

EUROPE THE CONTRADICTORY

by Johan Galtung

Center of International Studies
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey 08544

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Europe, the contradictory, the double-faced. Europe, the Janus. This is my theme, Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals and beyond; of course Russia is a part of Europe, and of course Russia today stretches to the Pacific.

I think, as a point of departure, that it is difficult to talk about Europe as a whole and that is the major reason why so few people do. The difficulty derives from one single circumstance: Europe is so contradictory. That is my major theme, and I shall dwell on that theme geographically, historically and culturally.

Thus, take geography as a point of departure. There is Europe east and west as we very well know. There is the abominable division of Europe by the blocs, euphemistically referred to as "the alliances" although they are mainly expressions of super-power hegemony, exercised in different ways. They are certainly pitted against each other militarily, they are divided politically, and from a social, economic and cultural point of view one is capitalist with a liberal/conservative underpinning and one is socialist with a marxist underpinning. This is already a contradiction. But even more contradictory are the socialist elements in capitalism found very clearly in the west in the welfare state more or less successfully achieved, not to mention the capitalist elements in socialism found very clearly in the east in the particular way market principles operating on the side of society, increasingly moving towards the center of the social formation.

Then, there is Europe north and south, roughly speaking divided by levels of technical-economic development. More developed in the north, less developed in the south. But then there are pockets of low development among the high and high development among the low. Not to mention the obvious circumstance that human development may be high but economic development is low and vice versa. Hence, there are plenty of contradictions also along this geographical dimension which cuts across the east-west divide in Europe making the total set of contradictions extremely rich indeed.

In fact, it might be fruitful to think in terms of four Europes: a more developed, capitalist northwest with the Nordic countries (including Finland), England and Scotland (but not Ireland, that belongs more to the southwest), Be-Ne-Lux, the Federal Republic of Germany, Switzerland and Austria; then the southwest consisting of the Latin countries France, Italy, Spain, Malta and Portugal (and then adding Ireland); a European northeast consisting of Poland, the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia and then finally a European southeast, often referred to as the Balkans consisting of Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania, Greece and Turkey (European part), Cyprus.

I mention this particular division because it is important in connection with the peace movement. Roughly speaking I would characterize the European situation as follows:

- In the northeastern corner: a strong, popularly based, peace movement, heavily against weapons of mass destruction, many of them also against weapons of any kind, highly critical of the way governments are handling foreign affairs in general and military affairs in particular;
- In the northwestern corner: a population strongly against the repressive nature of the regimes, arguing forcefully, in the Polish case very forcefully for human rights in everything that can be referred to as the cultural field, for decentralization of the economy and for decentralization of decision-making, in other words democracy--but not very high in terms of a peace movement as this concept is known in the northwestern corner because these other issues have higher priority;
- In the southwestern corner: a strong effort by governments and the population alike to modernize, catch up with the northwest (and the United States), strong emphasis on national and personal economic growth, relatively low concern with foreign affairs in general and military matters in particular although this has changed very much in Spain recently; rather weak peace movements;
- In the southeastern corner: a governmentally supported peace movement, with such astounding feats as a Greek-Bulgarian treaty on non-aggression, progress in work to-

wards a nuclear free zone, high levels of independence of the western super-power in Greece and the eastern super-power in Rumania, cooperation but particularly among the countries with an Orthodox Church meaning Greece, Bulgaria, Rumania and (southern) Yugoslavia-- not countries where Islam plays a certain role traditionally (Turkey, Albania) or the Catholic Church (northern Yugoslavia, Hungary).

A very complicated picture indeed, crying for an alliance between the northwestern and southeastern countries, **F**or the social democratic scenario of the revision of the military doctrine of NATO in a more defensive direction in the northwest (which has a assumption that the social democrats not only come to power, with or without the support of green parties and peace parties, but also that they keep the momentum that they have developed in a position) -and the free zone approach combined with disarmamentism more pronounced in the southeastern corner. And, of course, the significance of developing the peace movement in the other two corners, asking the northeast to give military matters the same priority as they justly give to other concerns, and asking the southwest to be more concerned with the fate of Europe and the world as a whole, not only with the economies and the modernization of their own countries (and their own families).

Why all these differences in such a small area of world geography? Of course, because the history was different. There

may be such a thing as a common European agenda, political tasks that are done, that have to be done, and may be carried out in something of the same order. There are both liberal/conservative and marxist theories in this field, all of them rightly famous, none of them capturing the richness of Europe as a whole. Let me add to those efforts a very simple approach dividing the problems into four: distribution of cultural, economic, political and military power. The point of departure would then be the general image of The European Prince in the late period of feudalism, still retaining in his hands considerable control over all four types of power; if not exercising cultural power--that was the prerogative of the church--at least upholding the church. He was not ruling quite alone, but together with his court he was very close to having a monopoly on economic, political and military power.

Enters the new age, the challenge to absolutism. In the field of cultural power human rights, freedom of expression and so on. In the field of economic power the rise of the independent entrepreneur, of private capital, of market forces. In the field of political power, in other words basic decision-making, the rise of democratic institutions. And in the field of military power: nothing, conscription from the general population, but absolutism at the top if not with The Prince so with the successor of The Prince, the State. Feudalism continues; monopoly, secrecy.

The point is now that not all parts of Europe have come equally far in these processes, and none of them have shown much inclination to go very far when it comes to the final battle on this list: demonopolization in the field of military power. As a general rule we might perhaps say that the northwestern corner has made the most progress along the other three roads. Eastern Europe in general has made a transition from the feudal Prince to a modern state, but then has vested in that modern state the monopolistic prerogatives of the feudal Prince with total control over cultural and economic and political and military power, all four at the same time. For some interesting ideological reasons this particular type of feudal structure has a special name, it is referred to as "socialism", even "the only really existing socialism". And southern Europe is in general more concerned with economic aspects, as is also western Europe although in a slightly different way; more concerned with keeping its position against the pressure from outside Europe than with any real effort to grow further.

Of course, there is no reason why Europe should be proceeding synchronically along these four roads. That would presuppose a homogeneity across european geography and parallelism in the history of the parts that would be totally unreasonable, or at least extremely improbable. Moreover, such differences would tend to accumulate in significance, leads and lags to become more prominent over time. And the result is a Europe that becomes in-

creasingly contradictory, particularly when compared to the (perhaps overly romantic) image we have of a relatively homogeneous Europe sometime back in the Middle Ages.

So, what is Europe then if we cannot catch it in an unambiguous way geographically or historically?

I might say that this is exactly the point: the only non-contradictory way of describing Europe is to say that Europe is contradictory. And there is a particular reason for this that has to do with what seems to be the most fruitful way of conceiving of Europe: neither geographically, nor historically, but as a cultural project. The Indian philosopher, who was also India's first president, Radhakrishnan said in one of his books (he was at that time professor of Religion at Oxford University): characteristic of the west is its roots, and they are Jewish, Greek and Roman. From Judaism the west learned to see itself as a Chosen People; Christianity, a derivative of Judaism is also an expression of that. From the Greeks the west learned some particular rules of thinking, such as the "laws of thought" with heavy emphasis on the inadmissibility of contradictions; this made theory-formation, deductive thinking in general, and in theology in particular, possible. And from the Romans the Europeans learned how to build empires, a habit they have practiced ever since. In short: a Chosen People with a very disciplined, special way of thinking, and highly expansionist!

I think what Radhakrishnan says is true, but it is not the whole truth. It leaves out what we might call "the other Europe", much more inclined towards itself, contractory; less rigid in its way of thinking, and more willing to see itself as one region among several, not particularly chosen for any particular missionary activity. There is Europe hard, and there is Europe soft. Moreover, it is almost impossible to think of one without also mentioning the other. In fact, it looks as if anything european comes in two versions: hard and soft christianity, hard and soft liberalism, hard and soft marxism. And no doubt this might also one day be the case for the Green Party which today appears in a soft form but already is thinking of "networking" with other Green Parties, building what might one day become a very hard organization in order to fight the hard Europes with which the Greens are surrounded. One may of course argue that this can also be found in other parts of the world, which undoubtedly is true for the Islamic world and for the parts dominated yesterday or today by Europe. But it is not true for countries in the Hindu-Buddhist sphere, or at least not to the extent that it can be formulated as a principle: double-faced Europe.

The Europe of high culture, of the sublime, of the highest in culture and science as well as the Europe of imperialism, of domination and aggressiveness, even genocide. Which Europe is the real one? Of course, it is easy to choose the hard and de-

nounce, and equally easy to choose the soft and praise. But in either case we shall do violence to truth: the truth is not inbetween, that is a very misleading metaphor, the truth comprises both.

But if the truth of Europe is so contradictory, what then about the laws of thought, themselves a part of the european cultural tradition and a very important part, ruling out contradiction? In this itself there is a contradiction, and that contradiction makes victims out of all of us in a very particular way: we become less able than we should have been to think about, leaving alone to talk about, Europe as a whole. Precisely because we have a tendency to shrink away from stating the contradictory, we would also tend to divide Europe, and the most tempting division is always the most concrete one: geographical subdivision. Of course we have a tendency to end up with two Europes regardless of how we subdivide, east and west, socialist and capitalist, north and south, protestant and catholic or whatnot. But the division of Europe into hard and soft is not a division of that kind. It is not the division of Europe into geographical parts, but rather an effort to point to inclinations in all Europes, at all points in european space and time, now with the hard as dominant and the soft as recessive, now the other way around, with the soft on the upper side and the hard lurking underneath. In other words, there will also always be hard elements in the soft and soft elements in the hard, making

the conceptualization of Europe even more problematic.

What would be the consequences that can be drawn from this kind of image? I think three consequences, all of them easily said, no so easily translated into practice.

First, to accept intellectually that this is Europe and give up any effort to produce images of Europe as either hard or soft when in fact it is both-and, and even both and at the same time and at the same point in space. European colonialism was outrageous in its exploitation, its killing and maiming--but at the same time it also brought values of solidarity and compassion, of tolerance. One might even say that every european message comes as counter-message, and the total message can only be understood if one is willing to accept both sides of the coin.

And that leads to the second point: trying to learn to think about Europe as a whole. When we project into the future for Europe then this very word should stand for the big Europe, not for the small one here in the west and the even smaller one aptly referring to itself as the European "common market", revealing in its very name its merchant orientation. We shall think in terms of the entire variety of European culture, protestant, catholic and orthodox, Germanic, Latin and Slavonic and all the others--an incredible diversity, much too much for any one human being to contemplate, leaving alone to comprehend fully

during a lifetime. And we would do well to learn to enjoy this diversity rather than trying to diminish it through giant schemes of mega-markets or mega-plans.

Third, and most importantly: a project of systematic efforts to support the soft Europe and to fight against the hard Europe. The problem is of course that in fighting something hard one might oneself become hardened, and thus continue the vicious circle. One way out would be the way of non-violence, of cultivating new patterns of political struggle, and more particularly new forms of social contracts between leader and led. Another aspect would be solidarity with the weak, with the victims of the hard Europe everywhere--certainly including one of the major victims, nature itself. And all of this in a pattern of fundamental democratic mobilization, not simplifying this word to parliamentarism alone, but meaning by democracy exactly that, the rule of the people, not of parliamentarians, not of technocrats.

In emphasizing these four themes, non-violence, solidarity, ecology and basic democracy four basic principles of the Green Party have also been mentioned. In short, Green Politics. But with the important reminder that we are all carriers of that European cultural gene, the tendency for the soft become hard and for Europe to continue its cyclical move through history, oscillating between the sublime and compassionate on the one hand, and the base and suppressive on the other.