

will change of its own accord. For we should not forget that on the 6 October 1956, on the very day that Laszlo Rajk was buried, the Party daily declared in capital letters: "NEVER AGAIN!" Three weeks later, the Communist Party ordered its security forces to fire on peaceful and defenceless people.

Scarcely had two years passed when the Socialist Workers Party had hundreds of innocent people, among them its own comrades, sentenced to death on trumped-up charges just as Rajk had been. We will never accept the empty promises of communist leaders. It is our aim that the ruling party, even if it so desires, should never again be able to use force against us, for it is the only way to avoid burials such as today's. Imre Nagy, Miklos Gimes, Geza Losonczy, Pal Maleter, and Jozsef Szilagyi gave their lives for Hungarian independence and liberty. For the Hungarian youth, these values still rank among the highest.

We bow our heads to your memory.

*Requiescat in pace!*

## THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN; A SPECTRE IS HAUNTING EUROPE

*Adam Michnik<sup>1</sup>*

A spectre is haunting Europe and other continents: a spectre of the end of the totalitarian system, a spectre of the end of a military form of communism.

Yes, it looks like the end. There is probably nothing capable of reviving a system which promised a bright future but which has instead brought terror and poverty, lies and corruption, denationalisation and the rape of people's consciousness.

We look around with distrust and uncertainty. Is this possible? Are we not mistaking our own wishful thinking for reality? Is this not simply another cunning device of the ruling team? Will we not be cheated once again as we have been so many times before?

Let us think: what counts in politics are facts. The most crucial facts of this spring have been the Round Table debates and Solidarity's return to the legal arena. What is the meaning inherent in these two facts?

The Round Table was an act of consent to transform the policy of police monologue to one of political dialogue; it was also an act of practical denouncement of the whole philosophy and practice of martial law which had allowed people to speak only from the underground, the jail or the dock. Such re-orientation, which after all aroused considerable resistance within the power camp, was not easy since it was preceded by years of propaganda campaigns slandering Solidarity supporters. We had been offered capitulation, emigration or re-socialisation in prison; we had been assured that political dialogue with Walesa and Solidarity would never take place. However, matters have taken a different course. What drove the authorities to take it?

First of all, the bankruptcy of the policies of martial law. Had the military action, taken on that notorious December night, resulted in fat wallets and full shop shelves, the people in power would have had no need for any Round Table talks. But political changes became the condition for positive changes in the economy. Society, whose aspirations had been blocked, turned its back on the people in power.

Secondly, there was the international situation. In the face of similar threats, the Soviet Party leadership and top authorities chose glasnost, offering a great political opening, and the widening campaign to expose Stalinism added further pressure. A marked change took place.

Until then, during every crisis in Poland, we were always told the same thing: that the Polish national character, Polish sloth and brawling, and the Polish inclination towards anarchy was to blame. The political volte-face in the Soviet Union and the acute diagnosis of the crisis gnawing away in that country made the traditional arguments nonsensical. The crisis in Poland appeared to be one element in the intense

<sup>1</sup> Published in 1989. Adam Michnik, himself a Solidarity candidate (later elected) in the elections, is editor of "the only independent daily between the Elbe and the Pacific", the *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Election Daily).

crisis in the whole system of totalitarian communism.

Human aspiration for freedom takes various forms. In Russia it has been the rebellion of the intelligentsia; in the Baltic republics, the establishment of national fronts; in Hungary, we have been witnessing the reconstruction of a multi-party system. In Poland, the re-legalisation of Solidarity became the key issue. This alone could extinguish the conflict between the power apparatus and the movement of civic opposition which had been relegated to the underground. This is why I think that the words General Wojciech Jaruzelski used several days ago, when speaking about "forgiving" the people who had been persecuted in the past for political reasons, were confusing and unreasonable. I think it is precisely these people who should be asked to forgive.

We must take into account that the persecution of people prepared to participate in the anti-totalitarian resistance was a form of self-defence, on the part of the Stalinist nomenklatura, against the process of democratisation of the state. That process could only take place thanks to people who had spat out the gag of fear and risen against the almighty power apparatus, when the truth of their conscience had turned into the strength of the weak, as Vaclav Havel would say.

From time to time we are asked: are you aspiring to improve or overthrow the system? This used to be the question we were asked by our prosecutors; today we hear it at meetings. We answer that the totalitarian system is our enemy. We want neither to improve it nor to correct it; we want to replace it with parliamentary democracy.

However, we reject revolution and violence since we are aware that it is easy to replace one dictatorship with another. We believe that the changes taking place in other countries, particularly in the Soviet Union, are our natural allies. These changes have been opening up new prospects for considering the Polish way: transition from a totalitarian system to one based on democracy and sovereignty.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE TRANSITION TO A NEW EUROPE

The early autumn of 1989 showed two fascinating scenes. On September 5, a new government with Tadeusz Mazowiecki as Prime Minister took office in Warsaw and was greeted not by Soviet intervention, but by Gorbachev's approval. Already in May, the Hungarians had begun cutting the barbed wire in their section of the Iron Curtain, enabling East Germans to escape across it. In early September the Hungarian authorities decided to let them leave officially, and the trickle turned into a massive exodus of East Germans through Hungary and Austria to the West German Federal Republic. Thereafter, the "Order of Yalta" collapsed with breathtaking speed. It caught people and politicians in Western Europe and North America unprepared and fully surprised.

Within a year after the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, Germany was peacefully re-united. By virtue of the Treaty on the Final Settlement With Respect to Germany of 12 September 1990 – reprinted as the second document in this chapter – Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States terminated their rights and responsibilities relating to Berlin and Germany.

In November 1990, the Heads of State or Government of the states participating in the CSCE (created by the Helsinki Final Act) gathered in Paris to adopt the Charter of Paris for a new Europe. According to the Charter – partly reprinted as the third document in this chapter – they proclaimed a new era of democracy, peace and unity.

The Charter of Paris was presented as a follow-up to the Final Act of Helsinki, but in fact contradicted the latter on most major points. The Charter renounced the status quo of a divided Germany by declaring that: "the establishment of the national unity of Germany is an important contribution to a just and lasting order of peace for a united, democratic Europe..."