

**The Anti-American Century** | Ivan Krastev,  
Alan McPherson

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# “Little America”

**Eastern european economic cultures in the eu**

*Janos Matyas Kovacs*

p. 27-47

## Texto completo

*“Why do we want to become members of the European Union? Because we haven’t been invited to join the United States.”*

Let us imagine the eternal *Wessi* and the eternal *Ossi*, typical figures in German popular discourse, talking in a pub about what the *Wessi* calls eastern enlargement. For him or her, EU membership not only covers all the civilizational benefits the “West” generously and light-mindedly offers to the “east” but also refers to the Westward expansion, a sort of “Western enlargement” of the dangers

originating in the former Soviet empire. The *Wessi* is anxious about what will happen to his job, family and savings after "those over there" (the infamous Polish plumber and Hungarian truck driver) are allowed to enter the union, either as employers or employees, for more than brief visits. Will you pay taxes properly? he asks the *Ossi* with deep distrust in his voice. Won't you accept lower wages, less safe working conditions than us? Will you protect *our* environment? How long do you want to capitalize on our budgets? Won't your "Wild-East" entrepreneurs ignore the social standards in our country? Will they observe the business contracts? Will they leave the mafia behind?

As a mirror image of how populists in Western Europe portray the eastern "savages" *ante portas*, one witnesses in Eastern European nationalist discourse the icon of the "honest" and "creative" Croat, Czech or Romanian worker and businessman who, while matching their Western colleagues in terms of capitalist virtues, are allegedly better-educated, respect family values, religion and rural bonds. Accordingly, Brussels should feel honored to receive the new members and be lucky to gain so much "fresh energy and culture" at such a low price.

This pride mingles with the worries of our *Ossi*. For him, eastern enlargement seems risky because, as a result of it, he may also lose his job (true, not via wage dumping, but via high-productivity competition). Similarly, he is also anxious about the lowering of social standards in his country (e.g., he would insist on his traditionally relaxed work ethic). Moreover, he fears both the erosion of his pre-communist traditions and the filtering of his new entrepreneurial freedoms, consumption habits, etc. through the world of the *acquis communautaire*, the oversized body of EU regulations. For instance, as an employer he will have to comply with equal opportunity rules, and as a consumer he may be forced to abandon shopping around the clock. Or, to quote even more profane examples from my country, Hungary, occurring right after the Accession, he is not allowed to slaughter pigs in his backyard, distill *pálinka* in the bathroom, and the *non plus ultra* of his fears, must reconcile himself with the fact that according to the eu regulations the Romanians may also call their traditional drink, the *tuica*, *pálinka* (a Slovak word by the way).

Won't you use us as cheap laborers and buyers of low-quality consumer goods—a poorhouse of the union? Will you not paralyze our innovative spirit and abuse our talent? Will

you accept our quest for informality or will you simply subsume it under the heading of lawlessness or corruption, and keep on stigmatizing and monitoring us? Questions such as these reflect the concerns of our *Ossi* who would prefer to see a kind of Western enlargement that brings his old and new virtues to the EU.

What, on the surface, seems to be a regular *Ossi*–*Wessi* conflict of perceptions, a two-person game, is, on a closer scrutiny, an interplay of at least three actors, including a powerful challenge by global (basically American) capitalism. As the aforementioned reference to an imaginary "Wild east" suggests, Eastern Europe and the United States are supposed to forge a peculiar coalition in this game, and the eternal *Wessi* finds himself in the crosshairs of similar economic cultures. If he cherished anti-American sentiments in the past, watching America emerge even from his immediate eastern neighborhood may strengthen them. I have bad news for those who tend to think that this kind of *Wessi* mentality is only characteristic of the potential losers and of a few noisy trade unions, chambers and small populist parties that do their best to instrumentalize the fear from that coalition. That fear already sits in the minds of a whole series of influential European leaders,

such as the French conservative Nicolas Sarkozy or the German social-democrat Franz Münterfering, when they are heaping curses on eastern European tax dumping or U.S.-based *HeuschreckenKapitalismus*—a metaphor portraying financial investors as swarms of locusts. Ironically, these politicians are in turn surprised to watch their own citizens reject the European Constitution.

In any event, these statesmen would feel reinforced in their passions if they knew the irreverent joke circulating in Eastern Europe before the first round of the enlargement, which introduces this paper. Is this joke indeed a proof of popular sentiments or rather just another expression of the legendary pro-American attitudes of the opinion leaders in the region? A great many analysts do not really worry about this distinction, just as they do not ask if these attitudes are stable and deep enough, if the notions of America in general and the United States in particular are really interchangeable, or if, in other words, the United States actually represents what it is presumed to represent, or whether it is also united in terms of its economic and political cultures. America is America and Eastern Europe is America-friendly—period. The whole world is becoming increasingly anti-American, goes the argument, yet, as usual,

Eastern Europe is an exception to the rule. Proper definitions and large-scale comparative surveys lacking, anecdotal evidence and bold generalizations prevail in both journalism and scholarship.<sup>1</sup>

It might appear that my paper will carefully dissect these generalizations to prove that there is no such thing as a pro-American *Sonderweg* in the region. On the contrary, in what follows, I will not challenge this assumption. Instead, in order to support it, I will experiment with just another bold generalization while mapping America in post-communist Eastern Europe. in explaining certain pro-American leanings of eastern European societies, it is not sufficient to focus on the ideological commitments made by the political and cultural elites, the businesspeople and the younger generations, or on mass consumption (popular culture) in general, i.e., on typical carriers of US-style capitalism all over the world. One cannot ignore a massive and robust process of Americanization over the past decades in which people at large vote with their feet for institutions, policies and concepts that *they* regard as American *and* good, and build institutions such as the flat tax, private pensions, or Valentine's Day into their daily life. Conversely, Eastern Europeans who embrace these and other U.S. signifiers

are often not aware of the fact that they have chosen the “American option” of post-communist transformation. For brevity’s sake, I call the result of this multi-faceted selection process “Little America.”

Let me immediately add that my words should be treated with extreme caution. They rest on a yet-unfinished research project on comparative economic cultures in eight eastern European countries,<sup>2</sup> as well as on a forthcoming one, an offshoot of the original project, that will focus on a possibly accurate mapping of the “American” features of economic cultures in the region. Mapping will not necessarily imply meticulous measurement, because the concept of economic culture in these projects is defined in rather broad—qualitative—terms. It encompasses not only the values, norms, beliefs, habits, attitudes, etc. of the economic actors, but also the institutional arrangements, policies and concepts in which these elements of culture are embedded. The term “culture” is frequently used in plural to express the prevailing diversity of cultural types and to cover as many subcategories of economic culture (such as work culture, consumption culture, financial culture, management culture, etc.) as possible.

With respect to the notion of Americanization, this is at least as value-loaded and ambiguous as it is old. It may refer both to imposing US-type institutions/policies/concepts on certain countries and to voluntarily borrowing them by others. It is used in both the normative and descriptive/analytical sense. It pertains to dreaming about the United States as well as to implementing detailed societal reforms that follow certain American patterns, and it can rest both on devotedly pro-American and harshly anti-American sentiments. In this paper I will take a possibly detached look at the notion, and a) concentrate on the *actual* processes of taking over certain institutions/policies/concepts of U.S. origin by the Eastern Europeans and b) disregard the ideological context of imposition versus borrowing, with all the heated debates on cultural colonization, Orientalism, neoliberal conspiracy, and Americanization that leads to Latin-Americanization, etc.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, why conceal the fact that my research hypotheses would have a considerably different tone, if I did not commute weekly between Austria and Hungary, that is, between a formerly Western country with a rather weak record in Americanization and a formerly eastern one that emulates American patterns with pleasure? If I had not had friends in

Vienna who asked me to bring along, not salami or paprika, but bagels from Budapest who, when visiting me there, had not urged me to show them, not the best dentist, but the closest Kentucky Fried chicken restaurant, or simply a food shop that does not know the sacred principle of *Ladenschluss* (i.e., closing early in the evening and not opening on Sunday), i am not sure this paper would have ever come into being.

The same applies to the recurrent complaints by Austrian environmentalists about pollution coming from the east and, conversely, to the admiration expressed by Austrian businessmen of American-style loose regulations allowing them to export garbage (in its literal sense) to the new EU member states. Also, the same businessmen praise the "trade union-free zone" in the ex-communist countries, while the Austrian trade unions cannot help accusing eastern Europe of wage dumping (in the words of their left-wing activists, "Vietnamization of wages") due to the "Americanization of the labor market and social policy"—a social disease spreading in eastern Europe, and which allegedly can destroy the welfare state in the West.<sup>4</sup>

## MAPPING AMERICA IN EASTERN EUROPE

2 After having postulated the existence of Little America in eastern europe, i will first provide a bird's-eye view of its main territories. Then, returning to our Ossi-Wessi dialogue, i will say a few words about how this small *imperium* might fit in with the scheme of cohabitation of economic cultures as conceived by many in the Western half of Europe, and Brussels in particular.

3 By and large, the conventional explanations for the pro-American leanings of eastern European societies rely on the following three assumptions:<sup>5</sup>

1. that a majority of the political, cultural and business elites in the region are pro-American, partly out of anti-communist nostalgia and/or neophyte exaggeration of liberalism, partly for pragmatic reasons such as geopolitics, and that they are also "anti-anti-American," to use Ivan Krastev's term, because in many countries of the region the discourse of anti-Americanism has been expropriated by their nationalist-populist opponents;
2. that it is the younger, better-educated, and more active groups of society who are the actual carriers of pro-American attitudes, while a great majority of citizens oscillate between their views and those of the anti-American populists;

3. that the principal vehicle of Americanization in the region is the McWorld.<sup>6</sup>

4 Below, I would like to go beyond these assumptions, and ask why even many older and less educated Eastern Europeans have been enchanted by American-style capitalism over the past decades.

5 Probably, the rough language of historical materialism will help make me understood. I cannot imagine the anti-anti-Americanism of a great many representatives of the political elites in Eastern Europe without presuming an apparent pro-Americanism of influential social groups. To avoid misunderstandings, I do not wish to narrow the notion of influential social groups down to the new capitalist "ruling class" of the region, with its "Americophile intelligentsia." instead, I include a good part of the "exploited masses" within the large camp of the sympathizers (without considering them opportunists or naïve victims of cultural imperialism). A large section of the political elite is, in my view, not simply committed to certain American ideals and geopolitical considerations and/or afraid of its domestic rivals, but is also exposed to the support by electorates, business lobbies, and NGOs, who respect the United States precisely because they are confident it embodies an attractive

and useful destination for post-communist transformation. It would be foolish for the elites to distance themselves from the people by challenging what the latter regard as American *and* accept with pleasure, be it a new pattern of consumption (shopping malls, online banking), a particular lifestyle (wellness fashions and suburban housing) or an economic institution (the credit card and partial privatization of health-care).

5 Pop culture leads to Americanization, but only part of the way. This kind of pro-Americanism has also been contingent on the robust and massive Americanization of eastern European economies and societies during the past decades.

7 Actually, Little America is rather large, though its territories are distributed rather unevenly among the countries. This imaginary realm intersects the national borders within Eastern Europe the way blue jeans, Madonna albums and Hollywood movies do. Obviously, one may scrupulously calculate the sales figures of similar icons of popular consumption in the region to identify the real phenomena of Americanization, if... if one does not meanwhile overlook another set of similarly real phenomena, the deeply penetrating Americanization of Eastern European societal regimes during the past two decades. At least

since the collapse of the Soviet empire, a whole series of economic, political, welfare, and other regimes wearing a U.S. trademark have put down roots in the region. They range from basic constitutional arrangements through the configuration of the labor markets, all the way to the management of hospitals, universities and churches.

3 In drawing the imaginary boundaries of Little America, its breadth takes the observer by surprise. NATO membership, the omnipresence of U.S.-based transnational companies, US AID, and the Soros network and other large American NGOs are just the most conspicuous components of this realm. The other, less visible components may prove to be even more powerful. here we are getting closer to economic cultures in their broad sense. A low share of public ownership in industry, banking, and housing, emerging forms of "managerial capitalism," privatized pension schemes, non-progressive tax systems and decreasing tax burdens, a low rate of unionization, permissive hiring and firing regulations, a high degree of social polarization, lax rules of environmental protection—could anyone disregard these *systemic* features of the new Eastern European capitalism? is it possible not to recognize the striking similarity between the region and the

United States in terms of the style of entrepreneurship (reckless rivalry, informal business-making, under-regulation), propensity for self-exploitation, individualism and self-reliance, suspicion toward the state, and so on?<sup>7</sup>

- Undoubtedly, commonalities can also be found in the broader culture. They range from the freedom of hate speech and strict privacy rules, as well as the elimination of compulsory military service in the Czech Republic and Hungary, through the large-scale privatization of the electronic media, all the way to the system of academic titles. Moreover, the all too evident features of pop culture-oriented Americanization render many observers blind to the rapid increase in imported high culture from the United States. These cultural goods, which are incorporated in scientific theories, religious beliefs, administrative skills, work routines, legal procedures, and the like, are widely used in designing post-communist government reforms, managing privatization, organizing civic initiatives or restructuring the universities. Or should one simply place the imported textbooks of microeconomics, the know-how of organizing a neo-Protestant church, and the rules of privatizing a public telephone company or ways of establishing a

## human rights NGO under the heading of the McWorld?

- 0 It was not a desperate search for the sources of pro-Americanism that aroused my interest in mapping America in Eastern Europe. On the contrary, a few years ago, I began to study a kind of anti-Americanism in Hungary—that is, latent, passive and spontaneous resistance to global (primarily American) cultures. With a dozen colleagues, we looked for “globalization failures” in cultural exchange<sup>8</sup> in fields ranging from the first American military base in the region, through feminism and new religious movements to the local reception of a prominent, U.S.-based NGO. For us, it seemed intellectually much more exciting to see fast food being consumed slowly than a McDonald’s pagoda being destroyed by anti-globalization activists. Similarly, to refer to my own discipline, political economy, we were less interested in overtly anti-liberal economic propaganda than in the almost unconscious, everyday interventionism of even those economists (like Vaclav Klaus in the Czech Republic or Leszek Balcerowicz in Poland) who, rhetorically, subscribe to a sort of libertarian theory.
- 1 However, in identifying the failures of Americanization in Hungary and beyond, one also learns of success stories that show a clear

popular choice of what people consider to be "the American way." Examples include the large-scale acceptance of the private pension schemes in Poland, Hungary, the Baltic states, and Slovakia; the introduction of the flat-tax system in Estonia and the other Baltic states, Slovakia and Romania, and, more recently, in Georgia, Russia, Serbia and probably soon in Hungary; the recent attempts at privatizing health care in Slovakia and Hungary; the upsurge of small entrepreneurship; and a lack of collective action in industry (Poland is a rare exception). A politician running for re-election has to think twice before challenging these institutional arrangements. Otherwise, he risks his future the same way as if he campaigned for the prohibition of Coca-Cola and soap operas.

2 Little America is not always a result of direct importation. Oddly enough, it displays quite a few Russian or even Chinese features. Consider, for example, the business practices of Moscow-based transnational oil companies or international trading networks of Chinese small entrepreneurs. The EU also conveys American cultural messages and transfers American institutions to Eastern Europe. Maybe the most important is the very idea of the single market, including its economic theory and business law foundations. And, vice

versa, quite a few items of contemporary American cultural export were originally imported from Europe: think about the underlying constitutional philosophy of the political system of the United States, or that even the Austrian School of economics arrives in Prague, Budapest or Warsaw, not from Vienna, but from Chicago, Fairfax, Virginia, or even Texas.

3 In addition, the United States delivers not only itself but also its self-criticism to the region: freedom of speech versus political correctness, the macho idols of Hollywood versus feminist values, health safeguards versus junk food, and so on. Finally, to comfort those who worry about U.S.-driven colonization, there are a couple of items of potential cultural import from the United States that face resistance in Eastern Europe. Capital punishment, widespread gun ownership, the omnipresence of lawsuits, and the role of psychiatry in everyday life are a few examples. Incidentally, these also have something to do with economic culture. As regrettable as it may be, less contested cultural values such as community spirit, civic patriotism and religion, or charity are also often received with distrust in the region. Hence, any thesis of sweeping Americanization in Eastern Europe today — McDonaldization, Coca-Colonization, or, more

recently, Sili-colonization, to quote the Salzburg historian, Reinhold Wagnleitner—would be a gross overstatement.

4 Nevertheless, there is, I believe, sufficient evidence for the existence of Little America to launch a research project that would map it out in due detail. (By the way, i would be interested in mapping the little Germany of Eastern Europe as well.) it would be good to know how to draw a balance between the parallel and contrasting changes caused by Americanization and Europeanization. Who is likely to win the contest of the most Americanized country in Eastern Europe? As far as government-led Americanization is concerned, Poland and Hungary were the frontrunners in the 1990s. Over the past years, however, Slovakia took the lead by introducing a package of radical liberalization, which included a number of original measures, in particular in health care. The new leftist-populist Slovak government is about to stop these reforms, while Hungary has just begun to emulate them.

5 How could a project on Little America contribute to the research of anti-Americanism in general? i guess it could certainly do so in one way: by discovering the popularity of u. S.-style capitalism in Eastern Europe, the observer might cease to focus on harsh anti-

Americanism, and recognize the intermediary versions between the two poles, for instance, the one called "America-skepticism"<sup>9</sup> by Timothy Garton Ash. Evidently, in dealing with those who reflexively identify the United States with imperialism, Zionism, materialism, junk culture or social irresponsibility, the social scientist may overlook a large array of softer or harder "America-skeptics," even "America-realists," who frequently form their judgments on the basis of *reasonable* arguments as to the common good, individual merits, the concept of culture and the like. Disregarding these arguments, one not only becomes unable to explore the overall capacity for, and the potential supply routes of, passionate anti-Americanism, but also deprives him/herself of the study of rather complex cases such as, for example, pro-European, British or French-style ("civilizational"), or post-colonial America-realism, not to mention their Eastern European variants—juicy fruits for an analyst, aren't they?

## RETURN TO EUROPE

6 Let us come back to our Ossi and Wessi, and their dialogue of the deaf, full of mutual distrust. I am wondering what the Wessi would think of his interlocutor if he knew that

the robust and massive nature of Americanization of economic cultures in eastern Europe is largely due to a rather peculiar coincidence with part of the communist legacy. Here I am referring to certain unintended consequences of communism that produced American-style norms, attitudes, and habits that would have probably withered slowly if the region had been co-opted and "disciplined" by the EU and its social market economies right after the revolutions of 1989.

7 What kind of unintended consequences do I have in mind? Was the proverbial *Homo Sovieticus* actually implementing the American Dream? I would not go so far, but if we look behind the mask of the once "really existing" communist type of man, we discover a Janus-faced economic culture based on state paternalism *and* informal markets, public ownership *and* private redistribution, central commands *and* decentralized bargaining, over-regulation *and* free-riding, collectivist economic institutions *and* individual (or family-based) coping strategies, learned helplessness *and* forced creativity. It sounds paradoxical but, in a distorted manner, communism was a school of capitalism. In that school, hard work bordering on self-exploitation, calculative behavior, risk taking,

competitive attitudes, and negotiation skills were obligatory subjects to learn. If part of these features can be considered to be typically American, then this sort of Americanization took place by default, not by design, in the informal economy rather than in the formal one.

8 Communism conserved/reproduced a sort of capitalist ethos, rooted in trust rather than formal rules, personal rather than institutional transactions, small rather than large organizations, and human rather than physical capital. While it began to erode in a large part of the West, it is being reconstituted today under the aegis of global network capitalism, knowledge-based society, flexibilization, and a risk society, to use current catchwords. Ironically enough, this ethos may grant some comparative advantage to the eastern Europeans in global competition, thereby worrying their Western European partners. At any rate, locusts are also quick, mercilessly flexible and have an extremely dense network regardless of whether they come from the east or the West.

9 Obviously, this capitalist ethos does not reproduce the old Weberian prototype of the Protestant entrepreneur, and does not have much in common with such neo-capitalist success stories as Confucianism and

evangelical Protestantism, either. It has no specific religious mission, contains weaker feelings of responsibility for the family or the community, and it is less self-denying and less savings-oriented. Surprisingly, most respondents in our comparative economic cultures project do not attribute any importance whatsoever to religious foundations in their economic behavior—a rather non-American attitude.

- o Our interviewees use a different language to reveal their preferences. in quite a few in-depth interviews, especially those made in Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, and Serbia, the local entrepreneurs and managers often use the word “warmness” when talking about the relationships with their business partners from Italy, Greece, or Spain, representing as a rule small and medium size firms, frequently in family ownership. They say that if they could choose, they would opt for a sort of “Mediterranean economic culture” as they call it as opposed to a “Nordic” one (meaning German in the first place), which they describe as megalomaniacal, rigid, and impersonal. The Americans, although they are not depicted as champions of Mediterranean mentality, also receive a couple of compliments for their easy-going, non-hierarchical, flexible, and informal business practices.

- 1 Does the Wessi understand this "thermometric" language? As far as our Western European respondents—largely entrepreneurs and managers working in Eastern Europe—are concerned, they exhibit some confusion when narrating their cultural encounters with the "natives." They still tend to insist on a traditional, one-dimensional, version of the *Homo Sovieticus* and characterize their local business partners and employees by means of old adjectives such as collectivist, egalitarian, unorganized, short-termist, irresponsible, passive, negativist, lazy, rule-bending, corrupt, nepotist, paternalist, even alcoholic and thievish. Such Soviet-type people, according to Western Europeans, prefer improvisation to following routine procedures, free riding to cooperative behavior, conflict to compromise, and promise to contract, and mix up politics and business, work and private life, public and private property, etc.
- 2 Ostensibly, our respondents had great difficulties harmonizing this list with many of their new experiences: on the one hand, with the clear upswing of entrepreneurship in Eastern Europe, and, on the other, with the ongoing changes in the economic cultures of the Western European welfare states. in other words, they struggled to understand their own

Americanization/ globalization process, while traditional pride *vis à vis* eastern Europe faded. They see less and less helpless, dependent, egalitarian-minded economic actors there, while at the same time witnessing the emergence of increasingly risk-taking societies with a rather creative, informal and socially-not-too-sensitive economic culture.

3 Brussels, I believe, also has a split ego. On the one hand, in demonstrating its liberal, perhaps even American, face, it is resolutely expanding the single market with all its freedoms toward the east. On the other, it has expropriated the old slogan of the anti-communist dissidents of the region: "Return to Europe." Two decades ago, the dissidents wanted their region to leave the Soviet empire for the West. Currently, however, the same region is strongly urged to come back from Little America to the imaginary "European Social model" and stop flirting with the idea of a "New Europe" that allegedly has more in common with the United States than "Old Europe" ever had. Eastern Europeans respond to this request with some indignation by saying, "we turned to America partly because after 1989 we were neglected by Europe for a decade or so." in its lack of a protective integration, the region was doomed to adjust to global pressures—a new aspect of

what I earlier called "Americanization by default."

4 Another important aspect is provided by the enormous urgency of very painful stabilization measures throughout Eastern Europe during the so-called transformational recession in the early 1990s, and the relative ease with which the region adjusted. Because of the lack of powerful pressure groups, including the trade unions, austerity programs could be connected with a radical liberalization of the ex-communist economic systems to balance the state budgets. Because of the devotedly neo-liberal discourse that justified some of the austerity packages, shock therapy was often mistaken by observers for a programmatic and general breakthrough of the spirit of American capitalism in the region. Yet, again, that breakthrough was at least as much forced by the economic crisis and allowed by the weakness of institutional counter-power as it was designed by the much-accused "Chicago Boys" and awaited by the citizens.

5 Meanwhile, however, much of the liberalization has proven successful, popular, and difficult to reverse. As a consequence, Eastern Europe has become considerably different from the societal model(s) offered by Western Europe. This may, in turn, impede cohabitation between the old members and the

new entrants after the Accession, for the former will be too fearful of it, while the latter will be fearful of too little diversity amid such unity. Today in eastern Europe, when eight plus two countries of the former eastern Bloc have almost completed the legal harmonization of their societal regimes with the *acquis communautaire*, the rivalry between the European and the American traditions is about to enter a new stage.

6 From now on, the question is whether the legal alignment required by Brussels will be followed by the actual de-Americanization of societies in the region. As a matter of fact, Brussels already scored some points during the Accession talks, for instance, in labor legislation (working hours, collective agreements, equal opportunity, etc.); today it is the taxation rules and the so-called Bolkestein guidelines that may become a tumultuous battlefield.<sup>10</sup> undoubtedly, it would be a slight exaggeration to assert that Europe and America have already begun to wage a culture war in eastern Europe. The region is currently testing the consistency and durability of American-style economic cultures under pressure from a powerful drive of EU-style social engineering that represents an alternative pattern of capitalist culture.

7 All things considered, in terms of rival cultures, the hot issue is not *how* the new members of the EU will choose between Europe and America but to *what extent* the EU will be willing to regard the choice as such as a legitimate act. Will it count Little America as an asset the EU can capitalize on, or rather a liability that has to be written off as soon as possible? Will it treat the newcomer nations as at least partly successful globalization laboratories, in which one can try out, for example, welfare reforms, or rather as dustbins of globalization, which should be cleaned before they start to smell? I would be happy to say that these are open questions. however, in studying, during the past couple of years, Highlevel political discourse in Western Europe on the eastern enlargement, I have not come across too many sentences thus far that would have praised the "American" virtues of the ex-communist countries. While every week hundreds of officials leave Brussels to visit the new member states with the aim of monitoring their convergence with the old ones, those who would go east to learn something "American" are, I am afraid, still sitting in their offices.

## Notas

1. Recently, an anecdotal and foreign policy-centered approach was taken even by authors such as Timothy Garton Ash and Tony Judt who otherwise cannot be

accused of a lack of interest in and knowledge of the deeper roots of Americophilia in eastern Europe. See Garton Ash, Timothy. *Free World* (Penguin Books, 2004); Judt, Tony. *Postwar* (London, 2005); and Judt, Tony. "Europe versus America," *New York Review of Books*, 10 February 2005, 37–41. The same applies to a new collection of essays, Mack, Arien, ed. *Their America. The U.S. in the Eyes of the Rest of the World*. *Social Research* 72, no 4 (winter 2005): 787–952.

2. The Dioscuri project ("Eastern Enlargement—Western Enlargement. Cultural Encounters in the European economy and Society after the Accession") embraces eight countries of Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia). It is supported by the European commission in the Sixth Framework Program.

3. For the first experiments with this approach, see my "rival Temptations—Passive resistance. Cultural Globalization in Hungary," in *Many Globalizations. Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World*, eds. Berger, Peter and Samuel Huntington (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 2002), 146–183; "Approaching the EU and reaching the US? Transforming Welfare regimes in east-central Europe: rival narratives," *West European Politics* 25, no. 2 (April 2002): 175–205. These experiments profited from works written by Richard Kuisel on France, Kaspar Maase on Germany or Reinhold Wagnleitner on Austria, which are still missing in Eastern Europe: Kuisel, Richard. *Seducing the French. The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: university of California Press, 1993); Maase, Kaspar. *BRAVO Amerika* (Hamburg, 1992); Wagnleitner, Reinhold. *Coca Colonization and the Cold War. The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after*

*the Second World War* (chapel hill: university of north Carolina Press, 1994). See also Nolan, Mary. "America in the German Imagination," in *Transactions, Transgressions, Transformations. American Culture in Western Europe and Japan*, eds. Fehrenbach, heidi and uta Poiger (Providence and Oxford, 2000); Lüdtke, Alf et al., eds. *Amerikanisierung. Traum und Alptraum im Deutsch-land des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1996). An earlier version of my paper emerged from a debate with Ivan Krastev on anti- versus pro-Americanism in Eastern Europe (see "Little America," *Transit* 27 (2004): 71–81).

#### 4.

<http://news.glb.at/news/article.php/20060221081129683>.

5. For a recent critique of these explanations, see Krastev, Ivan. "The Anti-American century." *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 2 (April 2004). For their origins, see Barber, Benjamin. *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York, 1995); Bauman, Zygmunt. *Globalization. The Human Consequences* (New York, 1998); Huntington, Samuel. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (new york, 1996); Ritzer, George. *The McDonaldization of Society* (Thousand Oaks, 1993); Sassen, Saskia. *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York, 1998); Tomlison, John. *Cultural Imperialism* (Baltimore, 1991); Wallerstein, Immanuel. *Geopolitics and Geoculture* (Cambridge, 1997). For a caricature of the conventional views, see Burbach, roger et al. *Globalization and Its Discontents. The Rise of Postmodern Socialisms* (London, 1997); Latouche, Serge. *The Westernization of the World* (Cambridge, 1996). Unfortunately, even many of the recent scholarly attempts at defining Americanization in Eastern Europe are burdened with anti-American prejudices. See Conversi, Daniele. "Post-communist Societies between

ethnicity and Globalization." *Journal of Southern Europe & the Balkans* 3, no. 2 (2001); Meardi, Guglielmo. "The Trojan horse for the Americanization of europe? Polish industrial relations Towards the EU." *European Journal of Industrial Relations* 8, no. 1, (2002). See also an interview with the Polish sociologist, Jadwiga Staniszkis ("Dangerous Americanization," *Rzeczpospolita*, 9–10 June 2004).

6. What Peter Berger and Samuel Huntington call Davos culture (op. cit), that is, values, habits, lifestyles, etc. spread by the global business elite, plays a secondary role in most explanations. This is rather surprising, especially if one remembers the frequent references made by the media to the eastern European Chicago Boys and the Wild-east adventurers in the early 1990s. With the exception of Poland, the same applies to the migrant communities, the migrants and the repatriates.

7. To be sure, I would not put the culture of tax evasion on the list of similarities.

8. Kovacs, Janos Matyas, ed. *A zárva várt Nyugat. Kulturális globalizáció Magyarországon* (The West as a Guest. cultural Globalization in Hungary.) (Budapest, 2002).

9. Garton Ash. *Free World*, 198.

10. Western observers witness with surprise that even the social democrats of Eastern Europe vote against a stricter coordination of the economic policies, the introduction of a minimum wage and the harmonization of tax rates at the EU level. Nevertheless, it is the Bolkestein guidelines of the free movement of services in the union that currently trigger the most heated debates. in contrast to the constraints of labor migration which could be forced upon the entrants by the old

member states as a *conditio sine qua non* of the Accession, today the latter face eight plus two member states representing the new (Americanized) entrepreneurial elites of Eastern Europe. These elites are more powerful in their countries than the workers were during the Accession, and not less eager to cross the borders. (See Busemeyer, Marius et al. "Politische Positionen zum Europäischen Wirtschafts- und Sozialmodell—eine Landkarte der Interessen." *Internationale Politikanalyse*, FES, August 2006.)

## Autor

*Janos Matyas Kovacs*

### *Del mismo autor*

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