

"Are we European ?"

A critical look at the meaning of being European.

An essay from Germany

Obviously, to begin with this essay, the term "European" awaits a clear definition. Thinking of which is maybe defined as "European" within the media, this definition remains quite queer. With the "European League" (soccer), even Israel is included. On the contrary the European Union is only formed by the inner kernel of Europe. Quickly it becomes clear that it is impossible to give a definition and - by referring to it – say whether one is European or not. But what is quite certain is that the "European identity" is not only a jigsaw of different national identities stuck together by an invisible glue called the "European Union". "European identity" is what we feel as "common sense" on our continent, which seems familiar to different nations and throughout that, binds us.

"European identity" is much more than the economic system of the European world which sometimes rather seems to be pulling us apart than to link us and which most people see as the only purpose of the "European Union". But this system actually has been existing for a long time, originally as a consequence of the plague killing 25 million of Europe's inhabitants which, at that time, was one third of its population. Right after this catastrophe the nation started to specialize on certain aspects of agriculture which was then followed by the then newly invented system of import and export. The fact that binds us now is that we have overcome years of war which made each nation not more than a single fighter and the glue of the European jigsaw melt away in the heat of exploding bombs and combats, is certainly not an economy which is an offspring of pure rationalism and usefulness but something different.

New inventions renewing the glue between the nations, each piece of the puzzle is getting conceivable: Crossing borders freely without the strict controls we were used to stand. Having a European Culture Capital each year, getting from Stuttgart to Paris in five hours. The list of advantages we – the Germans – feel, seems to be endless.

Unfortunately, people living in countries also geographically defined as "Europe" do not get to experience much of the changes we enjoy these days. A classical example is that the inhabitants of countries in the East of Europe like Russia, Ukraine, Belarus or Serbia are still suffering from amazingly different standards of "civil rights". Meanwhile the European citizen is meant to demonstrate for his right and express his opinion freely, the geographically defined as European citizens of Moscow are punched away from the streets by policemen for criticizing the country's government. The "European fetishist" might praise the European identity by pointing at the countries where the European idea clearly made its way. But obviously he is turning away from the countries left behind by the European Union.

To make the whole jigsaw being glued together and not leaving half of the pieces behind we have to accept (at least in a roughly similar way) the same system of values and the French principles of << Liberté, égalité, fraternité">> ("Liberty, equality, brotherhood") to guarantee a living together on the same strong basis of moral and ethics. Because in a

system in which the countries having certain moral standards are ignoring the countries just a few hours of flight away in which the government is not even thinking about treating its people in a reasonable manner cannot justify calling itself a "union".

And this is exactly why there are so many people laughing at the European "Union": A system not stable in the inside, a puzzle falling apart because the glue, the ethical principles, doesn't reach all the pieces, appears even more instable from the outside.

To make everybody in the geographically roughly determined European area feel part of this union, we have to change something. Not being cooperative with the countries ignoring human rights as we did not see it recently at the Russian-German meeting at the Hannover fair where cooperating with corrupt, non-moral leaders such as Putin was even enforced. And if this refusal of cooperation between moral and non-moral countries in Europe would not change the leader's behavior we should use more drastic methods like for example cutting the import of Russian products in the countries of the European Union which have and guard such moral principles and human rights. This will surely lead the non-moral leaders to introduce the human rights in their policies and join the European Union.

All in all, there is nothing left to say but: Without acting, the European jigsaw will never be fully complete. This will not exactly affect the parts already stuck together which already have a profit from the union they are in, but it will not help the solitary pieces to be part of the whole picture.

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