

"I AM OPTIMISTIC ABOUT ROMANIA'S FUTURE"

Quinton Quayle *

We are here to talk about Europe as a Democracy Promoter Europe is in the middle of a profound debate about its future. Yet whatever the differences may be on issues such as future financing, there can be little doubt that enlargements is one of the EU's greatest successes. It has helped spread peace, prosperity and stability across the continent.

The prospect of EU membership also acts as a Democracy Promoter It is a magnet for positive change. It encourages reform in newly democratised countries, it helps civil institutions, the protection of human rights and the roots of democracy to be strengthened.

That is exactly what has happened in Romania.

Where would Romania be today if it was not knocking on the door of EU membership? There is no doubt in my mind that if the door to Brussels had been closed, we would not see half the progress that has occurred over the past six years in the protection of civil rights;

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liberalisation of the economy and the fight against corruption.

Some good work was done under the last PSD government. But the pace of positive change has accelerated since January this year under President Basescu and the Tariceanu government

I would also like to pay particular credit in this context to the work of the European Commission. My friend and colleague, Jonathan Scheele, and his team in Bucharest have worked tirelessly in the cause of positive change. Jonathan has not been afraid to speak out - to say the unpopular thing, to incur criticism. He has even sometimes had doors slammed shut in his face! But he has always tried to do the right thing in the cause of Romania's future. A future which I am convinced lies in the EU.

If - and it is a big if - Romania honours its negotiation commitments, it will enter the EU in 2007. If it does not, its entry will be postponed until 2008. The British Presidency of the EU has no magic formula to deliver the date of 2007. That depends on the performance of the Romanian government. Postponement until 2008 is a distinct possibility if the conditions are not properly met

But whether Romania enters in 2007 or 2008 is not the end of the matter. The key question for me is how successful will Romania be when it is a member. When it comes in, it will be the seventh largest EU state in terms of population and of votes. It needs to enter as a dynamic country, with a strong economy and a modern, reformed administration. The economy is doing pretty well - some would say it is expanding almost too fast. But I am less convinced about reform of the administration. There has been some progress and there are some grounds for optimism. The young generation, people like the Euro-Counsellors, for instance, are full of ideas for positive change. But too often these youngsters are held back by the layer of older officials above them. People who are too set in their ways. Who resist change. And who are more concerned about working for their own interests rather than the interests of Romania

As I travel around the country and meet local officials, I also sense that there is too much of a club. You see the Mayor, the President of the County Council and the Prefect dining out together, often with local business leaders and owners of the local media. This can form a charmed circle, each of whom protects the others' interests. Elected and appointed officials are there to serve the people's interests not their own. The media, at both the local and national level, should be free from political interference. Allowing powerful business interests to colour the way the press reports political developments is wrong. It hinders democratic

debate and can allow corruption and dubious business practices to remain covered up.

As representative of the British Presidency of the EU, I now want to talk a little about the importance which the EU attaches to the promotion of democracy. One of the EU's main international priorities is sustainable development underpinned by democracy, good government and human rights. These contribute to the achievement of the EU's wider objectives. The security of Europe benefits directly from an increase in the number of stable, democratic, well-governed states and promoting free trade and investment.

Democracy is the only system of government in which individuals have the opportunity fully to realise their human rights. It also provides the best foundation for good governance and the rule of law to flourish. Civil society has a dynamic role in helping to shape policies and to monitor their implementation. And in that context I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous contribution which Alina Mungiu-Pippidi and her colleagues in the Romanian Academic Society have made to the promotion of democratic values in Romania.

With globalisation, the behaviour of one state increasingly has repercussions on others. Countries which are democratic, respect the rights of their citizens, and observe the rule of law at home and abroad, are also safer places in which to live and work. They are more likely to settle disputes peacefully, and to respect international legal commitments - whether on human rights, security matters, the environment, economic issues or international crime. And in this age of terrorism, societies in which the individual is allowed to flourish and in which there are legitimate avenues for expressing dissent, are also less likely to become breeding grounds for extremism. In our view, work on human rights and counter-terrorism is mutually reinforcing. Conflict is much more likely to break out in countries where human rights are abused, where democracy is weak or absent and the government does not respect the rule of law.

We want to make the EU more effective in this area. We want to ensure that the EU's European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights is effectively used, and that the EU financial perspective post 2006 has an adequate human rights component.

Linking OSCE work with that of the EU will also be a priority for our EU Presidency. We want to see better follow-up to election observation missions carried out by the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

The Council of Europe also has a key human rights function across all of its 46 member states which are centred on its legally binding instruments, the most important of which is the European Convention on Human Rights.

As Presidency, we want to encourage increased participation by the disenfranchised, especially women, ethnic minorities and the disabled, in accordance with the principles of equality, diversity and non-discrimination. Freedom of expression, which has been such a contentious issue in this country, will be a priority theme of our EU Presidency. In this context, I welcome the long overdue steps which the Romanian government has taken on limiting state advertising in the press.

Finally I would like to end with a message which is at the same time critical and encouraging. My criticism is directed at those - and there are many - who spread pessimism about Romania's future. Those who doubt whether Romania should be joining the EU at all. My message of encouragement is this: don't forget how far Romania has come in the past 16 years. Imagine you could put the clock back to 5 July 1989 and had a conversation with Ceausescu about Romania's future "Great Leader, in the year 2004 Romania will be in the same military organisation as the UK, France and Germany. And in 2007 (or 2008), Romania will be joining the same economic organisation as these Western European countries." One of two things would happen. Either you would be taken out and shot. Or Ceausescu would say, well at last, France, Germany and the UK have seen sense and decided to join the Warsaw Pact and Comecon!

Romania has come a long way since 1989. It has come a long way over the past five years, even over the past few months. Democracy has taken root here. And I, for one, am optimistic about Romania's future.

"GERMANY, A DETERMINED ADVOCATE OF EU ENLARGEMENT"

*Wilfried Gruber**

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to address you on the occasion of this conference. I commend the Romanian Academic Society for its ten years activity and its outstanding contribution to democracy in Romania SAR could not have chosen a better way to celebrate its 10 years activity than by organizing a conference on the topic - "Europe as a Democracy Promoter". Its relevance and timeliness is obvious: in May 2004 the biggest enlargement wave the European Union ever witnessed took place. In April 2005 the Accession Treaties with Romania and Bulgaria were signed. Accession negotiations with Croatia are supposed to begin as soon as it proves its good faith in cooperation with ICTY - the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia - and negotiation with Turkey they will start on October 3rd this year.

Germany has been an early and determined advocate of EU enlargement. The accession of the Eastern and South Eastern European countries to the EU, the vision a Europe whole and free, was and certainly still is a historical and political obligation for all of us. The

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creation of a larger, democratic, peaceful and prosperous Europe has always been in the vital interest of the entire Union. Could we hope for anything better than having neighbours who accept and implement the rules and standards which brought the old Member States such tremendous success?

The accession of the Central European and South East European countries cannot be explained without the fall of communism in 1989 / 1990. However, the promotion of democracy by the European Union is not an invention of the post cold war era. In 1981 and 1986 the European Community - as it was called at that time - welcomed three new members which had been transformed from dictatorships to democracies only a few years ago: Greece, Spain and Portugal. The arguments for their accession were linked at that time very much to the objective of promoting and consolidating democracy. There was a common understanding that membership in the EC would consolidate democracy and the rule of law in these countries. The fears and reservations at that time were also very much the same as nowadays: According to pessimistic scenarios, millions of poor Spanish, Portuguese and Greek migrant workers would flood the labour market of the richer Member States. These fears and reservations didn't prove to be realistic and enlargement by Spain, Portugal and Greece became a great success story for the acceding countries as well as for the other Member States.

Let us recall these lessons today in this turbulent period in the life of the European Union. Let us recall that we still have major responsibilities in ensuring security and stability on our own continent and further afield. We cannot take a "sabbatical" from these responsibilities.

While we must regret the current state of the Union, we should take consolation in the fact that enlargement was a survivor at the last European Council. The Council confirmed last year's conclusions on enlargement. This means that Romania and Bulgaria will join the Union in 2007 if they fulfil the conditions and live up to the commitments they assumed in their treaty of accession. This is an ambitious goal which needs determination and hard work if it is to be reached. As far as Germany is concerned, we wish to stick to the agreed accession time table. We have witnessed the thorough changes which have taken place in Romania during the last fifteen years. We follow the reform process of the current administration with great sympathy because we Germans know from our own East German experience about such a challenging and painful process.

The fact that the last European Council confirmed last year's conclusions on enlargement also means that accession negotiations will start with Croatia and Turkey, once these countries meet the conditions and criteria. And it means that the countries of the Western Balkans maintain their European perspective. It would be irresponsible if we gave up this perspective which we opened for this region that has been traditionally one of the most unstable parts of Europe. If the EU's attitude towards the Western Balkans' European perspective turned unsteady, our positive influence would be seriously eroded, at a moment when the region is entering a very difficult period of talks on Kosovo's future status.

Enlargement has been a success story. It reflects the EU as a civilian power; by extending the zone of peace and democracy we have achieved far more through our gravitational pull than we could ever have achieved by means of a stick or a sword. But in order to maintain this gravitational pull the Union has to remain attractive not only as a Common Market and an economic player. Europe will only retain its force of attraction and appeal as a promoter of democracy if it preserves its political coherence and if it continues to make a "political offer" too: integration in the field of Justice and Home Affairs, the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the European Security and Defence Policy are essential and integral parts of such an offer and vital for the future appeal of the Union.

It is essential that all present and future Member States, including Romania and Bulgaria, to participate as actively as possible in all domains and aspects of European integration. Indeed, the EU has its origins in economic cooperation but it is now much more than a cus-toms union. Germany expects Romania to become a EU partner that will not only seek to profit from the economic and financial advantages of Union membership. We expect Ro-mania to contribute to the further consolidation of the EU as a Political Union; a Romania which will contribute to the integration process as a whole. Europe a la carte should not be an option.

Europe needs Romanian expertise. The so called New Neighbourhood Policy of the EU creates a framework of partnership with 17 neighbouring countries, many of them in Ro-mania's immediate neighbourhood. Romania's role as a regional stability factor will in-crease even more after its accession to the EU. This will be especially true for its role in the Western Balkans and in the Black Sea Region.

President Basescu has taken this into consideration and,

consequently, declared the Black Sea Region a priority of Romanian Foreign Policy. As a next step this will have to be embedded into an integrated European concept. The EU will therefore continuously increase its cooperation with the Member States of the "Black Sea Economic Cooperation". Germany has given an impetus in the EU to pay more attention to the Black Sea Region within the framework of its New Neighbourhood Policy.

The promotion and export of democracy, the rule of law and stability as the very core of the EU's neighbourhood policy will remain a top priority of the European Union for the years to come. But we have to be realistic: in order to consolidate the existing enlargement agenda, we should be very cautious taking on new commitments. In the future we will have to make it more and more clear to countries within our proximity that not every successful transition to democracy and free market economy has to lead to accession to the European Union. Democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and economic prosperity are in the interest of every country and every people. To promote these values is in the interest of the European Union and its member countries, but equally of countries for which we do not see a perspective of becoming a member of our Union. If we like it or not, we need a debate on the "finalité politique" of the EU if we wish to preserve its internal cohesion. But even if we are to determine limits to the EU's extension, this does and should in no way mean a limit to its outreach as a promoter of democracy.