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EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND THE TRANSITION OF EASTERN EUROPEAN STATES. THE NEW CENTRAL EUROPE AND ROMANIA’S INTEREST IN REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE BLACK SEA- DANUBE REGION

This short article presents the most important directions of the evolution of Central and Eastern Europe during the second half of the 20th century during the period marked by the coming into power and then the downfall of the communism. One could also note that the Central and Eastern European countries have undergone several political and economic transitions- and for Romania’s case- the burdening heritage of the austerity economic policy that has been implemented during the years will affect the economic development of the countries on the long term. The transition towards market economy was realized upon the political decision of political accession to the free market principle. The new beginning of the regional integration process made the countries in the Danube-Black Sea region, sign new agreements for political and economic cooperation. The emergence of new countries on European and Asian maps opens new opportunities for regional cooperation, especially for environmental issues, which brings new dimensions for the global process of European integration and of the integration of the regional economies into the global economies.

In the dynamic history of the 20th century, which started late, in 1914 and ended early, in 1989 (this, of course, is a figure of speech), the 1914 Europe, the result of national and cultural movements that marked the second half of the 19th century, leading to the unification of Italy and Germany and the creation of the Belgian state, there were still four dominant empires: the German, the Habsburg, the Tsarist and the Ottoman. The late 19th century Balkan wars led to a weakening of the Ottoman Empire’s influence and its withdrawal toward Asia Minor leading to the 1877 independence of the Romanian provinces, followed by Bulgaria, Albania, Serbia and Montenegro. There were many other nations still in subservience in Finland, Ireland, Poland, Hungary (Romanians under the Habsburg Empire), Russia (also Romanians from Basarabia and Bucovina, territories occupied since 1812 by Russians). The conflicts between these empires and newly built countries, through alliances and influence, eventually encouraged by the Wilson’s doctrine of the peoples’ right to self-determination led to W.W.I, which changed the face of Europe.

The Trianon Treaty allowed the instating of the evolution, which was also confirmed in international public law as the creation of new states, mostly on the territories of the former empires and defeated powers. The change in borders were many and important, although some countries, and mostly Hungary, vehemently
contested them, leading to the early collapse of the fragile public law construction of the treaty in the wake of W.W.II. The ulterior evolution of Central and Eastern Europe left deep marks on the economy and politics of its states, the “autumn of the people” in 1989 finally giving a coherent signal to remove communism and accept democracy and market economy in a never-before-seen pan-European integration process.

A short analysis of the evolution of Central Europe in the second half of the 20th century

After a short period of stability, less than 20 years, W.W.II was about to turn everything upside down again. Romania was going to lose for 4 years a large portion of Transylvania, as well as the territory between the Nistru and the Prut rivers, that Moscow would keep until the end of the Cold War, not to mention northern Bucovina and southern Basarabia, which are still an official part of Ukraine. The tragedy of this war was that, after the Soviet armies occupied Eastern and Central Europe, they took the occasion and replaced the new democracies and market economies there with a totalitarian system and a hyper-centralized economy, planned according to absurd and anarchic criteria. The uni-party system was imposed by the Soviets in all the eastern countries (except Greece) under their influence, despite the results of the latest elections before the beginning of the Cold War.

After W.W.II, Europe looks re-arranged after the Paris Peace Conference: the USSR recuperated some of its former territories from its neighbors, especially Romania and Poland, the latter being compensated with former German territories. Romania kept Transylvania, recuperated *manu militari* between August and October 1944, but lost Basarabia and Bucovina, under Soviet control ever since the end of June 1940, in application of the secret additional protocol of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact (concluded between the Soviets and the Nazis in 1939).

After W.W.II, the Allies’ fragile alliance did not last, the victors of Germany, Italy and Japan breaking their alliance and once again splitting the world in two: the East and the West. The Soviet Union dominates the East while Western Europe looks toward the United States. The de facto ruler of the Soviet Union (who nominally kept the executive power only during the war, then returning to his political function- the Secretary General of the P.C.U.S.), Stalin, thought that: “whoever occupies a territory will also impose his own social system there. Everyone imposes his system based on
how far his army got!”¹. Based on this, the Soviets tried to impose their influence as far as they could, both inside and outside Europe. Western Europe’s reaction was immediate. They saw the “iron curtain” between their former allies and themselves. The first to use the now-famous phrase is the former “War Prime Minister” (he earned the name by leading the UK during the war and losing the post-war, 1945 elections), Winston Churchill in his Fulton speech on March 5 1946: “From Stettin, on the Baltic Sea shore to Trieste on the Adria, an iron curtain fell over the European continent. Behind this curtain, all the states in Central and Eastern Europe are, from now on, included in the Soviet influence”². It appears this was the second time the illustrious politician was using this expression, as he also used it in a telegram to Franklin Roosevelt, in 1945, just before the death of the latter. Churchill’s Fulton speech is seen as the signal for the beginning of the Cold War. The iron curtain separated the “Two Europes”, for over 40 years (1945-1991, the moment of the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the implosion of the Soviet Union), during which the Soviets dominated ruthlessly their subservient Central and Eastern European countries, after having first applied the “salami strategy” (instead of frontally attacking the adversary, one “cuts it up” piece by piece)³.

American author G. Kennan described in an article called “Containment” and published under a false name in “Foreign Affairs” (1947), the terms of the American foreign policy toward the Soviets. He said that: “the main element of American policy toward the USSR must be a long-term containment, patient but firm and carefully watching the expansionist tendencies of Russia, in order to oppose them with a inalterable counterforce in all points where they will seem to threaten the interests of a peaceful and stable world”⁴. This did not imply the use of force in order to make the Soviets withdraw from their advanced positions, but the possibility of peaceful withdrawal from certain areas (Eastern Austria, Finland, etc.). The American diplomat wanted simply to erect “dams” to contain the possible offensives of Stalin’s forces. He was also right, in the sense that, after the USSR expansionism was curtailed, the Kremlin officials resorted to a more reasonable policy.

² *Ibidem*, p. 10.  
³ Ibid.  
⁴ Ibid; G. Kennan is quoted by P. Boniface, *op.cit.*, p. 13.
Despite the diplomatic efforts on both sides, it was not long after W.W.II that the Old Continent was cut in half by the Cold War\(^5\), which only consolidated the military antagonisms between the Warsaw Pact and The North-Atlantic Alliance. Germany, yesterday’s superpower, is cut in two states and is going to stay split until October 3 1991, when the two states were once again united, as the first major consequence of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the starting point of the return of Eastern and Central European states to Europe.

The strained relations of the Cold War were followed by the “détente”. Between the many faces of this concept that changed the face of Europe, we are interested in the “lack of strain” in the new context which had less to do with negating the differences of the two blocks and more with a containment of tension and rivalries, without any attempt at collaboration by the two regimes (the international situation between 1962 and 1979). This policy was designed by Nixon’s National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, and one of the slogans of Nixon’s first successful electoral campaign was the necessity of negotiations with the USSR.

As for the Soviets, their external policy at the time was one of peaceful coexistence.

Over the same period, the continent’s split became visible economically through the parallel evolutions of the European Economic Community (the EEC and then the E.U.), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the Reciprocal Economic Assistance Council (REAC).

Most international relations specialists feel that bipolarity “has lived its stretch”; there is no need for its reinstatement, the antagonism between the two military blocks, which created the specific dynamics of the second half of the 20th century politics is over, but “power is more diffuse today” to quote Kissinger (in *Diplomacy*), more diluted and the United States cannot realistically assert their power as the only “peacekeeper” of the world and are, thus, less powerful. In this context, some analysts assert that the Cold War has evolved into a world with multiple poles

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\(^5\) The expression “cold war” was coined by B. Baruch (former counselor to President Roosevelt) in 1947. Generally, this covers the period between the end of WWII in 1945 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Particularly, it applies to the period between 1947 and 1962 (which begins with the refusal of the Marshall Plan by the Soviets and ends with the Cuban Missile Crisis). As Pascal Boniface puts it, the “cold war” is organized according to the principle “improbable war, impossible peace” defined by R. Aron.
of power\textsuperscript{6} (and there are actually many claims to being a pole of power if we consider the reactions of Beijing on the occasion of Boris Yeltsin’s, then President of Russia, last visit to China). According to other specialists, it is not just the instatement of one pole of power or even the lack of it altogether, but an increase in complexity with instability in certain areas, multiple and multifold crises which have replaced the rigidity of the Cold War.

The above-described evolution caused a shift in terms of security. The fall of the Warsaw pact and the dissolution of the alliances system in Eastern Europe (today, once again, Eastern and Central Europe), symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1991, caused the existence of a strategic void, a so-called “no security land”.

\textit{The economic inheritance of Romania and the circumstances of the passage to market economy}

The events in December 1989, leading to the fall of the dictatorship and the liberation of our country from the burden of the communist system, opened the way to what seemed like a promising future for Romania, politically, economically and in terms of security, through the rapid accession to a new, more credible alliance.

The real bases of a successful transition, despite the clear comparative advantages (the lack of external debt, the well trained workforce, a vast internal market- the second largest in Eastern Europe, after Poland, etc.) were extremely fragile. The former communist regime had oriented industry for decades toward narrow specializations, the economy being plagued with large industrial enterprises, great consumers of raw material and energy.

This inheritance, coupled with the mentalities generated by the totalitarian regime, is still risking to negatively influence the development of the country for decades to come. In these conditions, launching reforms was very difficult, as compared with Poland or the Czech Republic, for instance. Otherwise, economic failures impeded general development strategies. The decision of political accession to the principle of the free market, in Article 134 of the 1991 Constitution is still a very important step: “The economy of Romania is a market economy”.

During this transition period, Romania’s external debt has grown considerably, as contracts for the purchase of gases, oil and other consumables had to be financed (they were formerly paid in non-convertible money- the transferable Ruble, the account unit inside the former REAC) or bartered. This was a bad economic policy, as the loans should have been used to finance economic growth through direct investments in the most productive sectors of the economy (according to the comparative costs theory) and to correct the unavoidable dis-functionalities of turning to the open market. It was more urgent to buy necessary spares for the modernization and the relaunching of the economy, then to favor- through the creation of an artificial buying power- an inflationist spiral. Eventually, Romania’s trade balance lowered toward deficit, the excessive buying power increased, salaries grew while investments decreased and the development of production was compromised through the introduction of the 5-day-working-week in almost all fields, as well as the short Fridays. The production time that was lost is of 50 %, according to the statistics. In these conditions, real transition was just beginning for Romania.

In Romania, the transition toward the open market, begun in the street in December 1989, “the autumn of people” (an allusion to 1848’s “spring of people”), was postponed de facto till 1993 (through internal instability caused by the miners unrest, the fall of the Roman Government, etc.). The first reform strategy dates from 1993, and was elaborated by the Văcăroiu government, acknowledging the measures, the rhythm, nature and intensity of change that create the difficulties of any real transition.

In order to become part of the E.U. and the European continent, Romania has to comprehend the tendencies and dominant dimensions of transition, to curtail the unstable economical and political transitions in order to reduce their effects on development strategies and to have a clear plan of the directions to be taken for the reduction of risk and ambiguities and, finally, for integration.

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The Madrid nomination of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in the “first wave” of future E.U. members, followed by the nomination of the so-called “Luxembourg Group” can be seen as a reward for the Visegrad countries’ active fight against communism (the 1956 bloody rising in Hungary, the Velvet Revolution of Prague in 1968 and the Polish Unions after 1981) but also for the results of their economic transition. Romania was late on both fronts- it only got in the street in the
“Piaţa Universităţii” (a place of reference for the Romanian street uprising) in 1990\textsuperscript{7} and its economic transition yielded unsatisfactory results.

* The integration process in Central and Eastern Europe

For years now, there has been a flourish of regional integration and subregional cooperation agreements, based on free trade (or free exchange) with no immediate integration goals but flexible as institutions and adapted to the movements in the relations and trade flows of different regions. These agreements offer special economic and legal implications especially for the countries fresh out of centralized economies and willing to enter market economies.

Although this activity emerged before the organizations aiming for world dominance, their rapid multiplication was, during the 1950s pressured by the former colonial states, and, after 1989, by the former communist states yearning after economic progress and continental integration. Thus, regionalism manifests as a fundamental feature of economic exchanges, moreover leading the world toward trade blocks. This expansion of economic regionalism may be a reaction against globalism as well as the need to give economic legitimacy to formerly political or military organizations.

Economic regionalism brought to light organizations that encompass states which would benefit from economic unity (generally, the great water basins, depressions, plateaus, etc.) or organizations that defend the specific economic interests of certain states. The latter category can be further split in two: horizontal organizations, which gather states with similar levels of development, and vertical organizations, gathering economically unequal states, such as developed countries acting together with developing countries or countries with embryonic market economies.

Finally, there is the distinction between the economic regionalism of developed states and that of developing states\textsuperscript{8}. Here we can undoubtedly recognize

\textsuperscript{7} Pop, A. Un triumfalism păgubos, in Politca externă, no. 3-4, autumn 1997, year II, p. 12. The author writes: “After noticing President Clinton’s insistence on the anti-communist traditions of the three countries (1956- Hungarian, 1968- Czechoslovak and 1981- Polish) during his Madrid speech, President Constantinescu took it upon himself to inform Clinton of the Romanian anti-communist tradition started after 1989, centered around Piata Universităţii. Clinton’s speech in Bucharest was, however, focused on the economy. In the American’s “stay the course, stay the course and the future will be yours”, Romania’s administration should have seen the veiled warning about the necessity of a successful transition for Romania’s NATO integration.”

\textsuperscript{8} Belanger, M., Institutions Economiques Internationales, 4\textsuperscript{th} edition, Economica, Paris, 1989.
the differences between the E.U. market and the free trade areas in Central and Eastern Europe and also the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) and Mercosur in the Americas. The interdependency of continental economies usually leads to the creation of vertical organization, such as the E.U. of 2010-2020, with no less than 27 members (all associated states and prospective members included) or the Pan-American Free Trade Zone, which will be created as a consequence of the 2000 agreement between NAFTA and Mercosur encompassing both Americas. The phenomenon can be seen on a smaller scale in other parts of the world. In this sense, the creation of the Black Sea Organization for Economic Cooperation as well as other economical integration programs in Central Europe, as complementary organisms of the E.U., is but an attempt to establish in a reasonably short time a whole European economic space. In this movement of economic regionalization are caught not only organizations which are a pole of attraction for others, such as the European Union and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA- of which all but three members are part of the E.U.) which already have an European Economic Space (19 countries) through the 2 May 1992 Agreement, but also younger and stronger organizations such as those in Central, Eastern and Northern Europe (the former Visegrad Group which is now the Central European Free Trade Association- CEFTA, the Central European Initiative- CEI, the Black Sea Organization for Economic Cooperation, the Baltic Sea Cooperation or the New Hansa). The 1989 events favored all these projects, which are now both interdependent and complementary.

During this transition period, Romania was constantly interested in regional and subregional cooperation and collaboration and it is a member of: the Central European Free Trade Association- CEFTA, the Central European Initiative- CEI, the Black Sea Organization for Economic Cooperation. Romania also worked actively to reconsider the aspects of Balkan collaboration in view of the situation in the former Yugoslavia.

Although Romania is mostly interested in the Black Sea Organization for Economic Cooperation, whose 1995 summit was held in Bucharest, it does not shun newer or less powerful organizations for cooperation, and it is a full member or an observer in a number of other such organizations.
The new economic groups in Central Europe

All subregional cooperation zones in Europe emerged as vehicles of free exchange and then developed the feature of customs unions (also see bilateral relations between their members), which might eventually prove an asset for quicker European integration, as it favors reforms. Otherwise, they are on their own, less powerful than organizations. The Visegrad Group, which, in 1993, became CEFTA is one of these powerful organizations.

1) The Visegrad Group or “The Habsburg Empire without Austria”. On 15 February 1991, at Visegrad (Hungary), the Presidents of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic met in order to clarify the next steps after the dissolution of CAER and the destabilizing of Central Europe, as well as the measures necessary to insure the coordination of their moves to accede to the E.U. They decided to meet regularly and to cooperate closely in issues related to politics, economy and culture. Thus, they concluded an agreement for the creation of a free trade area in Central Europe\(^9\), “an area of three”, soon to become “an area of four”, once Czechoslovakia separated on 1 January 1993.

After this preliminary agreement, the Visegrad Group, as it had become known, signed on 10 December 1992 at Wavel Castle, near Krakow in Poland, the definitive agreement on the free trade zone - undeservedly called the “Common Market” of Central Europe. After Czechoslovakia became the Czech and Slovak Republics, the agreement, entering into force on 1 March 1993, had four founding members. This zone was numbering at that time only about 64 billion inhabitants, which meant medium economic potential in Central Europe (as there are more than 380 billion inhabitants in the whole Black Sea region, a unique market with great economic potential in itself, though heterogeneous and unstructured). Slovenia and Croatia were approached for collaboration, which led to the ironic name of “The Habsburg Empire without Austria”, coined by a Czech newsman, Karel Kritz in the “Lidone Noviny” daily.

Even before the agreement entered into force, the Visegard countries had implemented most reforms and were the most likely to be invited for NATO integration. After the creation of the Czech and Slovak Republics, the European

\(^9\) The Romanian Government, led at that time by Mr. Petre Roman, had tried to find a way to participate to the meeting, but Vaclav Havel, the Czech President, used his right as a founding member
Community signed separate association agreements with both countries (on 24 June 1993). However, despite positive evolution at first\(^{10}\), the cooperation between members was only a secondary matter, according to the Czech side\(^{11}\). The four countries considered bilateral cooperation with their neighbors as vital, on the other hand: “On the other hand, they (the Czechs) confirmed that cooperation with fellow Visegard countries was no longer paramount for the political coordination of the four countries…”\(^{12}\). This was a clear failure of cooperation in this area\(^{13}\), as countries such as Hungary and the Czech Republic or Hungary and Slovakia left other issues get in the way of their collaboration and allowed for the “Central European initiative” to fall second. Poland alone was striving for the survival of the group and avoiding a situation where each of the four would be “lone rangers” in their pursuit of E.U. integration: “It is obvious that the Visegrad states slowly got detached from each other in their common accession policy to the E.U., using different manners of integration strategies. Actually, the Czech Republic and Hungary flatly refuse a common accession of the four to the E.U., working on individual strategies”\(^{14}\). A more open regional solidarity was needed coupled with a relaunching of the group and an openness toward new members to make the area more dynamic.

II) The Central European Free Trade Association- CEFTA. At first, Romania was focused on structuring the area surrounding the Black Sea. On 11 September 1995, the Romanian Prime Minister presented CEFTA at the Brno summit with Romania’s request to join the trade association, thus making a great step toward European integration.

Romania prepared its integration by multiplying its free trade agreements, with the Czech Republic (October 1994), then with Slovakia (November 1994) and then with the other members of CEFTA (Poland, Hungary, Slovenia). Thus, the volume of commercial exchanges between Romania and the CEFTA countries doubled in 1996 to 834 billion US dollars. As a result of this, Romania became a full

to refuse the presence of Romania, probably because of Romania’s economic and social issues at that time.  
\(^{11}\) Ibid. The observer noticed that: “certain negative declarations on the utility of cooperation between Visegrad countries, made by Prime Minister Klaus, as well as his skepticism over the Maastricht Process caused some irritation”.  
\(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 8.  
\(^{13}\) Ibid. p. 10. The observer noticed that: “Actually, conditions are not identical for all Visegard countries, as they have started to display divergent interests.”  
\(^{14}\) Th. de Montbrial, P. Jacquet, op.cit., p. 281.
member of CEFTA in July 1997, through an agreement signed at Bucharest. Romania’s President issued a decree\textsuperscript{15} proposing the agreement for ratification, which became legal through its publication on 30 May 1997.

During the September 1997 CEFTA Summit in Slovenia, then Prime Minister Victor Ciorbea presented Romania’s proposals for increased CEFTA cooperation: the integration of Bulgaria, Ukraine, Macedonia and Croatia; the application of protocols on the liberalization of industrial products trade; the reduction of customs taxes until 2000. Other proposals concerned the strengthening of the public purchases market, the free circulation of capital goods and services, the fight against corruption and organized crime, the mutual recognition of certificates, diplomas, etc. The tendency was toward a better cooperation and bright perspectives for Central Europe. The next CEFTA Summit took place in the Czech Republic, and the evolutions were promising, although Romania was struggling against economic losses due to the deficient negotiation of its accession conditions.

\textit{The Central European Initiative or “The Pentagonal Cooperation”}

1) \textit{The Alps-Adria Group}. At first, the Alps-Adria Group was a flexible institutional assembly\textsuperscript{16}, grouping western countries and regions, such as Italy, the land of Bavaria, Austria, Hungary and Yugoslavia.

The name “The Pentagonal Cooperation”, or simply The Pentagonal came about after the former Czechoslovakia joined the cooperation in May 1990, while in July 1991 it became the Hexagonal, after Poland joined in.

It was Italy’s initiative in 1989 to expand the cooperation toward the south-east, in order to insure a subregional cooperation in the area.

At the end of 1991, the Hexagonal became The Central European Initiative and proceeded to include an important number of new members: Romania, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia, Albania, Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria and Belarus.

From the very beginning of its transition, Romania showed interest in becoming a full member of The Central European Initiative. In July 1994, Romania became a member of The Association Council of the Central European Initiative

\textsuperscript{15} Decree no. 192 of the President of Romania, of 14 May 1997.

together with three other associates: Belarus, Bulgaria and Ukraine. A year later, during the Warsaw summit, Romania was accepted as a full member, starting with the spring-summer of 1996. Thus, Romanian experts could participate in the activities of different workgroups.

2) The current situation of The Central European Initiative (CEI). After a more difficult beginning as compared to CEFTA, the CEI started to develop specific regional infrastructure, as a result of its heterogeneous participation.

Beside the CEI, an Association Council was set up on 16 July 1994, putting together Romania, Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria and Ukraine till the date of their full membership, on 1 June 1996. On 8-9 November 1996, during the Graz Summit, Moldova received the same status. Other countries, such as Greece, Russia and Turkey, also showed interest in participating in ICE activities. During a meeting at Warsaw, a special partnership was signed with the Russian Federation, implemented as regular meetings between the two sides. During the Graz Summit, the cooperation between regional groups as well as a common partnership with all the countries interested in accession were decided.

III) Organization and activity. The international ICE Secretariat was set up at Trieste. Also at Trieste, the Center for Information and Documentation (CID) was set up in March 1996. Two new organisms for cooperation were opened inside CID: The Secretariat for the Presidents of the Chambers of Commerce of the ICE countries and The Permanent Unit for Centralized Data and Offers for the Reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. The name, but not the attributions of the Secretariat was changed in November 1997 for “The executive Secretariat of CEI”, at the proposal of Italy. The working language is English, although certain documents are published in French or German. An important thing to note is the intense participation of the Bavaria land in several projects of mutual interest.

IV) Current goals and perspectives of the CEI. The main goals are: promoting peace, regional stability as a complementary contribution to CSCE’s initiative, the development of parliamentary diplomacy, the defense of human rights and economic development, the set up of a regional infrastructure. The economic cooperation included the following fields: internal and international transportation, trans-European networks, environment protection, energy, culture, sciences, emigration, telecommunications, etc.
Members work in different workgroups on bilateral issues and problems of mutual interest. However, the superposition of the CEI on the market of the Visegrad Group\textsuperscript{17} and most important, over CEFTA deems the CEI to the second place, having to face stagnation or...to disappear: “The Central European Initiative risks to not survive the European integration of its members.”\textsuperscript{18} In the current context, it is becoming increasingly obvious that, once the CEI members will be invited for E.U. and NATO integration, the activity of the CEI will stagnate. Romania wants the dynamic cooperation and an increase of stability in the relations inside CEI. This, however, is difficult in an organization which lacks institutional status and mechanisms and acts solely on the basis of bilateralism and periodic consultation.

The consequences of transnational cooperation and the first “drafts” of Eastern Euroregions

The EuroCarpathian Region and other projects

I) The first initiative. The cooperation between Central and Eastern European states has been changing, as the new Euroregions emerged after 1989. A first initiative, belonging to the Hungarian President, regrouped the border regions of Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Ukraine under the name “Tisa-Carpathians”, which was to include the Romanian counties of Satu-Mare and Maramureș.

II) Project participation. The first coherent project (14 February 1993) allowed the draft of a fragile community of mostly economic interests between the above-mentioned regions. The Romanian administration’s reaction to the initiative was a certain rigidity, considering “the measures taken as null”\textsuperscript{19}. What had happened? The leaders of the county delegations from Satu-Mare and Maramureș, also presidents of the County Councils, had signed the accession of their counties to the Eurocarpathian region in December 1993, at Nazderec (Poland).

The Romanian government declared (in a communiqué on 7 January 1994) that Ioan Chiș and Ioan Dulfu (the two presidents, from Satu-Mare and Maramureș, respectively) had acted in breach of their legal competencies and the accession was null. The Maramureș representative clarified the situation, by stating that he had the

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Th. de Montbrial, P. Jacquet, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 281.
legal right to sign the accession, according to Ion Iliescu’s engagements during the CSCE meeting in Vienna, in October 1993.

In the meantime, the situation evolved and several projects were begun.

III) The cooperation between eastern Euroregions

A new initiative. Romania’s president Emil Constantinescu had the initiative of a cooperation between the young Euroregions in Eastern Europe. During the Vilnius Summit in 1997, he proudly announced the cooperation between Romanian and Ukrainian border counties (northern Bucovina and upper Prut) as well as the similar cooperation in the south-eastern part of the country, with Bulgarian counties in the lower Danube area. Other initiatives led to interesting developments.20

IV) The trilateral collaboration system and the transnational “Baltic-Black Sea” cooperation. During the same Vilnius summit, the President of Romania had announced the initiative for the generalization of “trilateral cooperations”, which would include all the countries in the central European region in groups of three among which Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Poland, Turkey and the Baltic states as well as the implementation of the “Baltic-Black Sea” cooperation. The Baltic states are members of the Baltic Sea Conference, initiated in 1992 at Copenhagen to cooperate in the fields of communications, environment, transportation, trade exchanges and culture. The Romanian President felt that a successful cooperation of this type would benefit the entire region.

V) Danube transnational cooperation. From 1991-1992 on, several states on the Danube’s shores have developed a fruitful cooperation. The bases of this project were laid during the communist times (the “Iron Gates” joint project between Romania and Yugoslavia, another joint project with Bulgaria- the Giurgiu-Ruse Bridge). Other projects had been planned before 1989, also with Bulgaria, but they failed because of economic recession and poor relations with that country during the last years of the communist regime.

The cooperation did continue, however, after the communist dictatorship finally collapsed. In 1997, Romania and Bulgaria held a symposium for the adequate environment protection of the Danube’s mouths, under the patronage of the European Council.

The main issue between the two countries is, surprisingly,…atomic in nature. The nuclear plant at Kozloduj, also called “Chernobyl revisited” by specialists, is nevertheless one of Bulgaria’s main energy sources\(^{21}\) (45 % of national energy). Many European countries have been putting pressure on Bulgaria to shut down the plant, which uses several reactors, which are likely to encounter the same problem which tragically occurred at Chernobyl. The shutdown was one of the conditions for Bulgaria to be allowed to sign the Association Agreement in 1998. With Germany’s support, however, the plant is, nevertheless, still functioning.\(^{22}\) There is a clear risk for the environment associated with this plant, although Bulgarians have modernized it. Their main concern is Romania’s concurrence in the field, as they are the main energy exporters toward Serbia and Turkey. In 2002, once Bulgaria started preparations to shut down the main reactor, Romania, with the sole functioning reactor at Cernavodă, could satisfy both internal and external energy needs- taking Bulgaria’s market (mostly after the set up of the second reactor). As the French newspaper, the Courrier International noticed it is more of a “political and economical war between lobbies”\(^{23}\).

Despite these frictions and even worse behavior on the side of the Bulgarians (after 1990 they refused all forms of cooperation with Romania, even a common strategy for E.U. integration, in order to be the first to accede to the E.U.) the Danube cooperation must continue, as the region is crucial for E.U. integration. The free trade area on the Black Sea’s shores, initiated after 1992 (the Declaration of Intention at Bosfor and Istanbul) and recognized during the 1998 Yalta Summit as Regional Organization for Economic Cooperation in the Black Sea basin is allegedly a trampoline for E.U. integration.

Finally, in support of the pan-European importance of regional cooperation, here is a quotation from Ramses ’96 (edited by Th. de Montbrial and P. Jacquet): “Since this regional cooperation is a crucial point of the strategy for accession, the Commission and Ministers of the European Union will participate in the meeting of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Baltic Sea Conference and be more active within the Central European Initiative”\(^{24}\). The Bucharest Summit of 1994, bringing together the Danube countries to discuss the durable development of the protection of environment is going to be very

\(^{22}\) Ibid.
\(^{23}\) Ibid.
\(^{24}\) Ibid.
important in the development of an ecological project for the Danube. The Danube not only links the “Two Europes”, but it also ensures the trade water communication with the great western port of Rotterdam on the Danube-Mainz-Rhine canal.

CAER (The Council for Mutual Assistance- created in 1949 as a replica to the OECE) collapsed in 1989-1990 together with the communist system that had created it. Although during the Sofia meeting, in 1991, the Council had tried to envisage the type and steps to be taken for reforms which would insure its survival (which was impossible in the circumstances of unprecedented decrease in trade), it collapsed 18 months later, on 28 June 1991.

The great political and social shifts in the former Soviet Union became reality and led to a process toward democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. Some former communist countries (such as the Danube countries) also made good progress toward market economy.

The free trade zone established after the CAER collapse between the Visegard countries, numbering about 64 billion consumers, was powerful, yet as it approached just Slovenia and Croatia for collaboration, and only much later Romania, one can safely agree with the ironic name of “the Habsburg Empire without Austria”, coined by a Czech newsman, Karel Kritz in the “Lidone Noviny” daily.

In Eastern Europe, Turkey had advanced an economic cooperation project between the Black Sea countries ever since the beginning of 1989. The fall of communism and the troubled period which followed did favor this integration process. After 1998, this project materialized as the Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

The nomination of Central and Eastern European countries for E.U. integration, as well the effective integration of the “first wave” with “no other forms of process”, and Romania’s and Bulgaria’s achievement of being presented with a deadline for accession clearly show that the exit from the “transition tunnel” is possible and achievable, just like the North-Atlantic integration.

24 Th. de Montbrail, P. Jacquet, op. cit., p. 281.
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