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# Between Resentment and Indifference

**Narratives of Solidarity in the Enlarging Union**

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## **Full text**

Does anyone still believe in solidarity between the “two Europes”? One thing is for sure: even those who regard the concept of European solidarity as ambiguous, overused and occasionally harmful love to talk about it. I am afraid that I also belong to this group. My only excuse is that I do not preach solidarity, just listen to other persons’ “preachings.” As in the case of the previous enlargements of the European Union, solidarity also features as a crucial component of a regular *rite de passage* today, when eight (plus two) ex-communist countries are being admitted to one of the

strongholds of what they used to glorify or demonize as “the West.” Ideally, this rite would require a cold-hearted, impartial analysis. As an Eastern European citizen, however, I cannot promise to properly meet that requirement. As a participant in the forthcoming admission (an anthropologist would say, initiation), I am unable to disregard the intrinsic ambiguity of the feast.

This paper revolves around the rival interpretations of “true” solidarity with each other proposed by the two halves of Europe. In what follows, I will make a distinction between two dominant discourses conceived of as ideal types: a romantic (“Eastern”) and a pragmatic (“Western”) one, based on altruistic and utilitarian considerations respectively. The incredible bipolarity of the real types of these discourses, which is also well known from the proverbial *Ossi–Wessi* conflict in Germany,<sup>1</sup> allows me, I believe, to commit all possible crimes against science one can commit in such a brief essay. My paper will be an orgy of oversimplification. I will use a primitive, two-actor model, in which the aggregate terms “East” and “West” represent a large variety of agents and a great number of countries: Brussels and the EU member states; the members, the new entrants, the candidates and the “left-outs,” the elites and the people at

large, governments and oppositions, politics, business and academia, and so on, and so forth. Apologies in advance.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, solidarity will only be examined in a transnational framework, that is, I venture to explore a territory in which one cannot easily apply techniques that have been developed to understand, for instance, income redistribution at a national level, cohesion of social groups, or the exchange of favors within a family.<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, my task is not to assess the two actors' actual record of solidarity, but "only" to capture the underlying differences in interpreting the concept.

## A surprise

Under communism, solidarity was a subject of black humor rather than of scholarship. An altruistic interpretation of transnational solidarity could not be accepted under the conditions of "forced solidarity," to use a euphemism for dictatorship and military occupation. Merely the name of the *Comecon* (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) or the Soviet slogan "*druzhba narodov*" provided sufficient food for sarcastic thought. Let me quote my favorite joke on "mutual assistance" and "socialist brotherhood": "On a military training field a Russian and a Hungarian soldier find a bar of chocolate. They are

terribly hungry. The Russian says solemnly: let us share it in a brotherly manner. God forbid, answers the Hungarian, we should split it up fifty-fifty.” The message was clear: if solidarity is nothing but a farce, equal sharing becomes *the* just alternative. In Eastern Europe one did not have to nuance that proposition until the birth of *Solidarnosc*.<sup>4</sup>

Why deny it, the *ouvrierist* strand of anti-communism emerging in Poland at the end of the 1970s was a powerful challenge to me, a Hungarian economist who had left market socialism for liberal capitalism, and who did not want to stop along the way at a rather corporatist version of social market economy. *Solidarnosc* reached back to the world of ideas of the workers’ movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, no matter whether Marxist, anarchist or Christian–Socialist, and put the emphasis on protecting/emancipating the weaker part, actually the majority, of society. Sporadic contacts between Eastern European dissidents aside, the notion of solidarity gained a transnational meaning and a justified fame in the course of the 1989 revolutions, especially in terms of helping the East German refugees and Romanian rebels. The internal cohesion of Polish anti-communism and the sweeping victory that irradiated to the former Eastern Bloc as a whole forced me to think twice before

placing, in a sad gesture, solidarity à la *Solidarnosc* under the heading of social romanticism.

Yet, the attraction of “unforced solidarity” evaporated with surprising speed (somewhen between the first quarrels within *Solidarnosc*, the political disempowerment of the Eastern lands in Germany, and the outbreak of the Yugoslav war) in our region, and I resumed my customary suspicion toward allegedly altruistic transnational relations, regardless of their origin. To my mind, terms such as *Realpolitik*, geostrategy, superpower interests, etc. outcompeted any notion of Europe-wide or transatlantic fraternity, no matter whether it came to Visegrad, the Pentagonale or NATO. To be sure, that suspicion did not lead me to equate, with an anti-imperialist zeal, the violence of Soviet- style “proletarian internationalism” with the peaceful (and largely understandable) asymmetry of the European integration project.

My personal story is irrelevant, but it explains the surprise I would like to share with the reader in this paper. In studying the current history of ideas in Eastern Europe, I could not help recognizing the renaissance of the concept of solidarity, in particular, in the context of EU enlargement.<sup>5</sup> My surprise stems less from that revival itself than from

the crystallization of two rival discourses of solidarity on the two sides of the former Iron Curtain, which—unfortunately—reinforce each other, as in a dialogue of the deaf, without resulting in mutual understanding.

To quote a current example, in the course of running an eight country research project on cultural encounters in the economy between the East and the West, I am astonished daily by the extent to which the narratives of our respondents in our program's three target groups, Easterners and Westerners alike, are permeated by their views of European solidarity, no matter whether they are entrepreneurs, civil servants or academics. The micro-narratives allude to two macro-discourses, both dealing with the East–West distribution of costs and benefits, with a special emphasis on the turbulent game of the Enlargement. I call them "*rhetoric of resentment*" and "*rhetoric of indifference*." (I leave the reader to guess which discourse comes from which side of the former Yalta divide.)<sup>6</sup> Although the two rhetorics conflict sharply as far as their arguments and style are concerned, their representatives are fairly interchangeable. Today it is extremely difficult to determine, both in the East and the West, whether a given narrative of solidarity with the "Other" has been produced by a soft populist, a

pragmatic conservative or socialist, or a frustrated liberal.<sup>7</sup>

Undoubtedly, in the Eastern half of the continent, meditating on the East–West exchange of goods and cultures is an eternal pastime, in both its Westernizing and its nativist/populist versions, not to mention the plurality of their combinations.<sup>8</sup> In the course of admitting the former Eastern neighbors into the EU, however, no self-aware West European citizen can any longer afford to keep a low profile as to the balance of mutual transactions, either material or spiritual. The accession talks dealt with precisely such transactions; certain of the West's interests have fallen victim to the admissions, and, in principle, the newcomers have the right to renegotiate the balance at any future moment. In the West, the dominant event of the Enlargement has given rise to a dominant discourse, a partially new one, which pertains to that balance—in other words, to solidarity between the old and the brand-new member states.<sup>9</sup> Finally, there exists a Western discourse that eventually may go beyond “Orientalism,”<sup>10</sup> an attitude of condescension that is packaged, in the most favorable instance, in moderately polite phrases concerning the cultural traditions, revolutionary virtues, etc. of Eastern Europe.

) How did the dialogue between the representatives of the two rhetorics begin? Let me avoid struggling with the conventional chicken- and-egg problem. Westerners contend that the dialogue began with Eastern complaints and passionate allegations, the Easterners maintain that it began with unfulfilled Western promises. Surely it went on, either with the deep silence of the West, which might equally reflect a bad conscience, indignation and indifference, or—increasingly—with an enumeration of the mutual advantages of the integration, and an introduction to the “manual” of social engineering in transnational communities. In contrast to the “invitee,” the “inviter,” the stronger party in the game, could more frequently afford the elegance of a less heated rhetoric.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, scattered references to the overambitious demands of the Easterners, as well as to their poor performance, bad habits, etc., remained an indispensable component of even the friendliest Western narratives.

[ While the two discourses of solidarity failed to meet, the bargaining over the Enlargement between the members and the would-be entrants continued. The asymmetric position of the two parties suggested that the rhetoric of resentment was invented to soften the pain

of unilateral imposition, and to obtain a few exceptions to the admission rules. Similarly, the rhetoric of indifference seemed to serve as a simple cover discourse to justify why the West could not make more concessions in the bargaining game. My hypothesis is more benevolent than those interpretations. Beyond the ideologies required by daily politicking, I presume to find, in the divergent narratives of solidarity, deep-seated convictions reinforced by rational motives. By this I mean motives that are firmly grounded in past experience and do not aim at manipulation or self-deception. As with most rites of passage, large differences of interpretation between these convictions occur at the two ends of the passage. The fact that the diverging interpretations do not lack imagination and use a great variety of symbols, and, what's more, rest on rival concepts of rationality, must not lead the observer to take pleasure in detecting conspiracy and mass psychosis among the participants of this continent-wide dialogue.

2 In what follows, I will touch on four major issues:

The semantic roots of the divergent approaches to solidarity.

The difficulties in defining and measuring solidarity.

The composition of the two rhetorics of solidarity.

The chances for a rapprochement between the two.

## Between two vocabularies

3 Suspecting a dialogue of the deaf, one is advised to reach for dictionaries. In looking up the word “solidarity” in English language dictionaries, I found the following definitions:<sup>12</sup>

*unity or agreement, especially among individuals with a common interest, sympathies or aspirations*  
*mutual dependence*  
*mutual support or cohesiveness within a group*  
*complete or exact coincidence of interests*  
*an entire union or consolidation of interests and responsibilities*  
*fellowship*  
*community*  
*combination or agreement of individuals, as of a group*  
*complete unity, as of opinion, purpose, interest, feeling*  
*agreement between and support for the members of a group, especially a political group.*

4 In the English language, apparently, solidarity is not necessarily imbued with the altruistic value of *fraternité* and philanthropy. The emphasis is put on common interest, mutual dependence, and agreement (and the ensuing *esprit de corps*), rather than support. The words “solidary” and “solidaristic” hardly exist in English. If this meaning is badly needed, one may use the French original “*solidaire*.”

5 To confess my ignorance, I have, until recently, replaced the word “solidarity” in English with a group of terms beginning with “co”: companionship, cohesion, compassion, consensus. This bias comes from my mother tongue, Hungarian, or, in a wider context, from Central and Eastern European traditions as a whole. In Hungarian one cannot be solidaristic with someone out of self-interest, not even on the basis of a sober assessment of “mutual dependence” and reciprocity, or with an aim of “consolidating interests and responsibilities.” If you strike a business deal or you forge a political agreement, this can reflect mutual dependence and rest on mutual concessions. Solidarity is, however, essentially unselfish, it pertains to assisting the weaker, with a bit of sacrifice at least, a sacrifice that is without material reward. What you gain from supporting others is—at most—purely moral gratification. Also, my fellow citizens would

add, you cannot be solidaristic with the stronger or the more powerful.

5 When it comes to differences in meaning between Anglo-American and Hungarian terms of the same Latin/French origin, one had better consult a dictionary of German language. Small wonder that terms such as “support”, “sacrifice”, “fraternity” and “charity” (*Nächstenliebe*) are stressed there. In *Wahrig* or *Duden*, for instance, one comes across synonyms like “*gemeinsam*,” “*einig*” and “*fest verbunden*” but, at the same time, they also focus on the *Solidaritätsprinzip* in Catholic social teaching (the theory of *Solidarismus*), which expresses the “*wechselseitige Füreinander-Eintretens (einer für alle, alle für einen)*” and legitimizes “*soziale Ausgleichsprozesse*.” Furthermore, they make a sharp distinction between “*Interessenssolidarität*” (see, e.g., *Solidarhaftung* and *Solidarschuldner* in business law) and “*Gemeinschaftssolidarität*.<sup>13</sup>

7 I expected to examine a communication gap, and actually fell into a cultural abyss. The hope for mutual understanding between the East and the West, I thought, depends on whether or not the dominant discourse in the West can reasonably combine the Anglo-American (liberal) and the German as well as other

European (social-liberal or conservative) readings of solidarity. However, things turned out to be much more complicated, and not only because one can easily get lost in the jungle of communitarian, egalitarian-liberal, multicultural, etc. theories.

## Measuring solidarity?

- 3 I spare the reader most of the intricacies of measuring solidarity between two parties who disagree on the merit of the concept. Even in the best case, where European integration is a positive-sum game, opinions will differ on whether one can call a win-win situation a quintessential embodiment of solidarity. The typical answer by a Westerner would be the following: this favorable situation results from joining forces on the basis of our common interests and shared values, therefore we are definitely *solidaire* with each other. Synergy is a primary prerequisite to solidarity but redistribution (i.e., a sacrifice on our part) and leveling are not. If someone insists on the concept of support, no one will prevent him/her from using the word, because in the given case the stronger party actually helps the weaker one by means of cooperating on the basis of mutual advantages.
- , The Easterner, however, would argue in the following way: a win-win situation can only

reflect solidarity if the weaker party gains (perhaps significantly) more in relative terms than the stronger as a result of co-operation *and* redistribution. This may eventually lead to a catching up with the West. If we, however, catch up without redistribution, there is no point to talk about “genuine” solidarity. In the opposite case, i.e. if the East gains comparatively less in the win-win framework, the Westerner will still continue to talk about solidarity, whereas the Easterner will begin to wonder why the West does not offer the East part of its own gains in order to reduce the distance between them. Why should one regard a widening of the gap between the rich and poor, the developed and developing, as a sign of solidarity? he/she will ask. According to his/her view, it is the entrants in this case who are, in a perverse manner, *solidaire* with the—stronger— member states, even if no direct redistribution takes place.

o Questions upon questions, though we have not yet considered the problem of absolute gains and the games without “happy ending,” i.e. the win-lose and the lose-lose situations. For instance, continuing to presume rather optimistically that the win-win thesis<sup>14</sup> applies, the two sides may nonetheless disagree on the preferred size of the sacrifice. The Easterner can be modest (or diplomatic) to ask only a

small sacrifice of the West in relative terms, because he/she is aware of the fact that, given the vast differences in the status quo, small sacrifice in absolute terms is equivalent to a large support in relative terms in the East, and will result in a fairly high pace of catching up.

- 1 Conversely, he/she can challenge the West by fixing an arbitrarily chosen, quick pace of leveling as a *conditio sine qua non* of solidarity, and by deriving from this pace claims for the absolute size of support. On its part, the West can choose from a large repertoire of responses, ranging from the dry message of “be happy that you aren’t losing” to what I would call “realistic generosity.” By the latter I mean the implementation of the elastic idea of “give the East as much as necessary to prevent it (and the enlarging EU) from declining, and as much as possible in terms of the stability of the West.” The elasticity of the idea becomes transparent in particular when win(East)–lose(West) and lose-lose situations appear on the horizon of integration.
- 2 In any event, what notion of gain is to be applied? As with all theories of distributive justice, the devil is in the details of defining what exactly is being distributed, and in what manner. Is it income or wealth, or opportunities for generating them? Is it a material or a spiritual good? What is the time

frame of distribution? One party may lose in the short run, only to win in the long run. Winning might also mean that you lose less than you would have lost if you had not taken part in the game.

3 The game of integration consists of numerous subgames. Are the gains in these subgames really measurable by the two actors *and* commensurable between them? How do we calculate, for example, the decline in the sovereignty of the entrants, and how do we compare the result of our calculation with the growth of agricultural subsidies allotted to them? I am afraid that measuring is a no less perplexing task if one studies the pluses and minuses in the same field, say, sovereignty. Can we reasonably compare sovereignty losses that are due to the imposition of the *acquis communautaire* in the candidate countries with sovereignty gains that are due to new freedoms granted by the same *acquis*?

4 Let us suppose the impossible: that all short- and long-term gains and losses of the Enlargement are quantifiable (or at least predictable) in both halves of the European economy. We know not only all price indices, trade figures and employment indicators, but also the monetary equivalent of each and every indirect effect of economic change on air pollution, life expectancy, or propensity for

migration. Moreover, the balance of all genuinely political and socio-cultural transactions between the East and the West is precisely drawn. Let us also presume that, at the end of the day, the entrants will be net recipients of the integration in all respects of the overall give-and-take. Yet, even in this Paradise we will certainly hear many Easterners lament: “the concept of solidarity must not be expropriated even by a farsighted and all-encompassing but exclusively technical calculation. You, Westerners are not quite solidaristic with us if you write us a thousand billion euro cheque but deliberately drop it to force us to bow down before you.” It seems that there is no path that leads out of the cultural abyss.

## Rhetoric of resentment

5 The Western reader may find the metaphor of the cheque pathetic,<sup>15</sup> the feeling of humiliation exaggerated, and the damage caused by what the Easterners consider impolite behavior reparable. “Sooner or later, the synergetic effects of the integration will convince them of their hypersensitivity, as happened in the case of Spain, Portugal, or, more recently, East Germany,” he/she would contend optimistically. Evidently, the growing “accession fatigue”<sup>16</sup> among large segments of

societies within the new member states today, and the disillusionment with the record of solidarity coming from the West, would be less widespread if the citizens of Eastern Europe were sure that the above-mentioned cheque had actually been written. At this point, however, they feel increasingly reassured to the contrary: no generous cheque has arrived yet in Budapest, Prague or Warsaw, which may well mean it will not arrive later, either.

6 Today, it is relatively easy to make pessimistic long-term predictions such as these (let me stress again, without a special populist bias) in the region:

Given the less favorable starting conditions, the success stories of previous enlargement rounds cannot be repeated.

The entrants will stay in the poorhouse of the Union, torn out from their natural (Eastern European) environment. The best of the former outsiders will become (and remain) the worst situated insiders.

The EU regulations (administered by the Brussels bureaucracy) will slow down economic growth, invalidate the entrepreneurial skills of the new Eastern capitalists, and dismantle economic and social regimes of high efficiency, which have emerged after communism under global/American influence.

No one will guarantee our catching-up with the EU average and compensate for its future costs. At any rate, the relative backwardness of East Germany demonstrates that an ex-communist country cannot hope for leveling during a single generation's lifetime, even if a generous cheque continues to arrive each year.

7 This paper is not about the cost-and-benefit ratio of the Enlargement. Similarly, it does not want to decide whether or not the popular mind is wrong in feeling a sense of humiliation and showing a propensity for depressing scenarios in the future. Are these traits due to the well-known paranoia of small nations in Eastern Europe that instinctively distrust any “new hegemony”? Are they rooted in their secular inability to make a distinction between better and worse hegemonies? Do they try to overcompensate for their inferiority feelings and/or the fact of being exposed to a thorough examination by the West? Are the communists, the nationalists, the conservatives, or any combination of them, responsible for making the public attuned to the nightmare of neo-imperialism? Be it as it may, there already exists a detailed *Leidensgeschichte* of the Accession; a story that is ritually told in the region. Let's begin

our brief hermeneutic expedition by reconstructing this “tale of woe.”

8 The lamentations about the alleged misdeeds of the West begin with the “original sin” of rejecting, in 1989, the project of European reunification, and replacing it with the foggy prospect of gradual integration.<sup>17</sup> The Grand Illusion of inventing, in a joint effort, *the* good society was thereby replaced by the everyday boredom of seeking compromise between various bureaucracies.<sup>18</sup> In fact, membership in the EU was not conceived of by the West as a quasi-natural entitlement a country merits because of its geographical position, or as a moral compensation for suffering under communism. To a large extent, the Easterners still remember their own tribulations as a service rendered to the West. The context was granted by history many centuries ago: accordingly, Eastern Europe (especially its Western borderlands) constitutes a buffer zone between civilization (Christianity) and barbarism, the inhabitants of which do their best to arrest Oriental invasion.

9 Evidently, an immediate reunification in 1989 would have been regarded by the citizens of Eastern Europe as a courageous and magnificent act of solidarity on the part of the “lucky half” of Europe. They made repeated attempts to convince the West of the fact that

this act would demand less sacrifice than a gradual solution. They referred to the danger of communist restoration, to the economic and political destabilization of the buffer zone, and, in a self-ironical tone, even to the risks of forcing the “bad children” to play in the yard. “We make a bigger noise outside than inside, under strict surveillance”, they said, “and tomorrow we will bring in more mud on our shoes than today.” “Please mind,” they went on, “that if you make us wait too long in the cold then you will have to face exhausted and angry youngsters in the new family.” No success whatsoever...

- o To be sure, sharing the luck in order to help the unlucky catch up was not only a sentimental desire by the Easterners, but also a strong gesture made by quite a few politicians and prominent intellectuals in the West during the Cold War. Since then, the theory of “having been left in the lurch by the West” (a historical component of any rhetoric of resentment in Eastern Europe) could always find a sympathetic ear in the region. All the more so as, right after its “defection” in 1989, the West returned to (more exactly, remained in) the ex-communist countries, assuming the combined roles of business partner (investor, privatizer, economic advisor, etc.), political ally of the future member states of NATO and

the EU, and—rhetorically—cultural companion of the old European nations in the East. These nations had, by the historical accident of Sovietization, remained separated for half a century.

1 “You deserve to return to Europe, you are one among us,” the West communicated to the East, “but please wait a little, first we must adjust to one another.” Initially, the core of the Western discourse in its various roles did not differ much in its passionate emphasis on mutual adaptation and solidarity, no matter whether the latter concerned job creation, teaching business culture, assisting democratization, providing military defense, or supporting spiritual renewal.

2 While in business *strictu sensu*, no sensible Eastern European citizen could trust in good faith in altruism,<sup>19</sup> the verbal gestures of inclusion on the basis of historical/cultural proximity *did* raise bold expectations in the would-be European countries. At the beginning of the 1990s, one might have believed throughout the region that the indisputably large gains obtained by the West from the first moments of post-communist transformation would pave the way for a fast and rather smooth political enfranchisement of a large part of the former Eastern Bloc by the Union. Yes, one could expect that EU

members would be in solidarity with the potential entrants at least in a *narrow sense* of the word: the West would take the political and socio-cultural risks once the economic risks were abundantly covered by profits earned, without making special efforts, in the emerging markets of Eastern Europe and by way of a reduction in military spending.

- 3 “Not only our past suffering but also our current revolutions have directly contributed to your welfare,” the Easterners told the Westerners. “We do not beg you to do us any favors, and we might also relieve you from your historical debts. But please do not forget about your most recent windfall profits.” In this way, the West was not asked to compensate for its gains during the era of *Ostpolitik* and *détente*,<sup>20</sup> and the East also seemed ready to cancel the moral debt originating in the West’s indirect responsibility for the consecutive tragedies (1956, 1968, 1981) of the “other Europe.” A new—European or Euro-Atlantic—Marshall Plan was, however, mentioned as an appropriate device with which to cushion rapid admission to the Union.<sup>21</sup>
- 4 It came as an embarrassment for the applicants that, in West European attitudes towards the Eastern neighbors, the principles of natural entitlement and cultural proximity

were not maintained or, in the worst case, were replaced by that of co-option based on general reciprocity. The latter would imply the above-mentioned exchange of risks *without* examining the performance of, or making distinctions between, the newcomers. The principle of overall reciprocity promised virtually the same outcome; i.e. admission by “birth” or by— largely indirect—merits achieved earlier throughout the region. By contrast, the EU did not suspend the rules applied in previous enlargement rounds, and insisted on the principles of individual (direct, non-historical) merits and competition among the accession candidates. It thus applied a procedure that was defined by entrance examinations, performance criteria, hurdles, roadmaps, etc., which resulted in dividing the countries into groups arranged vertically on a long waiting list.

5 Admission to a club, athletic game, school enrollment, parental help, job interview, guided tour, military training, etc.—even if the West has not always employed exactly these metaphors, the East translated the incoming paternalistic messages with their help, and slowly gave up its own optimistic metaphors ranging from love, marriage and a friendly reunion to the exhausted sailor who finds refuge in the harbor after the storm, to the

more pragmatic image of risk-sharing in a non-profit insurance association. These metaphors were chosen to reflect symmetric relationships, fast mutual acceptance, and trust, all based on moral virtues, traditions and an exchange of favors, rather than on a certain level of performance at a given moment.

6 Yet another blow to Eastern European self-esteem occurred when it became clear what the EU meant by “preparedness to join,” what kind of performance counted, and how it was measured. Here the tale of woe rose to epic heights and became filled with a whole series of concrete offenses that the region allegedly had to endure in the course of the Enlargement. Indignation was caused by both the philosophy of screening and its implementation, not to speak of its language:

7 “The European Commission focuses on legal performance rather than on the socio-economic culture of the candidates;” “the criteria of selection between the would-be entrants are inconsistent”; “the rules of the game reflect the worst of what social engineering can produce, including the fact that they undergo changes in the course of the game”; “the liabilities of the East are overestimated while its assets are undervalued, and the price it has to pay for the

integration is ignored by the West”; “the alignment with the *acquis* excludes the takeover of other than a diluted model of European capitalism”; “the selection procedure is distorted by *ad hoc* (geo)political decisions, financial constraints, etc.”; “the Enlargement is controlled by incompetent officials who waste time as if they had been commissioned to delay the accession”<sup>22</sup>; “competition incites the candidates against one another”; “the end result was pre-programmed by a centuries-old symbolic geography, i.e., a traditional bias of the West toward East- Central Europe”; “the expected level of preparedness is higher than it was in the case of ‘Southern Enlargement,’ while the support provided by the Union is much lower”; “no one spoke about Eastern Enlargement when Austria joined the EU”; “accession is a heavily hierarchical term”; “two-track/speed Europe, *Kerneuropa*,<sup>23</sup> etc. serve as linguistic means of exclusion of the Eastern periphery.”

8 One could list the complaints, which culminate in accusing the West of Orientalism or—in a more radical fashion—of imperialism,<sup>24</sup> without end.

9 Beyond a certain point, the West had practically no chance to evoke sympathy for its strategy of enlargement, as all its moves were interpreted within a framework of resentment.

The *Leidensgeschichte* ended with peculiar conspiracy theories (I use the populist terminology to sharpen my point): “The *compradores* sold our nations to the new invaders for peanuts”; “the Westerners need us (our land, our talent, our moral standards, etc.) much more than we need them”; “the *acquis* was invented to paralyze competition coming from the East”; “what happens is actually a Westward enlargement<sup>25</sup> of our unique values, which has been marketed by the West cunningly as Eastern Enlargement”; “in sum, we are enriching the West, which is a sheer nonsense”; “as with the Soviets, solidarity is just a codeword for exploitation and unequal exchange.”<sup>26</sup>

o Solidarity is a fragile commodity. One has the impression that, in deciding whether or not the West showed solidarity toward the newcomers, the latter were influenced at least as much by the choreography (scenery, language, symbols, images) of the accession as by the size of the transfer payments, or the entrants’ voting rights in the enlarged Union. They felt provoked by the coldly critical remarks in the country reports, by the Brussels delegation’s rigorous claims and reserved style, by the secretive world of administration in the Commission, by the constant postponement of the accession date, and by

the incessant repetition of the civilizing messages (“wait a bit and clean up your house,” “put your things in order,” “adjust to the European level,” “develop, discipline yourself, leave your bad habits behind,” etc.).

1 These messages were imbued with a warning: “don’t forget please that *you* are the ones who want to join *us*.” Symptomatically, this sentence was interpreted by the East in the following way: “they in the EU say that they are doing us a favor by accepting our application.” This interpretation anticipated the Eastern attitudes toward the Accession Treaty. The “take it or leave it” principle applied by the West at the end of the accession talks (and sugarcoated only by minor concessions) was regarded by the entrants as blackmail. “Why does the West not at least pretend that it respects us?” they asked angrily.

2 Sheer populism? Even liberals in Eastern Europe could share this anger with some reason. Certain aspects of their reservations (cf. overregulation, legalism, social engineering, Europe vs. America, etc.) have already been mentioned. An additional ground for anxiety, however, distinguished them from the Western Euroskeptics: the asymmetry between Brussels and the new entrants mobilized the worst attitudes that had been

developed way back under communism in the hearts and minds of the latter.

3 Thus, quite a few “bad habits” of the Easterners have been reinforced, rather than eroded, during recent years. For instance, what we called “plan bargaining” (“performance hoarding,” “rule bending,” etc.) in the command economy—implying a complicated double speak (and double-dealing) with the authorities, and a constant fishing for soft regulations and exceptions to the rules—was revived in the framework of the accession talks. Similarly, intrigue between the candidates behind each others’ backs and striving to forge a special relationship with Big Brother also reminded the observer of the “good old days” of the Soviet empire.

4 Cumulative frustrations notwithstanding, the rhetoric of resentment is more than merely a sentimental or, on the contrary, a sneaky variation on the themes of historical debt, moral responsibility and the like. Its language is partly rational, wherein rationality goes beyond the minimum level required for inventing a game strategy. This rhetoric includes a peculiar mix of requests and charges. It can be sarcastic, bitter, even furious; nonetheless, it rests on a specific concept of solidarity.

5 A close reading of the East's dominant discourse reveals that, apart from the obvious attempt at gaining as much support from the West as possible in the shortest period of time, the entrants put forward quite a few rational ideas of distributive justice. Indeed, they did their best to maximize the balance of transfers, prolong the advantageous derogations, and shorten the life of the disadvantageous ones, etc. They were aware of the size of support the EU member states (former accession countries) had received thus far, and used these figures as benchmarks of fair treatment, dignity, etc., in the accession talks.

6 Rational reasoning did not end here. As we have seen, the newcomers did not refrain from comparing costs and benefits ("we give more than we take"), suggesting risk sharing ("we have made substantial payments in advance"), or calculating opportunity costs ("the Enlargement will be more expensive if you delay it") when they tried, by means of utilitarian arguments, to persuade the EU of the need for showing more solidarity. Among these arguments, however, two plausible suggestions were missing: to my knowledge, no serious program has been recommended by the East to introduce a sort of "solidarity tax" (following the German example of *Soli*) and/or a "solidarity loan" in the West.

7 The new member states want to catch up quickly. This is the cornerstone of the moral economy of the East, but does not aim at instant leveling by claiming a large part of the wealth (income, welfare) of the older members. At the same time, the Easterners are not willing to tolerate alms. They do not wish for the West to lose when the East gains, but they cannot imagine solidarity without real sacrifice on the part of the stronger party. If both parties win, then, in their opinion, the relative gains must differ in favor of the East in order to secure medium- or long-term leveling. Provided that this higher percentage does not come about autonomously, the West is asked to channel part of its gains to the East.

8 This is a necessary condition of solidarity. The entrants are convinced they are not asking too much. Donating, say, one per cent of Western GDP to the East could replace (or trigger) a several-percent growth in our half of the continent, they observe wistfully. Maybe it is just a “first push” that is lacking, the argument goes, and redistribution could come to a halt fairly soon thereafter, since the relative gains will be higher in the East.

9 Why are even such rational messages misunderstood, misinterpreted or simply disregarded in the West? Are they inextricably mixed with historical/moral arguments? Are

they just poorly elaborated? Do they rest on a concept of solidarity to which the addressee cannot subscribe? Or is the West plainly disinterested in listening to the messenger?

## Rhetoric of indifference

- o One cannot help, in asking these questions, witnessing the deep-rooted indifference that the West has betrayed in responding to (or triggering off) the rhetoric of resentment. I hasten to add that I do not mean by indifference either a lack of a moral(izing) approach to European integration, or a low profile of tactical moves in the accession game, or a total repression of negative sentiments. On the contrary, the member states did not reject the ethical conclusions of the entrants' solidarity narrative as a whole (supporting the weaker members of the "family" is, namely, part and parcel of the foundation ethos/myth of the Union). Rather, they frequently used the image of indifference to improve the bargaining position of the West in the course of the Enlargement, and they could not conceal some of their Orientalist prejudices toward the newcomers.<sup>27</sup>
- 1 Indifference reflects three things: a) a principled disinterest in an overwhelmingly altruistic approach to solidarity, in historical arguments on reciprocity, and in vague ideas

on distributive justice and social engineering; b) an instinctive inattention, originating perhaps in aversion and fear, toward any kind of reasoning based on the concept of the victim and his/her *ressentiments* and toward any “culture of complaint”; c) a calm attitude of the “seller” toward the “buyer” in the sellers’ market of the accession.

2 Consequently, the West did not think it had to make special efforts to challenge the main tenets of the East’s discourse. The entrants still experience this neglect as humiliating (and mistake it for condescension, or even hatred), which in turn drives their resentment even further, thereby widening the communication gap.

3 As a rule, the representatives of the rhetoric of indifference limited themselves to pragmatic/utilitarian arguments. Interestingly enough, they did not present the final objective of the East’s catching up as questionable. Instead, they kept silent about the distant future, and focused their criticisms on another *leitmotiv* of Eastern narratives of solidarity, namely, the claim of redistribution. The main aspect of this critique came as a surprise: “Why does the East not realize that direct support may wrongly serve the end of leveling? Does it wish to jeopardize its own project?”

4 The Easterners responded indignantly. They did not understand why they could not build consensus around their own concept of solidarity with the Union that also loves to advertise categories such as identity, belonging, the family of nations, cultural/religious traditions, citizenship, social cohesion, the European Social Model, etc.<sup>28</sup> By a reflex motion, the Easterners associated these categories with forgiveness, biased rules, altruism, moral responsibility, permissiveness, the exchange of favors, and generosity, applying the *Solidaritätsprinzip* of “one for all, all for one.”

5 It took some time for the East to recognize that the West went beyond the biblical analogy of the prodigal son:<sup>29</sup> its paternalism was not humble and unconditional, fueled by affection and bordering on self-punishment. The *pater* called the European Union decided to be strict and demanding, rather than generously tolerant, and if it nonetheless made an exception to the rule, this stemmed from his own interest, rather than from a personal bias toward his son. Nothing should invalidate the underlying maxim of initiation: “first prove that you are able to live with us under the same roof,” wherein equal emphasis was placed on “prove,” “first” and “able.” This rite of passage also stipulated the right of the

father to specify the initial conditions of cohabitation, e.g., the way in which decisions were made in the family, or the kind of assistance the son received from the close relatives.

5 In what follows, I will arrange the main elements of the rhetoric of indifference according to the six principal tropes of its Eastern counterpart.

## **Accession as a quasi-natural entitlement**

7 Geography and history, of course, matter. However, they are only necessary, but not sufficient and not at all well-defined, conditions for claiming support from the West. Solidarity has not only an East– West axis, but also a North–South one, with far larger masses of “deserving poor” in the developing world. A large part of these (e.g., people in the Mediterranean region) can also prove their geographical and cultural proximity to Western Europe.<sup>30</sup>

8 Furthermore, as the example of Turkey or Israel (or, for that matter, that of Russia) shows, the cultural geography of Europe is too shaky to sustain an operational theory of solidarity. Because symbolic boundaries (religion, arts and sciences, social doctrines, etc.) are fuzzy, the EU has to insist on practical

considerations in order to avoid endless cogitation over questions like “is Romania more European than Croatia?”

9 Along with the alignment with the *acquis* and the Copenhagen criteria, a crucial consideration is the general workability of the Union. The capacity of the EU for altruism is limited, according to the West, actually much more limited than that of the Western parts of Germany, and the poorer member states, as well as the poorer regions or groups of citizens in the member states, also compete for help. They, too, are “naturally entitled.” The larger the number of “natural” claimants, the lower the probability of finding viable patterns of cohabitation, and the higher the probability of organizational overstretch.

## Moral responsibility for Eastern Europe

0 This is again a fairly inoperational concept, especially in a transnational context. It competes with the principle of national and Union-level responsibility. “Until we have our nation-states,” the Westerner admits, “we will probably feel more responsible for the destiny of our lower-middle class than for that of other countries’ underclasses.”

1 Even in the case of Germany, in which the principle of the nation was not expected to constitute a huge obstacle, moral

responsibility for the former GDR has remained a fiercely contested concept. Moreover, like the notion of natural entitlement, the term of responsibility may imply admission to and/or support from the EU, but it does not specify the terms of admission and guarantee the pace of catching up with the Union's average (why not with its most advanced members?) by the entrants. "In any event, what could explain a moral choice that prefers the victims of communism to those living in our own former colonies?" the Westerner asks.

## Paying historical debts

- 2 "Is there anyone out there," he/she will continue, "who could calculate our bills from the past? What is the starting date of the period of calculation: The stopping of the Mongol invasion? The ousting of the Turks? The Paris peace treaty? Munich? Yalta? Why not forcing the Russians to pay? We did not colonize Eastern Europe, why should *we* compensate its citizens today for what they lost under communism? True, the West was relatively lucky but who says one has to do penance for its fortune?
- 3 Anyway, we also sacrificed part of our welfare in the arms race while contributing to welfare under communism and/or to the implosion of

the Soviet empire. Don't panic, we will pay because we do feel *some* responsibility for you (in particular, once you are in the Union), but please avoid this perplexing talk of historical debts. Or— *ad absurdum*—tell us how much the well-supported East Germans owe to the poor Russians today, and don't forget about drawing a balance between what Hitler did to the Russians and Stalin to the Germans. Wouldn't it be more useful for both of us to draw a line and break with the practice of looking backward? By the way, could you please tell us how *you* treat your Eastern neighbors (or the citizens of the Eastern part of your own country)? Have *you* already paid all your historical debts?"

## **Reciprocity and risk sharing between East and West today**

4 "In principle," goes the argument, "this scheme of solidarity would be acceptable for us if the 'favors' granted by the East were not overestimated, while the services rendered in return were not systematically undervalued. First of all, the accession countries have profited tremendously from the inflow of Western capital thus far; this was the only way in which they could avoid total collapse. Similarly, if admission to the EU had not materialized, they would have risked the same

outcome. Secondly, by that very inclusion, the West offers the East not only new market opportunities, employment possibilities, and transfer payments, but a variety of other benefits ranging from a security umbrella for investors through growing monetary stability, business networks and education, to the brand name ‘Europe.’”

- 5 The entrants can continue freeriding on a much larger scale. And these are merely the economic advantages; advantages that could not have emerged without some sacrifice on the part of the member states. The same applies to political and socio-cultural opportunities: the “community achievements” being assumed by the East with much complaint reflect a large array of hard work, conflict, self-restraint—in a single word, *sacrifice*—made at earlier stages. Leaving the East in the lurch? A false accusation!
- 6 From this perspective, inclusion itself is tantamount to solidarity based on support and sacrifice, especially if one considers the risks of allowing the East to use Western societal regimes. The accession may imply yet further sacrifice if the entrants abuse those regimes by way of tax evasion, corruption or ethnic strife, all favorite topics of Western populism, which unfortunately signal real dangers.

7 “Thirdly,” the Westerner continues, “much of the risks are even less predictable than these. By experimenting with deepening and enlargement simultaneously, and by co-opting an unprecedentedly large number of relatively backward countries, we took a bold step that, in retrospect, may well turn our former sacrifices into futile efforts. Extrapolation is in vain. But how to share risks without knowing their dimensions? Perhaps if we were able to calculate the balance of costs and benefits properly (including political and socio-cultural ones), it would not be the West, but the East, who should pay. In such a case, why should we spend more than absolutely necessary for damage control on the East?”

## **Instant/quick accession as a proof of solidarity**

8 “You accuse us,” says the Westerner, “of committing the ‘original sin’ of missing the historical chance for instant European reunification. Are you aware of the complexity of such a vast social engineering project? Careful preparation, thorough screening, institution building on a large scale, legal and cultural adaptation, etc. take a long time. It was also out of solidarity that we wished to spare the East the shocks typical of the across-the-board unification process in Germany.

Haste may result in a situation in which both parties would be worse off in the near future. Please also be mindful of the fact that some of the earlier EU candidates had to wait longer than you for membership. We cannot simply renounce our entire philosophy of piecemeal social engineering, which has been corroborated by the centuries-long experience of making democratic capitalism work and coping with inequality in Europe, and, more recently, by the construction of the European Union.”

9 In an ideal case, this philosophy includes the following principles:

1. The EU takes an organic/evolutionary approach to institution building, which includes long-term regulations, stable and formalized rules, a cautious combination of societies with divergent pasts, a gradual leveling of old and new members, etc. It would be an unjust simplification to call this a bureaucratic stalemate.
2. The workability of the integrated system is a main priority, and because it is contingent on the abilities of the individual members, prudent selection and preparation of the candidates are indispensable tasks. Transfers alone, however large they may be, do not create viable institutions. And, conversely, faced

with the lack of appropriate institutions/cultures, even the most tight-fisted support cannot be absorbed, or it will leak away due to ignorance, neglect and corruption.

3. The EU prefers steady and homogeneous systems of regulation with only a few unavoidable exceptions, and no double standards. Any divergence from the established rules of accession, for instance, would be unfair to the participants of the former enlargement rounds, and would provoke resistance. Because the Union fears corruption, accession deals based on an exchange of favors, informal bargaining, obscure transactions, etc. are to be ruled out *ab ovo*. “We do not grant special favors,” says the West, “we just establish the hurdles. Anyone who can overcome them, has the right to join (upon being invited, of course).”
4. In order to avoid conflicts of interests, the candidates are not allowed to take part in deciding on the terms of their own admission to the Union. This is, of course, asymmetry by definition, but only of a temporary kind. By and large, democracy begins after the accession. As a matter of

fact, no one compelled any of the entrants to apply for admission.

5. Consensus-building,<sup>31</sup> shared values, common identity, European citizenship, etc. are important pillars of cohesion/solidarity within the Union. They should rest, however, on a negotiated coordination of particular interests. Romantic promises will not help.
6. The organization potential for social engineering in the EU is restricted, and budgets are under severe constraints. Thus, common tasks must be prioritized. Eastern enlargement, for example, had to wait for the completion of previous accession projects, and was delayed by the deepening as well.
7. Although the Union is keen on reducing inequality between member states, it cannot guarantee the pace of catching up for the above reasons, as well as because of the self-imposed limits to redistribution between the member states.<sup>32</sup>
8. The historical bills presented by the East compete with future payments demanded from the West. In endangering internal solidarity within the member states by indulging in nostalgia, the entrants may

paralyze the future of the entire continent within the global competition. Engineering requires a constructive attitude, and the suppression of dissatisfaction with the allegedly unfair distribution practices of the past, in order to ensure distributive justice in the future.

9. The EU does not live in a vacuum, free from the concerns of *Realpolitik* (including geopolitics). The proportions of size and power between member states are not disregarded in decision-making. No matter whether we like it or not, there is a core and a periphery in European integration.<sup>33</sup> The interests of the member states are more important than those of the future entrants. Additionally, the Union's political and socio-cultural goals cannot persistently counteract the objectives of economic integration. The members cannot have their cake and eat it. The given stage of the business cycle is a crucial variable of Union-level policies. Those who happen to enter the EU during stagnation or recession are victims of bad luck.<sup>34</sup>
- 5 In sum, accession is not a panacea. If launched too early and badly managed, it can spoil the chances of the East's being supported, not to

speak of the implementation of its final goal of catching up.

## Distributive justice and catching up

- 1 The principles of fair distribution within the Union are defined less strictly than those of social engineering. The maxims “there is no free lunch,” “merits first, rewards later,” “no help without self-help,” “the assistance should be transparent,” “charity is just an auxiliary solution,” “the donor has the right to check the recipient,” etc. are the familiar rules of thumb of textbook capitalism. These maxims were widely used during the accession talks to urge the East to leave its postures of “learned helplessness” and “subsidy addiction” behind. In so doing, the West proudly presented its stronger ego, i.e. the meritocratic (versus the charitable) one during the pedagogic exercise.<sup>35</sup>
- 2 “We have been socialized in a culture of self-reliance,” said the Westerner. “If we really left our Eastern neighbors in the lurch, then it would be high time for them to follow the example of Baron Münchhausen, and pull themselves out of the morass by grabbing at their own hair. Charity disguised as solidarity would demobilize the entrants and impair their ability to catch up. Empowerment is a better solution; offering the East a single

fishing net rather than tons of fish promises a more robust procedure of catching up. Subsidies would only give birth to new subsidies; support is a Pandora's box. At any rate, how can one vehemently make a claim for assistance and complain about the loss of sovereignty at the same time?"

3 Hence, redistribution from the West to the East should be scrupulously apportioned. But what will be the end result of just redistribution? Catching up has many faces. Should it result in an equality of opportunity or outcome? Should the entrants target the representative middle of the member states, or the most advanced among them? Whom among the would-be entrants should the West support: those who perform better or worse? Do those who give more also deserve more? "It would be stimulating to meditate upon these issues," says the West. "Unfortunately, our opportunities are severely limited; solidarity as support can only be sold to our electorates if it does not jeopardize the status quo. Anyway, why should even the Western underclass eventually support the Eastern upper class?"

## Chances for a rapprochement

4 It is not my intention to situate myself in the middle ground between these two discourses, and assume the role of wise and neutral

arbitrator. Yet, I could do so, because the rhetorical conflict conceals a great variety of overlapping ideas and discursive techniques, even if the stylised arguments reconstructed above suggest an extremely deep cleavage between them. That is why I have tried to call the reader's attention to quite a few pragmatic considerations within the rhetoric of resentment, and to a fair degree of resentment within the rhetoric of indifference. Why cannot these commonalities nonetheless bridge the communication gap between East and West?

5 I am afraid that the conflict between the two discourses of solidarity is, by definition, irresolvable. The dialogue is fruitless not only because of the divergent value orientations and semantic approaches, and the strong link between the rhetoric and the actual strategies of bargaining over the accession, but also because both discourses rest on a number of assumptions that can only be checked (if at all) many decades from now. Hypotheses such as the one that postulates catching up without generous redistribution cannot be proven by reference to previous EU enlargements, which were much more open-handed toward Greece, Portugal or Ireland than the current one is to the ex-communist entrants.

5 Conversely, it would be difficult to verify the assumption that rapid accession accelerates

leveling between old and new member states, because precedents are lacking. In making a case for their own rhetoric, both parties rely on the only available real-time experiment, the process of German reunification. Unfortunately, both discourses find enough evidence in that experiment to validate their own messages.

7 If the reunification of Germany is regarded as a successful story of catching up (because the average rate of leveling has been high during the past fifteen years), the Westerner would say: “Look what an exorbitant level of support is needed to offset the adverse effects of instant accession!” The Easterner would respond in the following manner: “Now you can see that it is only a combination of quick accession and generous redistribution that can fill secular gaps in development.”

8 If, however, the German experiment is thus far considered as a partial failure (because leveling slowed down considerably during the past decade), the Westerner can assert: “Look, even such an exorbitant level of support is insufficient to redress the balance impaired by instant accession!” And the Eastern reply would be: “Because even a combination of quick accession and generous redistribution does not guarantee a sustainable pace of leveling between the Eastern and Western

lands of Germany, imagine how slow our catching up will be if you insist on ‘realistic generosity,’ that is, if you remain so selfish.”

9 Of course, these reactions can be nuanced, but it is likely that the indignant questions “why aren’t you more generous?” and “why aren’t you more grateful?” will recur in the dialogue of the deaf. Similarly, recriminations such as “you are just moralizing to raise funds” and “you just talk about gradualism since you do not want to help us now” will not fade away. Moreover, day-to-day bargaining will unavoidably reveal double standards in the strategies of the two parties from time to time, a fact usually not conducive to mutual trust.

0 Today, with a lack of powerful common enemies,<sup>36</sup> the forces driving reconciliation are feeble, and the two halves of Europe are not compelled to rethink their own interpretations of solidarity. Hence, given the West’s favorable bargaining position, for the time being I can only imagine a kind of “unilateral rapprochement,” to use an oxymoron, between the two rhetorics. In other words, this will involve a unilateral adjustment by the East, or – loyal to the well-known traditions of Westernization in Eastern Europe—a simulated one.

1 Meanwhile, provided the enlargement is successful, the entrants may actually reconcile

themselves to a less romantic concept of solidarity. Instinctively, they will strive to reduce cognitive dissonance, and view the EU as a good choice. Once they enter the West, they will be confronted with less humiliation because the enlargement will operate as a self-fulfilling prophecy within the Union: “We admitted them to the club,” the Westerners will argue, “*therefore* they can’t be too bad.”

2 This prediction may moderate the Orientalist prejudices. Departing from an outright rejection of the enlargement, a radical populist in the West can arrive at a reserved statement such as “once those over there join the West, they probably cannot remain Easterners for good.” In this more relaxed atmosphere, the new members will be tempted by an interest-based approach to solidarity, as has been suggested by the West. In fact, they have already been so tempted. In response to the growing resentment of their Eastern neighbors, in particular those who have not yet been invited even into the Union’s waiting room, a familiar attitude is becoming more and more fashionable among both new members and current entrants. I would describe it as “indifference.”

## Katzenjammer

3 This paper has grown out of a conference presentation made just before the official admission of the first eight ex-communist countries to the European Union. It bore the title, “On the Eve of a Gloomy Feast.” Although it was clear to most observers at the time that the feast would be a bit sad, I promised to celebrate it as an unprecedented act of European reunification. Falling in love with my own concept, I put my faith in the inertia of the attitude of indifference. In other words, I assumed that *a*) the West would be protected against the adverse effects of the Enlargement for a sufficiently long period; *b*) the European Constitution could be endorsed (even if by a small margin) by the national referenda in the core countries of the EU, and the latent conflicts between them would not burst out soon; *c*) the debate about the accession of Turkey would—fortunately—steal the show from the one concerned with Eastern Enlargement. Hence, a large part of Eastern Europe would “creep into” the Union under the aegis of a “normal” amount of indifference. Thus, the images of the proverbial Polish plumber and the Hungarian truck driver could not be exploited to spread *réssentiment* amidst domestic and intra- EU political quarrels in Western Europe.

4 True, clouds began to gather around the next budget round before the feast began, but I did not expect the state of indifference to be disturbed from within the “old” Union, resulting in a falling degree of redistribution in favor of the new member states. As a consequence, instead of witnessing a gradual reduction of resentment in the East, one sees additional arguments emerging in the region to support the old belief of “having been left alone.”

5 “We accepted the limitation of labor migration to the West, but no one told us that the Bolkestein directive granting the freedom of movement for service providers would not come into force, and our legal migrants should face popular distrust, hostile trade unions and harassment by the police.” “We thought we would have the right to decide about income and profit taxes in our countries, and that no Western politician such as Nicolas Sarkozy would threaten us with reducing transfer payments if we went on with what he calls ‘tax dumping.’” “We expected to remain under close surveillance by Brussels, but did not know that we had joined a community in which influential leaders such as Jacques Chirac could instruct us to ‘shut up.’” “How does the Union dare to demand solidaristic behavior from us, while it descends into petty

bargaining over less than a half percent of the EU's aggregate GNP?" These stylized sentences are meant to reflect the present mood of political, business and cultural elites in the new and future member states.

6 Theoretically, these elites could have a unique chance, I believe, to alter their traditional roles for a moment by contrasting the growing resentment in the West with cool-headed, pragmatic reasoning (bordering on indifference) about balancing interests, assuring the viability of common institutions and the like. What we have instead is a wide stream of the usual complaints, suspicions, renewed talk about dignity, and, last but not least, a romantic gesture of self-sacrifice by the Eastern European prime ministers at the Brussels summit in June of 2005. In a heroic (pathetic) move, they demonstrated the readiness of the "New Europe" to cut its own funding in order to save the Union's budget.

7 "When I heard one after the other, all the new member countries, each poorer than the other, say that in the interest of reaching an agreement they would be ready to renounce some of their financial demands, I was ashamed," said then-EU President, Jean-Claude Juncker. Apparently, he took this gesture of solidarity at face value. Most other leaders of Western Europe were said to

suspect calculated behavior behind the newcomers' pedagogical ambitions.

8 Welcome back to square one in the game called transnational solidarity in Europe...

## Notes

1. For the limits of the explanatory power of the analogy, see the penultimate section of the paper.

2. Probably, I would not dare to afford this luxury if I were a specialist of the economic and political history of European integration. Thus far, I have made only two and a half attempts to interpret the current round of EU Enlargement, and even these were excursions to intellectual rather than "real" history. See J. M. Kovacs, "Westerweiterung? Zur Metamorphose des Traums von Mitteleuropa," *Transit* 2001/21; "Approaching the EU And Reaching the US? Transforming Welfare Regimes in East-Central Europe: Rival Narratives," *West European Politics* April 2002; "Rival Temptations—Passive Resistance. Cultural Globalization in Hungary," in: Peter Berger & Samuel Huntington (eds.), *Many Globalizations*, Oxford University Press, 2002; "Little America," *Transit* 2004/27.

3. For an early approach to moral principles in the international political economy of income redistribution, see Amartya Sen, *Resources, Values and Development*, Oxford, 1985. See also his *Inequality Reexamined*, Oxford, 1992. The economic branch of postcolonial studies also revolves around the problem of distributive justice in North-South relations. Today, one can observe an upsurge in the institutional theory of foreign relations. See e.g., M. G. Cowles et al (eds.) *Europeanization and Domestic Change*, Cornell UP, Ithaca, 2001; A. Stone Sweet et al. (eds.), *The*

*Institutionalization of Europe*, Oxford UP, 2001; E. O. Eriksen, “Towards a Logic of Justification. On the Possibility of Post-National Solidarity,” in: M. Egeberg and P. Laegreid, (eds.), *Organizing Political Institutions*, Oslo, Scandinavian UP, 1999; F. Schimmelfennig, “The Community Trap. Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union,” *International Organization*, 2001/1; U. Sedelmeier, “Eastern Enlargement: Risk, Rationality and Role Compliance,” In: M. G. Cowles and M. Smith (eds.), *The State of the European Union: Risk, Reform, Resistance, and Revival*, Oxford UP, 2000.

4. An important exception to the rule was a promising but rapidly aborting debate in the middle of the 1980s about unequal exchange in the Comecon. According to an iconoclastic view in Soviet studies at the time, the Soviet Union was “exploited” by the satellite states in its trade with them in the so-called “socialist world market.” See M. Marrese and S. Richter (eds.), *The Challenge of Simultaneous Economic Relations with East and West*, New York UP, 1990; J. Brada, *Interpreting the Soviet Subsidization of Eastern Europe*, MIT Press, 1988.

5. The IWM projects “After the Accession... The Socio-Economic Culture of Eastern Europe in the Enlarging Union: An Asset or a Liability?” and “Dioscuri. Eastern Enlargement—Western Enlargement. Cultural Encounters in the European Economy and Society after the Accession” embrace eight countries of Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia/Montenegro and Slovenia). To a large extent, the following arguments are based on many dozen in-depth interviews and private conversations that I made during the past five years with leading participants of the accession game in both

politics and business as well as in the academia in the framework of the project, and also on a preliminary analysis of hundreds of interviews and dozens of case studies, media- and literature reviews completed by my colleagues in the eight countries.

6. In what follows, I will use the term “rhetoric” more often than that of “discourse” in order to point to the persuasive thrust of the given narratives.

7. This convergence, of course, makes my life of an analyst easier but why conceal the fact that I am not that happy witnessing the dire state of liberal thought in the West and the dilution of the Westernization paradigm of the liberals in my own region. The example of “Euro-realism” propounded by Václav Klaus in the Czech Republic shows much in common with the attitude of “entering Europe with national pride” by Viktor Orbán in Hungary.

8. See J. M. Kovacs, “Uncertain Ghosts. Populists and Urbans in Postcommunist Hungary,” in: Peter Berger (ed.), *Limits of Social Cohesion*, Westview Press, 1998.

9. This discourse on solidarity is not without antecedents. Besides the relationship between the EU and the developing world, it builds on the ongoing debate between the Union’s net payers and net recipients in general, and between the developed and less developed regions of Europe (e.g., North vs. South Italy, West vs. East Germany) in particular.

10. Cf. Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, Stanford, 1994; Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford UP, 1997; Iver Neumann, *Uses of the Other*, Minnesota UP, 1999.

11. In the West the production of vicious figurative slogans is left to the Haiders, Bossis and Blochers. However, I am afraid that even they cannot beat the

Csurkas, Leppers, Sheshels and Zhirinovskys in hate speech.

12. I applied a random selection from various editions of Oxford, Cambridge and Webster dictionaries, and made only minor simplifications in the texts.

13. I do not want to bore the reader with the nuances of the term “solidarity” in other languages. For still influential definitions, see Piotr Kropotkin’s “natural solidarity” (a natural law describing spontaneous compassion rather than rational choice) and Emile Durkheim’s distinction between “mechanical” and “organic” solidarity.

14. For the Easterners’ propensity to expect lose-win situations to emerge, see Georgi Ganev, “Economic Attitudes after Ten Years of Transition,” in: *Political and Economic Orientations of the Bulgarians*, Centre for Liberal Strategies, Sofia, 2000.

15. Some years ago, in Eastern Europe the press was still full of the “we cannot trade money for pride”-style declarations, and of the frustration felt over the lack of an elegant—even if symbolic—gift given by the West to the East at the end of the accession negotiations with the “first rounders.” Instead, the region received the infamous Rasmussen documentary on “The Road to Europe” that revealed a deep condescension felt by the Danish prime minister especially toward Poland. Disillusionment is also reflected by a new genre of Eastern European witticism, the EU jokes. Let me quote three of them: “Why is the EU like a cemetery? Because we will all end up there.” “Why do we enter the EU? Because we have not been invited to join the US.” “Why does the EU enlarge itself to the East? Because there is the Ocean on its Western border.”

16. A feeling of popular discomfort was demonstrated by the accession referenda, especially in Hungary and Slovakia (as regards the voters' turnout), and Latvia and Lithuania (as regards the proportion of the yes votes).

17. The most offended were the former dissidents who, after a while, put the Western attitudes under the heading of “usual geopolitical practices” that ranged from Yalta, through 1956 and 1968, to 1981. For a recent recollection of this view, see e.g., Bronislaw Geremek, “Welche Werte für Europa?” *Transit* 2004/26; Ulrike Ackermann (ed.), *Versuchung Europa. Stimmen aus dem Europäischen Forum*. Frankfurt a.M. 2003 (humanities-online.de).

18. Cf. Tony Judt, *A Grand Illusion? An Essay on Europe*, Hill and Wang, 1996.

19. In 1989 still quite a few economists in the region put their faith in a comprehensive debt relief.

20. “Do not panic, our cheap revolutions will be followed by a cheap EU enlargement,” some of them added cynically.

21. This initiative was actively supported by George Soros. See e.g., *Soros on Soros: Staying Ahead of the Curve*, Wiley and Sons, 1995.

22. According to the *bon mot* by Bronislaw Geremek, the Accession lies always five years ahead of us.

23. For ironic and angry responses from Eastern Europe to the paper by Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida in *FAZ* on May 31, 2003, see Peter Esterhazy, “Wie groß ist der europäische Zwerg?,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 2003/6/11, and Ivan Krastev, “Nicht ohne mein Amerika,” *Die Zeit*, 2003/8/14.

24. See József Böröcz, “Empire and Coloniality in the ‘Eastern Enlargement’ of the European Union,” in:

*Empire's New Clothes. Unveiling EU Enlargement*, *Central Europe Review*, e-book, 2001. See also Krzysztof Pomian, "Vor der Osterweiterung: Westliche Vorurteile, polnische Ängste," *Transit* 2003/25.

25. See my "Westerweiterung..." In one of the interviews the Polish team conducted in the framework of IWM's project "After the Accession..." I read the following lines: "I remember that once I picked up tomatoes and I did not feel like working, I was very fucked up, too and made a kind of historical analysis, whether he, my employer, does not have some obligations toward me as a Pole because they in 1945 had left us... I was getting more and more angry with this man... OK, if I were a student and worked there, it would be OK but I work there because I cannot earn money in my own country, I am a poor man here in this Holland, of course, because they abandoned us, they had sold us to the Russians..." (I am grateful to Jacek Kochanowicz for calling my attention to this text.)

26. The populists are mistaken. True, Article 42, the so-called solidarity clause, in the EU draft constitution is rather empty (by and large, it refers to mutual assistance in times of terrorist attacks and natural disaster) but at least it does not hide ulterior motives.

27. See my comments in *Transit* 2002/25 on Alfred Gusenbauer's programmatic paper on populism.

28. "Can one create social cohesion within the nation states, without creating cohesion between them?", they wondered.

29. Andrei Plesu addresses the West with melancholy: "Look... we got out of historical mess... We turned ugly, tired and became sour. We bare all the sins of the prodigal son, we return to you, full of wounds but of hopes, too. Where is the golden calf?... Maybe you

would say you are not obliged to nourish us in expensive sanatoriums, to heal us.” (“Die verlorenen Söhne und ihre Sünden. Welchen Patriotismus braucht Europa? Warum die Länder Osteuropas fürchten, ihre Originalität zu verlieren,” in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* June 5, 1997).

30. Cf. the recent initiative by Brussels called “Wider Europe.”

31. According to Heather Grabbe, “the nightmare scenario is ten new member states which behave like Spain on the budget, but like Britain and Denmark in their Euroscepticism.” (*CER Bulletin*, Issue 5, August/September 2002).

32. The entrants had to accept that they would get much less than the beneficiaries of the “Southern Enlargement”. To compare, in 2000, for example, Portugal, Ireland and Greece received 200 to 400 euros per capita from Brussels, while for the newcomers the EU will offer no more than 30 to 70 euros per year and per capita in the period between 2004 and 2006. In the period between 2000 and 2006, 67 billion euros will be spent by Brussels for the Enlargement: this amounts to one thousandth of the GDP of the EU and one tenth of what the former GDR received during 1990–1999 (see Heather Grabbe, *Profiting from EU Enlargement*, CER, London 2001).

33. The reaction by Jacques Chirac to the “letter of eight” demonstrates how fast indifference can turn into an angry talking-to if the entrants replace resentment by rational coalition-building.

34. “Today we have 2 apples for 15 persons, unfortunately, tomorrow we will have only 1 for 25 but no one asked you to eat apples,” said an Austrian politician to me in a private conversation.

35. Interestingly enough, when it comes to a comparison with the US, the EU prefers to distinguish itself by pointing to its own greater sensitivity in social matters.

36. Today, the old slogan of the dissidents “return to Europe” appears in the declarations of leading politicians in Western Europe with a twisted meaning. Accordingly, the entrants are strongly requested to return to Europe (not from the Soviet empire but) from America. The “New Europe” is hesitating...

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