

Mont Pelerin Society Speech in Korea^{*}

Václav Klaus

It is great to be in Korea again and to see the rapid economic development this country achieved in the last few decades. I was here last time in 2009 in a very special capacity – chairing the EU-Korea summit in the moment when the Czech Republic played the role of a rotating EU presidency. The participants at the summit were rather different from those at this gathering.

Let me start with returning to my last two Mont Pelerin Society speeches. The first one was delivered in the historic building of the Prague castle in 2012, the second one in a luxurious Hong Kong hotel in 2014. Both speeches were devoted to – what I considered – the main issues of our time and partly also to our, I mean the MPS, reactions or, perhaps, a lack of reactions to them. I know that my words were considered too sharp by some of our colleagues, but some

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others expressed their agreement with them. One of our very distinguished members wrote me afterwards a letter saying he also feels unhappy “with the gradual morphing of MPS from an academy of creative thinkers into a travel club of thinktankers” and that he is afraid that the “indiscriminate openness of the MPS erodes substance and shared institutional capital”. I suppose that many of us feel it similarly.

I wish our former president, my good old friend, Pedro Schwartz were right when he said last September in Miami that “we are still very much needed”. Our ideas are, without doubts, much needed but we must be able to make them known and to present them in a persuasive, comprehensive and understandable way. Our meetings should be more structured. Our message should be more explicit, more focused and more directly aiming at the undergoing battle of ideas because “the central values of civilization continue to be in danger” as Pedro Schwartz aptly put it.

My Prague speech had a rather pessimistic title **“We Are Not on the Winning Side”**¹. I allowed myself to explicitly express my very strong feeling (as well as my deep frustration) that “we live in a far more socialist and etatist society than we had imagined in 1991”, in the moment of the first MPS meeting held in a post-communist country, in my country, in Czechoslovakia. I dared to add that we – and I meant the people who were part of the fall of communism – are frustrated because “we are in a number of respects returning back to the era we used to live in the past and which we had considered gone once and for all”.

I also briefly discussed some of the non-Montpelerian or directly anti-Montpelerian “isms” which started to dominate the Western world in the last decades. I mentioned **environmentalism** (and its extreme version, the global warming alarmism), **an “apotheosis of the technocratic thinking”** as a method how to efficiently organize human society, **a radical denial of traditional values and social**

¹ Klaus, V., „We Are Not on the Winning Side“, Mont Pelerin Society General Meeting, Prague Castle, Prague, September 7, 2012. Published in Policy, vol. 28, No. 3, Spring 2012. You can find it here: www.klaus.cz/clanky/3178.

institutions, the ideologies of **humanrightism**, of **political correctness**, of **juristocracy** and their role in the establishment of a post-political society, **the power of NGOs** to start a new re-feudalization of human society, the dangers connected with **the shift from national and international to transnational and supranational**, etc. I would be able to present new partial arguments about all of them now but the substance would remain the same.

My speech in Hong Kong² – based mostly on my European experience – was devoted to the discussion of **“the accelerating shift to transnationalism and global governance”**. I argued that “the main motivation for shifting the bulk of decision-making out of the nation states is **to get rid of the democratic control** which – with all its limitations and imperfections – still exist in the nation states”. All kinds of vested interests, lobbyists, rent-seekers, international bureaucrats and power-hungry politicians “are eager to live in **a world**

² Klaus, V., „Careless Opening Up of Countries (without Keeping the Anchor of the Nation-State) Leads either to Anarchy or to Global Governance: Lessons of the European Experience“, the Mont Pelerin Society General Meeting 2014, Kowloon Shangri-La Hotel, Hong Kong, September 1, 2014. The speech was published under the title "In Defence of the Nation-State" in Policy, vol. 30, no. 3, Spring 2014. You can find it here: <http://www.klaus.cz/clanky/3623>.

of supranational institutions devoid of democratic control because they want to escape politics”.

I even raised a question whether the growth of global governance is demand-driven or supply-driven – suggesting that “the motivations on the supply-side are much stronger. The ordinary people do not ask for it”. I concluded with saying that “to protect liberty, we need to rehabilitate the sovereign nation state”.

What to add? Let’s be inspired by what has happened in the last three years, between Hong Kong and Seoul. Or by what I consider important when looking at the world from Central Europe. Using these perspectives, the main developments were the following ones:

- the continuing decline of Europe and America and the steady rise of China;
- the restarting of a Cold war between the West and Russia;

- the tragic developments in Syria (and the whole Middle East) and in Ukraine;
- the mass migration into Europe;
- European economic stagnation, world-wide irrational monetary policies, negative interest rates and plans for a cashless society;
- and, finally, Brexit, Trump and the rapidly growing widespread opposition of ordinary people against the political establishment and its arrogant behaviour.

All of them are or should be MPS and my topics. Let me pick up just two of them for this occasion. Let me concentrate my today's speech on the migration issue on the one hand and on the "Rebelión de las Masas" (to use Ortega y Gasset's term) which is most visibly connected with Brexit and Trump on the other. At the end I will make a few comments on the permanently returning confusion connected with the terms classical liberalism, liberalism (mostly American, but not only) and libertarianism.

I. A New, our Culture and Civilization Endangering Phenomenon of Mass Migration³

We are – these days – confronted not only with the old, sufficiently known, quite natural, because gradual and evolutionary, phenomenon of **individual migration** but with a conceptually different phenomenon of **mass migration**. This is something else, not only quantitatively. Many politicians and their fellow travellers in the media and in the academy either do not understand this difference or pretend not to. **They try to deal with mass migration as if it was the case of individual migration, which it is not.** I am afraid that some old-fashioned liberals – who are traditionally against all kinds of borders – are making the same mistake, the mistake of not looking carefully enough and of not differentiating.

I follow this phenomenon mainly in Europe, but everything indicates that it has become more or less a universal issue. Europe

³ I wrote – together with my long-term collaborator Jiří Weigl – a small book about mass migration. It was published first in Czech in December 2015 (Olympia Publishing House, Prague). In German under title “Völkerwanderung” (Manuscriptum, Berlin, June 2016), in Belgium, Sweden, Russia and France in the last several months.

makes it – due to its peculiar institutional arrangements and to the absence of democracy in the EU – much easier. **Mass migration has become a new and innovative social experiment of our era.** The whole continent has been transformed in an experimental laboratory.

I consider as the most important cause of the current mass migration **the radical shift in ideas**, not a new, more tragic than in the past situation in countries from where the people migrate. As a consequence of this shift, people in many unsuccessful, poor and underdeveloped, broken, non-democratic, ungoverned or chaotic countries **got the feeling** that they have a right to migrate, to depart to more successful, rich, developed, orderly functioning, democratic countries which – in addition to it – offer generous social benefits to all newcomers.

It is – methodologically – very important to see that concentrating on failed or broken countries covers only **the supply-side of the whole story.** This is important. The supply of migrants undoubtedly creates a huge (as we see almost limitless) migration

reservoir. It in itself cannot, however, bring about migration. To make mass migration possible, there needs to be also a demand-side. And it is there.

The demand for migrants – in spite of all the political rhetoric suggesting the opposite – **comes these days from Europe**. It was not only the reckless and ill-conceived explicit welcoming gesture made by Angela Merkel and some other leading European politicians in the summer of 2015. This was just the last drop. **The European – perhaps more implicit than explicit – demand for mass migration** has been gradually getting momentum for years and decades. Several distinct, but mutually reinforcing factors have been contributing to it – some of them were ideological, some systemic, some policy-driven. Without giving them any particular order or weight, I would mention the following ones:

1. The modern or post-modern **ideological confusion** connected with the ideas of multiculturalism, cultural relativism, continentalism (as opposed to the idea of nation-state), human-rightism and political

correctness becomes the principle factor. **It destroyed the traditional way of looking at the origin and organization of human society.** It replaced the orientation towards a nation (or a nation-state) with continental or planetary thinking. It proclaimed that diversity is more than social cohesion and homogeneity. It sacrificed civil rights in favour of human rights. It changed the concept of rights from negative to positive ones. It incorporated migration among human rights, etc., etc.;

2. Not less important is the fact that the European (and Western) society has been gradually transformed from a society heralding **performance**, results and achievements, production and work, to a society based on **entitlements**. Due to it, the economic and social policy has switched from the concept of market economy to the concept of social market economy where the adjective social has become more important than the nouns market and economy. Potential migrants understood the importance of this destructive shift very rapidly. They are not coming into Europe as a labour force but as recipients of all kinds of social benefits;

3. There is one additional, Europe-specific factor. The original, post-second world war concept of European integration has been transformed by the Maastricht and Lisbon treaties into **the concept of unification**. It led

- to the weakening of nation-states and to the fundamental undermining of their sovereignty;

- to the elimination of borders throughout the European continent. Instead of introducing easily crossable borders, the borders were abolished with all kinds of unavoidable consequences;

- to the weakening of democracy and to the creation of a post-democratic, bureaucratically run Europe which enormously increased the role of the European strongest country, Germany, and – symmetrically – decreased the role of smaller EU member states. It brought about a typical imperial structure of society;

4. Finally, these processes led to the reappearance of old dreams about creating **a new Europe** and **a new European man**, someone who would be entirely deprived of his/her roots in individual nation-

states. Migrants are believed to become the ideal input in the pan-European society, hence, the more of them, the better. I don't suggest that this intention has been openly and explicitly formulated by one or another European politician, but this mode of thinking has become – at least implicitly – a driving force behind the current migration deadlock.

Mass migration into Europe – much more than terrorism, which is just a supplementary factor – threatens to destroy European society and to create a new Europe which would be very different from the past as well as from MPS way of thinking.

II. Arising Rebellion against Political Elites (and Against Post-democracy)

The explosive growth of the regulatory state – discussed at many MPS meetings – together with the accompanying undemocratic and antidemocratic increase in the role and power of political elites has

become – gradually and almost silently – the defining characteristics of the current era.

This change has been connected with the replacements of freedom with rights, with the apotheoses of equality and non-discrimination, with the NGO revolution, with the strengthening of social engineering, with the destructiveness of political correctness, with post-democracy and post-politics, with the decay of American progressivism, etc. Its support and advocacy became the mainstream position. This way of thinking turned into the conventional wisdom. It began to be the obligatory, state-organized teaching at schools. It began to be a widely accepted and aggressively enforced truth now.

It is everywhere. John Fonte⁴ put it very clearly: “the adherents of these ideas can be found in the editorial offices of the Guardian, the BBC, the New York Times, Le Monde, Der Spiegel and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation; among the politicians and global business leaders who gather at Davos; among human rights

⁴ Fonte, J., Ideologies Have Consequences, Quadrant, January-February 2016.

activists and NGOs; among the leadership of almost all EU, UN and international organizations; and among the ‘Sixty-Eighters’, the aging politicians who cut their activist teeth in the protest of the 1960s”.

It is tragic that the rational or irrational, sophisticated or easily understandable, academically formulated or in simple words expressed criticism of such approaches and of the arrogance of “the anointed”⁵ (to use the fascinating term of Thomas Sowell) **is so often mistaken for populism**. I was surprised that Pedro Schwartz spoke in Miami⁶ about it in a similar way. He considers “the latest danger for freedom the spread of populism in our democracies” and suggests that we should “fight against this new plague”.

I consider this a wrong ambition, similar to the misdirected fighting of terrorism⁷. It is possible to fight terrorists and to oppose ideas which motivate them, but we can’t fight terrorism. It is neither a person, nor an “ism”.

⁵ Sowell, T., *The Vision of the Anointed*, Basic Books, New York, 1996.

⁶ Schwartz, P., Presidential Address, MPS General Meeting in Miami, The Mont Pelerin Society Semi-Annual Newsletter, Volume 72, December 2016.

⁷ This term was coined (or put into general use) by U. S. President G. W. Bush after September 11, 2001. This tragic event took place during European Regional MPS Meeting which was held in Bratislava, Slovakia.

It is also very indicative who are considered “populists”. Pedro Schwartz spoke about the American election campaign plans to build a “pharaonic infrastructure”. He also mentioned Marine Le Pen, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy. I closely follow these politicians and political parties, participate in their gatherings, and see a different picture. I see frustrated, in the current politically correct media setting powerless people who try to oppose the arrogant European (or American) political elites. I see the enormous extent of media manipulation which reminds me of the communist era. I see the extremely biased reporting in public media. I see the demonization of leaders of all anti-establishment parties. I see the unheard of indoctrination of our children and grandchildren at schools (at the intensity of late communism). This should be our topic. We should be able to discover and describe the real causes of the misfortunes and failures of the current era in its structural characteristics, not in its accidental forms.

The current “rebelión de las masas” is a real one. The people are starting to open their eyes, to look around, to speak out, to express their dissatisfaction with the brave new world without freedom and democracy, with the world heralding relativism, with the suppression of old values, traditions, customs and habits, with the world of new aristocracies (I would include well-known public intellectuals among them), with the world of nanny states and freely distributed social benefits. This revolt is a social movement and its arguments and slogans cannot be formulated in an academic sophisticated form. They must be as simple, clear, straight-forward as possible. They shouldn't deceive anyone but we should resist to accept the highbrow approach of political and intellectual elites who dismiss them as populism.

3. 2. 2017