constitutional courts of Member States, like the Italian, the German, the French, the Estonian, the Czech and so on, but also by the European Court of Justice. The times are gone, when the concept of absolute primacy of European Union law prevailed. There are limits. The limits are not easy to define in each particular case. But we all know that there are limits and these limits have to be accepted. Instead of supremacy or absolute primacy there must be respect, mutual respect and an on-going, permanent dialogue between the constitutional courts of the member states and the European Court of Justice.

My conviction is that if we comply with all these conditions, Europe will come out of the crisis more united, more integrated and possibly substantially stronger in the international scene. What we have to avoid – and I think we all agree on that – is a kind of multiple or multilevel Europe. Multispeed is something different, I would not confuse multispeed with multilevel or multiple. Multispeed is a reality. We have to avoid, by any means, that it turns into a kind of multiple or multilevel structure. That is why we have to avoid any kind of parallel institutional frameworks. We have to keep a single institutional framework for the whole family: 27, 28, or over. We also have to impede by all possible means a growing differentiation, fragmentation and a possible disintegration of the whole system.

The real question here is where we see the place and role of Central Europe in that future structure. I know that now there is a dispute on that within the V4 countries themselves. Could be even some diversity of views among the V4 states, I just would like to humbly expose my personal view. Central Europe's future is no longer on the periphery of Europe, but in the heart, in the core of Europe. That is what the whole exercise of catching up was and still is about.

The basic issue is here whether we want to be decision-makers, whether we want to participate in the decisions. Or we accept that basic decisions are taken about us and without us. We have to be aware of the fact that decisions taken now within the Eurozone have an immediate and very serious effect upon all of us. Whether we are members of the Eurozone,

or not. If we want to participate in all those decisions, if we want to be in the core of the future developments, the single option we will have to take is to join sooner or later not only the Eurozone, but we have to catch up in every possible sense. But there are some conditions. You referred to the community method, which I fully subscribe to. It is a fundamental condition. We are all equal and there should not be double standards, and everybody must be respected. If we have a double-level Europe, which we would like to avoid, double standards will get even stronger. And we will be considered even more 'others'. But we have to be united also in the structures while respecting the constitutional identity, which is closely linked to our cultural, historic, and national identity.

Most people in this room read not only the book of Henrik Sienkiewicz, but also the famous book of István Bibó: 'The Misery of Central European Small States'. If you re-read this book, you realise, that some of the ideas are still valid. At the same time, much or most of those changed. And they changed tremendously. We are first and foremost no longer Eastern European small states. We are Central European countries. Some of us are larger than others, but we are successful. Why are we successful? Because – instead of an unhappy and unhealthy rivalry – we learnt to co-operate with each other. First and foremost, we learnt to co-operate in getting rid of the totalitarian system. We will never forget Poznan, we will never forget Ursus, we will never forget the Lenin shipyard, and we will never forget Solidarność. We know exactly why we are so grateful to the Polish people. We immediately realized that it is a new era, and we have to co-operate. We set up new structures, we set up free-trade agreements, and we set up V3, then V4. Thanks to the combined efforts of all of us, that is where we are now.

The question is now how to go on. We have to promise to have full trust and confidence: in our bilateral relationship and friendship and also in the future of a successful V4 and Central European co-operation. And also it is my firm belief that we will co-operate in a very successful and strong Europe as well. Thank you very much for your attention.

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