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## Global Changes and the Context of Education, Democracy and Development in Eastern Europe

Mitter, Wolfgang [Hrsg.]; Schäfer, Ulrich [Hrsg.]: *Bildung und Erziehung im Umbruch: Vorträge von Mitarbeitern des Deutschen Instituts auf dem VIII. Weltkongress für Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft, "Education, democracy and development", vom 8.-14. Juli 1992 in Prag. Frankfurt am Main : Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung 1993, S. 85-98*



### Quellenangabe/ Reference:

Kopp, Botho von: Global Changes and the Context of Education, Democracy and Development in Eastern Europe - In: Mitter, Wolfgang [Hrsg.]; Schäfer, Ulrich [Hrsg.]: *Bildung und Erziehung im Umbruch: Vorträge von Mitarbeitern des Deutschen Instituts auf dem VIII. Weltkongress für Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft, "Education, democracy and development", vom 8.-14. Juli 1992 in Prag. Frankfurt am Main : Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung 1993, S. 85-98* - URN: urn:nbn:de:0111-opus-18858 - DOI: 10.25656/01:1885

<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0111-opus-18858>

<https://doi.org/10.25656/01:1885>

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**Botho von Kopp**

## **Global Changes and the Context of Education, Democracy and Development in Eastern Europe**

**Summary:**

The following essay deals with several aspects of change in Eastern, post-communist Europe. This change – often labelled as "transformation" when seen as a goal-directed process – is itself embedded in a global context. It hints at a fundamental change of paradigmatic, social, political and power structures. In the given context of austerity policy and market ideology a new exclusiveness of education and a possible decay of the comparatively remarkable educational infrastructure in Eastern Europe (and not only there) cannot be excluded. A conservative revolution also evokes reactionary and chauvinistic tendencies – which might cause repercussions in the whole of Europe. The events in Eastern Europe are another example that democracy is not the outcome of a singular act of revolution – notwithstanding its necessity in order to overcome dictatorial structures – but a permanent task.

## **Globaler Wandel und der Zusammenhang von Bildung, Demokratie und Entwicklung in Osteuropa**

**Zusammenfassung:**

Der folgende Essay befaßt sich mit verschiedenen Aspekten des Wandels im östlichen, post-kommunistischen Europa. Zweifellos ist dieser Wandel – der unter dem Aspekt eines zielgerichteten Prozesses meist als „Transformation“ bezeichnet wird – eingebettet in globale Zusammenhänge. Diese deuten selbst auf einen fundamentalen Wandel paradigmatischer, sozial- und machtpolitischer Strukturen hin. Im gegebenen Kontext von Sparpolitik und Vermarktungsideologie zeichnet sich eine neue Exklusivität von Bildungschancen und ein Abbau der insgesamt beachtlichen Infrastruktur der Bildungssysteme in Osteuropa, und nicht nur dort, ab. Eine konservative Wende weckt auch reaktionäre und nationalistische Tendenzen, die Rückwirkungen auf ganz Europa haben können. So gesehen sind die Ereignisse in Osteuropa ein weiteres Beispiel dafür, daß Demokratie nicht Folge eines singulären revolutionären Aktes ist, so notwendig dieser auch sein mag, um diktatorische Strukturen zu überwinden, sondern eine permanente Aufgabe.

## 1. The context of change and the crisis of modern industrial society

The explanation of social change was a central issue of nineteenth's century social science. True, there were different theories, but in general all of them – those defining change as an revolutionary act and those defining it as evolutionary development – were based on the idea of a future-oriented process: the impact of change was seen in the triumph over, as it was felt, the insufficiencies of the past. Change created something that had not existed before. In the optimistic interpretations of the nineteenth's century these changes were generally interpreted as „progress“. In modern sociology, until recently, theories of change on a macro-level certainly have not vanished but stepped back somewhat in favour of middle-range theories on change of subsystems, institutions, and social groups rather than transformation of whole societies. However, in face of the present changes which seem to be both profound and global, social science and humanities are confronted with a new phase of societal change and thus are in need of theoretical explanations and models helping to analyse the situation.

One of the characteristics of the ongoing changes, and this makes them different from the dynamics and ideologies of those changes based in the nineteenth century, is a kind of looking back, an attempt to recover lost knowledge, meaning and structures. It is, as if society needed a „pausing for breath“. We find this tendency as a new interest in historical values and structures, not seldom used or propagated as a remedy against a crisis of identity and consensus, we find it in a possible shift towards Eurocentrism, religious fundamentalism, philosophical communitarism, a trendy mood of apocalypse, mysticism and esoterics or, in sum, as an all-embracing and fundamental criticism of modern rationalism in some concepts of „post-modernism“. Its definitions show great diversity, but with regard to some basic characteristics some analysts, in search for an appropriate analogy, compare the future we are heading for with the Middle Ages, not only in respect to some superficial similarities, but both in respect to some functional characteristics and to „post-modernism“ as an era, as it seems, between „no longer and not yet“.

For Umberto Eco it is mainly the dominance of visualism in our civilisation, which reminds him of the Middle Ages, and indeed, a common interpretation of one of the features of post-modernism says that it is replacing the objects by their images. Others may have different basic assumptions but mostly come to similar conclusions about the growing importance of symbols over things. For example a Japanese social scientist, Taichi Sa-

kaya, identifies as the main factor of change in modern society the growing scarcity of resources<sup>1</sup>. The strategy in order to cope with scarcity for him consists of the devaluation of the material resources and of the creation of a new, immaterial, value structure and the production of symbols. This inexhaustible pool of resources can, in principle, be shared by all and future will bring, he argues, an end of classical mass production and mass consumption of identical products. Instead, an era of individualisation of production will come. In it, material worth will be replaced by highly diversified, individualised non-material values based on information – about the social value of goods – and on symbols. In this system of non-material priorities he sees the analogy with the Middle Ages.

Somewhat similar seems to be, what many analysts find future education might need most urgently: it is not so much knowledge of facts – „material value“ so to say – but knowledge of relations, social competence and, as Martin Baethge (a reputed German social scientist) formulated, „the ability to decode symbols“.

Another analyst, however, Manuela du Bois-Raymonds from Leyden, attracted recently some attention among educationalists in Germany, because she predicted the end of compulsory education systems as no longer fit to meet the requirements of future needs. She gave the following reasons for her argument: 1) the existing school system is not able to cope with growing individualisation of lifestyles and to integrate them into plausible and relevant processes of learning for its students; 2) youth has gained and still is gaining increasing power in many respects of society, but not so in school. There, power balance is kept only by a loss of educational engagement from the side of the school and a „quiet arrangement“ between teachers and students not to disturb each other too much and to keep an atmosphere of camaraderie which du Bois-Raymonds finds to be symptomatic for modern schools; 3) knowledge is increasingly becoming a commercial good and a growing market sector outside schools offers skills and knowledge more effectively than school does.<sup>2</sup>

There is, however, criticism that those „post-modernistic“ concepts of „individualisation“ of values based on a „marketised“ concept of society and a „commodification“ of education is nothing else but a neo-conservative plot. In fact, many features of the present cultural, ethical, and politi-

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1 Taiichi, S.: The Knowledge-Value Revolution. Tokyo 1991  
 2 Frankfurter Rundschau, April 2, 1992

cal changes have the character of a conservative revolution, which stabilises and gives legitimacy in a situation of growing global polarisation and antagonism between rich and poor, between those who have food, access to resources, capital, education and health care, and those who have not.

It is probably true that these present trends are connected with a deepening crisis of our system as a result of a growing scarcity of resources which must be exploited in order to keep the system running smoothly. Not only that the material resources are scarce, their processing and usage is becoming increasingly risky for the ecological balance. This crisis of the modern industrial system and the corresponding strains come to be expressed in culture and society in many ways.

## 2. Transformation

The change in the post-socialist countries is an essential part of global changes and at the same time unique. Sometimes this task of transforming societies so profoundly is compared with post-war Germany or with post-fascist Spain. But not only are, in spite of some similarities, the circumstances very different – these regimes were capitalist in essence, but also the political and economical context has changed – the mere dimensions of transforming the former socialist, non-market, dictatorial societies are huge: „transformation“ this time refers to a set of about 20 states, a huge territory, some 430 million people and some hundreds of different ethnicities. There is no model and we do not dispose of theories on a transformation of such a character and of such dimensions. Apart from this, the first optimism cooled down: the upheavals against the old regimes gave the peoples new freedom, pride and hope. However, the real existing world order threw them directly from the „Second“ into the „Third World“ in some respects and in face of some economical data: Third World means to be exposed to tariffs against free international trade, to be helpless against the dictate of raw material prices, it means monthly wages of 50 or 150 Dollars on an average, huge disparities between social classes as well as political and social instability. All this has an enormous impact on the social coherence and the chances for democracy in the region. Transformation has to count also with the risks.

Generally the word „transformation“ suggests that there is a clear starting point and an equally clear end point. The end point, to begin with, is to „become Western“, and seen from there the starting point in the minds of

many concerned and observers is near zero. In reality, it might be one of the central problems better to understand the material social and cultural preconditions of transformation: transformation of the former Eastern bloc is implicitly and explicitly most often connected with the idea of modernisation. Certainly technology – both technology of production and of political leadership was helplessly outdated – although modernisation was the rationale of communist ideology. In this sense, modernisation is most needed and one might speak of a „belated“ or „catching-up-modernisation“. But does that mean that the societies in question should copy „more modern“ societies or should they take up the threads after an interrupt of some 40 years or more, or are there other options?

I think there is a lack of analyses of the starting positions. Not so much analysis of the old regime's deficits in respect to the goal of transformation: free market and political pluralism – these deficits are evident and abundantly documented – but of the functional character of the former societies in respect to a relevant theory of change and transformation. Unfortunately, there is not only lack of analysing the starting position, but the goals and the ways of how to achieve the goals are somewhat nebulous sometimes: not only that Western mass-industrial society in itself is quite diversified, but this type of technologically and economically modern society has become – exactly for its high level of development – a „risk-society“ as some analysts call it<sup>3</sup>. However, not to transform into this risk-society seems to be equally very risky.

Theoretically there are several possibilities of modelling transformation in the sense of modernisation:

- 1) a model based on the philosophy copying of the highly modernised societies;
- 2) a model of an utopian modernisation; it's designers could try to draft a „better“, an „authentic“ modernisation or, as for that, something like a „third-road-modernisation“ trying to avoid the problems and losses of non- or anti-modernisation as well as those of modernisation;
- 3) a model which would be critical against the present stage of Western modernisation but which would, rather than aspiring to find a third road base its philosophy on the very principles of modernisation;

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3 Beck, U.: Risikogesellschaft – Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1986. (Edition Suhrkamp. 1365).

tion, that is, rationality and emancipation, arguing that historical modernisation in many ways has not yet fulfilled the promises of the classical modernisation project; a German scholar call this „reflexive Modernisierung“<sup>4</sup>;

- 4) a „selective modernisation“ based on a pragmatic analysis of modernisation gaps on the one hand and priorities and means available in the given country on the other. This model counts with a significant difference of the modernisation levels which cannot be levelled quickly;
- 5) a „partial modernisation“; the correspondent strategy would be based explicitly on the character of the former socialist societies as „partially modernised“ societies and it would concentrate on modernising the non-modern features of these societies. This strategy, however, would have to be based on a more profound analysis of the modernistic and anti-modernistic strategies and on the outcomes of these strategies in the different subsystems of former socialist countries;
- 6) a model which makes use of selected pre-modern features, structures and institutions of the former regimes in order to promote modernisation. Some analysts, in the light of some general tendencies in the former Eastern bloc which show a tendency to combine inherited structures (of centralised and hierarchical control) with rules of a market economy, see exactly this model of a „complementary modernisation“-strategy being realised<sup>5</sup>.

What place has education in these models? If one analyses education under the old regimes, one will find that it was this subsystem which perhaps more visibly than many others was characterised by the above mentioned aspect of „partial modernisation.“ Educational policy in the respective countries stressed from the very beginning of erecting the socialist regimes most consequently the modernistic issues of massification of education (alphabetisation in the underdeveloped countries), access to higher levels of education for those classes of society which had been more or less excluded from education, integration of general and vocational education, a general high esteem for technical and technology education and so on.

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4 see note Nr. 3.

5 Balá, J./Bobach R.: Transformation als Modernisierung – eine Diskussions-skizze. In: IGW-Nachrichten, (1992) 3, pp. 27-52.

Apart from the fact that expansionist educational policy slowed down or stagnated since the seventies both for political and financial reasons, from the very beginning one equally can find anti-modernistic trends which result from the totalitarian, mechanistic philosophy of leadership and, correspondingly, a voluntaristic, dictatorial praxis of planning, controlling and executing the educational system.

Summarising these characteristics one might say that educational infrastructure was highly modernised – especially in the formerly less developed countries modernisation achievements surpassed at times clearly those of the non-socialist countries – but this infrastructure produced an education which in effect was anti-modern in its contents and functions – then especially in those of social and civic learning. Whereas in the Western countries the school system tried to react on the changing context of an highly developed industrial society which has become definitely more flexible, more pluralistic, and is based on a system of intrinsic control, the school system in the former socialist countries conserved a type of school typical for the time of early industrialisation and based on extrinsic control.

As far as the ongoing changes and transformation strategies in the Eastern European countries already had impacts on the educational systems, a trend becomes visible which is quite paradoxical: certainly the contents and functions of school on the one hand become rapidly more modern in the sense mentioned above, on the other hand restorative tendencies have appeared: the structure of the educational system is becoming much more flexible everywhere. Partly this is due to the particular phase of change in which different ways and compromises are sought. Thus, in most cases the question how many years should the grammar school be attended, respectively if the old pre-war system should be restored or not, led to a variety of different forms where anything between four- to eight-year types of upper secondary grammar schools („gymnasium“) can be found at the same time. In addition, there is a variety of experiments both with school types and with an inner differentiation of the curricula of the same school type. However, although there is a general acceptance of a consumer-oriented restructuring of the educational system, this is not easy to carry out partly for financial restrictions and partly for the great variety of opinions and consumer aspirations.

It is part of the complicated situation in the respective countries that not only necessary and progressive changes occur but also changes adopted or sought after out of nostalgia or, worse, ultra-conservatism and

nationalism. Particularly, church affiliated groups try to get more influence over education especially in the field of „morals“ and „ethics“. Some of these issues are clearly reactionary like the official publication of the Polish Education Ministry's School Reform Bureau, which recommends the re-introduction of physical punishment in schools: „Physical punishment, as long as it is not too painful and frequent, provides the child with the positive emotion of physical closeness to the tutor ...“<sup>6</sup>.

In most of the new emerged states of the former Soviet Union, educational policy tries to restore the own cultural and national heritage as a basis for language of instruction, literature, civics and history teaching. Not seldom the newly gained sovereignty turns against the educational aspirations of the non-majority ethnic groups. In parts where acute conflicts arose, where even is war, we do not know how school and education react in this situation, but is it realistic to expect school to resist general nationalistic moods?

One of the most serious problems seems to be the financial situation in the context of a mixed application of rude market-philosophy on the one hand and of state control on the other. In this respect, the changes have brought with them developments which seriously endanger the achieved level of educational infrastructure in most of the respective states.

This development, however, is to be seen again in the context of more global trends of change: the development of education after World War II was based on an idea of democratisation which not only incited a huge alphabetisation movement and the massification of middle and higher educational enrolment, but which propagated the conviction that modern society is obliged to secure education as a basic human right, to compensate educational handicaps and to take educational care for all. It goes without saying that the enormous global expansion of education in these decades was not based on mere idealism: political sciences, sociology and last but not least economy provided theories which underlined the importance of education for the functioning of modern democracy and economy.

This context has changed: some of the assumptions on the correspondence between education and economic growth were too simple. The so called first oil-shock resulted in a slow-down of economic growth and the

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6 Quoted from: R. Pachocinski: Survey Study into Conditions, Problems and Policy of Education in Central Europe. Conference Paper. Warsaw/Amsterdam, August 1992

last decade of recession and austerity policy has only added to the change. Also in Eastern Europe the new ideology has liquidated, together with communism, its ideology of mass education as a paramount factor of creating the „new man“ as well as a factor of production. Often the wish to transform the old system, which is seen to be responsible for all past and present drawbacks, results in the wish to turn back to the opposite. Thus there seems to be a general mood among educationalists in Eastern Europe which strongly favours the philosophy of concurrence and differentiation in education and denounces comprehensive schooling as „communist“ and ineffective. Apart from this, it is also in line with the logic of new economics that new criteria for effectiveness in education emerge and become dominant: the market preferably directs investment there, where profit can be realised safely and quickly. In educational terms that means to invest into those children and adolescents who are the most talented or the most clever or the most fit to withstand stress and strain – or whose parents are able to buy the critical item education.

### 3. Integration and Disintegration

There is a global trend towards integration, be it politically and economically as „internationalisation“, be it culturally as „multiculturalism“, be it technically as global networks of communication. The role of international agencies grew considerably in the last few years. At the same time there are disintegrative tendencies: new nationalism, even tribalism, fundamentalism and economical polarisation. At the first sight, the trends seem to be very different in Western and Eastern Europe, on the other hand a peculiar combination of both, integrative and disintegrative tendencies, is typical for both parts although there is a difference in emphasis and historical background.

In the West we find – despite recent drawbacks – an emphasis on transnational integration represented in the European Community, although its strong bureaucracy causes that many people become increasingly concerned about the abstractness of processes and structures felt to be totally out of their control. Apart from this, and in respect to the more than 20 states in North, Middle and Eastern Europe, waiting for an European integration, it is very questionable if the European Community, which was founded and has developed under specific conditions, can continue just like before without a serious re-evaluation and probably some changes in order to cope with the new challenges. The European integra-

tion process, some few years ago looked upon very optimistically is now in serious troubles, although the European idea still is alive.

In spite of the mentioned global tendencies of integration, disintegrative forces did not cease to exist even in Western Europe (Northern Ireland, Bask province, Corsica, etc.). On the contrary, some strengthened (Scotland) or even emerged anew (Northern Italy). It is not possible to say if this trend will end in the creation of ever smaller state units or a new infrastructure of regional units. Both state centred nationalistic and anti-state regionalistic even urbanistic ideologies can be found.

True, mobilisation of national and ethnic movements is ambiguous: it played, at least in the context of modern industrial society, a paramount role in the process of economic and political development and transformation. On the other hand it is one of the least controlable and most destructive forces of modernisation. The new nationalism in Eastern Europe and the corresponding disintegrative tendencies have often an atavistic, dull and in some regions a cruel appearance. Is this then an aspect of the above mentioned „catching-up modernization“ meaning that there is an unchangeable pattern of becoming a nation and that all the sometimes cruel and painful historical stages the established nations went through have to be repeated by the new nations? This is, indeed, not a pleasant perspective. On the other hand, how can we not concede the right of searching for identity and a state-form to emerging nations by applying the same seriousness we use towards established nations and states, be they small or large?

Generally the question of ethnic groups, minorities and nation gives a new importance to what was until recently believed to be problems of the past. As far as minorities are acknowledged as such, they have (at least formally) nearly all over Europe a certain status which grants them special group rights, one of them being the right of education in the minority's language. In a context of nationalism, however, minorities are easily provoked (or as for that: forced) to follow political philosophies which add to the disintegrative tendencies in a given region.

Still, the migration of huge numbers of people into and across Europe might become more important, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Perhaps the numbers of migrants sometimes predicted, speaking of tens of millions to come mainly from the former Soviet Union and from Africa, are exaggerated. However, migration is a reality, and not to see that Europe has become an immigration area is to close the eyes in front of real-

ities. As far as the immigrants within the decades since World War II are concerned, they are nowhere seen as „minorities“ despite the fact that some immigrant ethnic groups outnumber the figures for minorities by far in most Western European countries and despite the fact that a certain fraction of them is living in a „foreign“ country in the third or fourth generation. Perhaps less the pressure of immigration, but the incompetence and paralysis of today's policy in this respect is a problem: its outcome cannot but be a growing racism and thus a strengthening of disintegrative tendencies.

Disintegration has equally increased in countries which aspired to create new integrated cultural and ethnic identities. Although perhaps the United States are the only (so far) functioning multi-ethnic society, one does no longer speak in America of a „melting pot“, but rather of a „salad bowl“ society, in which the respective ethnic and cultural groups more and more drift apart. Similarly – under due consideration of the differences – the „melting-pot-policy“ of the former USSR was a failure. Vitalij Kostomarov, former president of the Academy of Educational Sciences of the USSR, recently gave a self-critical résumé in which he came to the conclusion that the former cultural policy had failed totally in this respect. As a basic principle of this policy, Russian language was proclaimed to become the „second mother tongue“ for the non-Russian population of the USSR on the one hand, and the special ideological construct of the „multinational soviet culture“ was developed on the other hand, which was proclaimed to be „socialist in its content and national in its form“<sup>7</sup>.

Probably we will have to learn, that the principle of ethnically homogenous nation-states has become more than ever a fiction, but also that the traditional politics of assimilation, integration or „melting“ have failed. But how then could new structures be found? Certainly, there is no easy answer to this question, but equally certain is, that we need a new balance between individual, group, local, regional, national and transnational identities and rights. One could well imagine that the borders of functional systems, for instance legal systems, until now coinciding with the state border become more open and more diversified without demolishing them and without interfering with each other. Perhaps something like that could have emerged from disintegrating Czechoslovakia, where

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7 Kostomarov, V.: Sprachen und Kulturen in der Sowjetunion. Forschungsbericht. Frankfurt am Main: Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung 1992.

Slovaks asked for „full sovereignty“ in a common state. In any case, Europe will need such experiments of many different, innovative, and even seemingly „impossible“ forms of coexistence beyond centralism on the one and separatism on the other hand.

There is one recent event which ran counter to all present tendencies of supranational integration resp. national disintegration, and this was German unification. Since Germany will hold a key position in the relationship between Western and Eastern Europe, this context deserves special attention: unified Germany was put suddenly into the position of greater influence and even greater potential power and it is the question if it is prepared to deal with this situation in a manner which is just and fair in its content and diplomatic and sophisticated in its form. To find such an appropriate way of acting as a strong power is not at all easy. One should not forget, that Germany lacks (has lost long ago) the tradition of handling a European power position in a decent way. After unification in 1871 the German model of power in Europe was that of hegemony. This of course was not an original German idea, but it was a German and an European tragedy that Germany, as a young and dynamic power, did not find the appropriate philosophy according to its power position, but behaved like the typical parvenu.

Interestingly, at the same time when in Germany and Japan (in a somewhat varied form in the Soviet Union), countries competing to enter the club of the world powers, strength was interpreted as the absolute superiority of the own culture, system and/or race and a general disrespect of others, in America on the other hand, the philosophy of „cultural relativism“ not only as a social scientific school, but as a general idea, penetrated the whole society. Without this „culture of cultural relativism“ the United States could probably not have become the 20th century world power they are: it was this general ideology of respecting poly-culturalism which enabled many societies to accept not only the power position of the US, but also to accept a certain Americanization, which, in the given context, proved to be perhaps the only road of modernisation. All kinds of ideologies of exclusivity, hegemony and dominance, however, will lead in Europe (and as for that: everywhere else) sooner or later into catastrophe.

However, not all recent German diplomatic moves towards Eastern Europe are encouraging. It is not only the suspicion that German diplomacy deepened (if not triggered) the Yugoslavian drama. It is also regrettable that once again a treaty with Czechoslovakia ended up to be ratified in a context of ambiguity over the interpretations of the past and suspicions of

claims for the future. Apart from this, a Czech newspaper reported that the German President von Weizsäcker mentioned in Prague that „Germany has a particular relationship with Czechoslovakia. Similar to that which has France with Algeria or Portugal with Brazil“<sup>8</sup> Czechs who heard these words, were told to be surprised by this comparison since they don't feel that they have been ever a German colony. One also hardly could believe that the president wanted to evoke the reminiscence of the „protectorate“ 1939-45. What then, did he really mean? Or was he only unable to put into unequivocal words what he meant? On the other hand there is sometimes criticism from the left in Czechoslovakia itself, saying the new governmental policy would follow a „protectorate-concept“. This of course is not my task to judge.

In any case, both, a protectorate attitude as well as a Germanophobia are dangerous: the post-war era in Europe is over, Germany has changed and so did his neighbours. The transformations and changes we are witnessing and are parts of, impose, however, great responsibility on us in order not to waste what has been gained.

Another question which arises here, is, if hints at „protectorate-relations“ have not perhaps become presentable once again. In fact, political thinking in this respect seems to have changed dramatically: unthinkable still some few years ago, that a reputed and critical analyst of political science could have suggested „new forms“ of economical help for the „mini-republics“ in former Yugoslavia, by means of a co-operation with „patron-nations“ – the Slovenes perhaps with the Austrian, the Croats with Germany and Italy<sup>9</sup>. Again: looking at the global context it seems that these arguments are completely in line with a more general „new thinking“: In an editorial about the dramatic situation in Africa the German magazine „Der Spiegel“ wrote that „a sort of humanistic colonialism will hardly be avoidable“, in addition quoting a British expert who asks similarly: „is time ripe for a new imperialism?“<sup>10</sup>. Perhaps nothing can illustrate clearer the apparent direction change is taking presently. Since history has very few examples indeed for a „benevolent protectionism“ and a „humanitarian imperialism“, this direction is not only backward but also dangerous.

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8 Rudé právo, July 5, 1991.

9 E. Altvater on an international peace conference organised in April 1992 in Sarajevo by „Helsinki Forum“ and other groups: „Die Festung Europa muß ihre Zugbrücken herunterlassen“. In: Frankfurter Rundschau, April 3, 1992.

10 Der Spiegel, (1992) 51, p. 152 and J. MacManus, *ibid.* p. 153.

#### 4. Conclusion

It might be questionable if we, as some believe, face changes which are so all-embracing and of such a kind that they only can be described as an allegedly new era of „Middle Ages“. On the other hand – different concepts of „post-industrialism“ reflect upon it – modern society is exposed to substantial changes. They are not the least caused by a general crisis. The growing scarcity of resources which can well mean the end of mass production and mass consumers society, is a crisis which affects the core of modern industrial society, namely the expansive exploitation of nature.

There are two main strategies, how to cope with scarcity of resources: to re-distribute of the given resources or to find new resources. Those could, after all – if material resources come to an end – well be immaterial ones like meaning, symbols and information. Hints for both strategies, a conservative revolution which fixes the gap between haves and have-nots as well as the search for new paradigms, can be found.

The consequences of the first, however, will have their impact on the educational and social systems for many years: whereas the contents and the methods of teaching have definitively be modernised (and are going to be modernised in Eastern Europe right now), there is a change in the global tendencies of educational systems which tend to become more stratified again. Perhaps, in the wake of the changed social policy and social ideology, obligatory school attendance might come more and more under attack. Was the slogan which expressed best the post-Second-World- War policy the „chance for education“, later the „right for education“, in the so called socialist countries even: the „obligation for education“, than the new slogan could become the „privilege of education“.

In the modern sense of the meaning of the word „democracy“, this new tendency is not increasing democratic tendencies in Europe. As for the contents of education in the context of integration – but also disintegration – in Europe, it must be clearly seen that education is not a decisive factor of social change as sometimes was believed. On the other hand, the education system is relatively autonomous and the actors of this system decide if they become the mere transmitters of political programmes, or worse, of atavistic spirits, or if they stay aside, or if education – many pedagogues and scientists hold this to be the most important core task of the education system – is preserving and passing on with its peculiar system-“language“ the message of humanism.