

Manchester capitalism is no solution for post-communist Europe

by Jozef Miklosko

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The fall of the Wall in 1989 can be compared with the fall of the Roman Empire. Forty years of communist radiation, stronger than the radiation from Chernobyl, had a powerful impact on people's brains in the post-communist countries. They produced a "Sovietization" of thinking: a lack of opinions of one's own, a lack of initiative, a tendency to wait for orders, passivity. The quick success of [Czechoslovakia's so-called Velvet Revolution] led to an illusion that there would be a rapid improvement in the situation, and greater unity in the future. We dreamt of life in a world without communists, totalitarian regimes, secret service, or censors; we believed naively that such a system exists — in the West — and that we, too, could create one.

The Velvet Revolution was too velvet: There were many winners, but, it seemed, no losers. The post-communist government should have dealt more sharply with the communists. Now, former communists — as well as capitalists — are dealing more sharply with us. We should search for specific types of transformations for each country, and not just repeat the mistakes of Manchester capitalism.

Shock therapy made things worse

The formula for all post-socialist countries was the same: shock therapy, without preserving some positive social elements of the past. Nationalism which split society presented the communists with their last chance. The International Monetary Fund demanded liberalization of prices, devaluation, wild privatization, cutting of subsidies, etc. This led to increasing social differences and tensions, to the fall of the first post-revolution dissident government, and to the comeback of former communists, whose behavior is again more or less totalitarian — in Slovakia, for example, almost all members of government are former communists. The weakness of democracy is apparent: One-third of the people elected the pres-

ent government, and a small majority in the parliament results, once again, in a one-party system. This is very dangerous, if basic ethical principles are not adhered to at a time of big privatization, and the system only benefits party members.

The post-socialist countries jumped, at the last minute, from one *Titanic* to another, which also has many holes in it. We rejected communism, collectivism, and centralization, but we see now that capitalism without ethics also does not work. It makes 10% of the people rich, but it is also a big factory for producing millions of poor and unemployed. The system in which nearly all financial transactions are speculative, without yielding any production, is also going to collapse. The race for profit, money, competition, total decentralization, individualism without solidarity with those on the fringes of society, created many new problems. My former colleague in government of the C.S.F.R. [Czechoslovak Federated Republic], Mr. Vaclav Klaus, used to say: "The 'third way' is going to the Third World," but now his government has been saved by just one Social Democratic vote!

We need an economic system with a social conscience, responsibility for others, and some Christian answers to these questions. The social teachings of the Church and the Pope's encyclicals are a good base from which to search for such an alternative. The results of shock therapy have meant the comeback of communist governments (e.g., in Poland and Hungary), and crisis in Russia, Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, not to speak of the disaster in Africa and South America.

It is a goal of education to educate people in social attitudes, against the logic of the present world, according to logic of God's Kingdom. Our enemies in this attempt are not only egoism, lack of ethical principles, drugs, pornography, criminality, and media manipulation, but also our own bad qualities, such as divisiveness, intolerance, passivity, and slander.

In 1989, we had a big, unique chance for a new start in East-West collaboration, but this chance was not used, and now, again, an invisible wall is growing between these countries. Europe has only a common future, or it will have no future.

Research and teaching

The impact of the post-revolution transformation on research and teaching, e.g., in Slovakia, is not positive; the free



Dr. Jozef Miklosko visits Sarajevo in April 1996, with a delegation sponsored by the Schiller Institute's Committee to Save the Children of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Miklosko is the president of the committee. Left to right: Theo Mitchell, former state senator, South Carolina; Dr. Miklosko; Elke Fimmen, Schiller Institute; host Bishop Pero Sudar, Sarajevo; Benjamin Swann, state representative, Massachusetts; Paolo Raimondi, Schiller Institute; James Mann, former U.S. Congressman, South Carolina; Umberto Pascali, Schiller Institute.

market cannot solve problems in education, research, and culture. Previously, I used to do research at the Institute of Technical Cybernetics of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, with about 600 co-workers. Now, only about 60 of them remain—and not the best ones. I used to be the head of the International Basic Laboratory for Artificial Intelligence, which was visited, in five years, by about 200 skilled research workers from 12 socialist countries. After 1989, this laboratory was immediately shut down.

Education and teaching in East and Central Europe are subject to a constant shortage of financial means. The salary of a university professor is less than a secretary in business; a young medical doctor or teacher make about 250 German marks monthly—so little, that young, talented people are going into business or going abroad. Scientific conferences in the West are very expensive for young scientists to attend. The information-oriented society is changing into an entertainment-oriented society, where the rock-drug-sex-violence culture has bad influence on youth.

Additional problems exist in legislation. Slovakia's Higher Education Law is once again centralist; there is still no law governing the Slovak Academy of Sciences. We have bad laws governing non-profit organizations and foundations, the mass media, protection of youth and families; we need more generous tax relief for education, science, culture, etc. Research and science are not held in very high public esteem, and the leftist-oriented government often attacks the intelligentsia. Young people are often persuaded that, to get ahead in their career, it is not important to be an excellent student, but merely to have influential friends or—as in the past—to be a member of the ruling political party.

There are many problems in both East and West. To solve

them, we need to come back to ethical values, to the idea that creativity is the most important feature of mankind, that each person has the same dignity, because he or she was created as *imago viva Dei*, and that, in addition to economic development, spiritual values are also important for the third millennium.

I come from Trnava University (TU) in Slovakia, which was founded by Cardinal Peter Pazmany in 1635. After the 1989 revolution, TU was re-established by law in 1992, as the first post-communist university without former communists and with new teaching and research topics, which were forbidden and suppressed in the past. Many teachers from TU were persecuted during the totalitarian regime, and were jailed for political reasons. During its five-year existence, TU has been often attacked, and attempts have been made to abolish it. These did not succeed, but now a new method has been invented: The government has decided to found a new, parallel university in Trnava. If the Parliament agrees, then a new University of Saints Cyril and Methodius, similar to TU, but with no building, no teachers, and no students, will be created this year, and given 60 million crowns (TU's budget for 1997 is 40 million, with more than 2,000 students). Slovakia's universities need a budget for this year of more than 800 million crowns, but Trnava, Trencin, Banska Bystrica, and Presov will get expensive, new pro-government universities this year.

TU has a big bronze statue of its founder, Cardinal Pazmany, on the ground floor of its building. The bronze for the statue was taken from melting the statue of the first communist President of former Czechoslovakia, Klement Gottwald. I believe, however, that Gottwald's spirit is still alive, not only in Slovakia, but also in other post-communist countries.