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Angelika Volle

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Integration in the West --  
Disintegration in the East

Dr. Angelika Volle

**INTEGRATION IN THE WEST--  
DISINTEGRATION IN THE EAST**

**DR. ANGELIKA VOLLE  
Europa Archiv  
Bonn  
Federal Republic of Germany**

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## INTEGRATION IN THE WEST--DISINTEGRATION IN THE EAST

### ONE EUROPE - A REALITY WITHIN REACH?

The political division of Europe has certainly been overcome, and we were all witness to it. However, there is as yet nothing like a "common European house," as was Gorbachev's famous saying. Instead, we close our door to migrants from Eastern Europe! In Europe we now have zones of stability and zones of instability quite close to one another. On the one hand, the Europe of Twelve has negotiated a "Treaty on European Union," in which all EC countries promise a peaceful co-existence and an "ever closer union." The fate of this Maastricht Treaty is, however,--even when ratified by all twelve European member countries--still unclear. On the other hand, the dangers of internal disorder, like ethnic quarrels, organized crime, trade with (nuclear) weapons and migration to name but a few--are looming large in Eastern Europe.

Both Eastern and Western Europe are in the process of transformation. Tectonic changes have taken place since 1989. Let me first make clear that I see three different categories of disintegration and integration.

1. When I shall speak of "the East," I understand first all the countries of the former Soviet Union, i.e., Russia, the Ukraine, Byelorussia, but also the Caucasian and Central Asian countries of the former SU. These new countries are certainly in disintegration (the only major institution they are all integrated members of now is the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the CSCE--52 countries now!).
2. Then there are the countries of Central and Southeastern Europe, countries like Poland, Hungary, the Czech and the Slovak Republics, the Baltic States, but

also Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and probably the countries of former Yugoslavia. They have committed themselves to the values and structural principles of Western society. They need and deserve a positive answer by the West. Most of these countries have said they see integration as their main goal, especially integration in the European Community, but also to a certain extent in NATO. However, the initial euphoria about the new freedom in Eastern Europe, including Eastern Germany, has yielded to dissatisfaction and discontent with the economic situation at best, to political and ethnic unrest and civil war in former Yugoslavia at worst.

3. When we in Europe speak of "integration in the West," we mean, of course, the Twelve European Community countries on their way to European Union. However, to be honest, integration in the West is at the moment exposed to certain developments which one might call "disintegration of integration," and here I mean amongst others, the Danish Referenda, the British dithering, the German hesitations to give up the Deutschmark, the navel-gazing on the domestic situation in all European countries, and the lack of leadership.

#### DISINTEGRATION IN THE EAST

*The main challenges:*

1. Ethnic conflict, closely connected with the issue of national sovereignty (see Georgia and Ossetians/Abchasians), Nagornij-Karabach, Tadjikistan, but even ethnic conflict in Russia, i.e., Tatarstan, Chechens/Ingush, etc.
2. The nuclear issue (both with respect to weapons and reactors; the transfer of nuclear know-how and/or scientists to other countries; the difficulties of guarding the nuclear weapons depots, etc.).
3. Islam (see the growing role of Turkey and Iran in the Southern former Soviet republics, but also in Saudi-Arabia) and its "march towards the West."

4. Unemployment/social security (if I may just take the example of Russia, where there are still too many plants which are not economically viable). Making ever so many people redundant--which one needs to do to start a competitive industry and business in Russia--would certainly lead to vast political unrest. However, such an enormous amount of money for a functioning system of social security would be needed that one might as well stop thinking about it!

5. The role of the military. It is highly unpredictable right now, and even though it is not well organized and the top generals do not relate very well to the young ordinary soldiers, the military are suffering in all the new countries of the former Soviet Union because: a) their status has been lowered, b) their housing problems have not been solved, c) their transfer to civil jobs has not yet materialized--on the contrary, the dismantling of the military industrial complex has made whole regions redundant--, and d) they are still needed (or think they are) in many parts of the former Soviet Union, for example to interfere in areas, where they see an emergence of:

6. Russians as national minorities being suppressed (in Latvia and other Baltic states, for example.)

The West is facing one of its greatest political and economic challenges by trying to stabilize the situation in Russia. There is so much "chaos potential" there, one doesn't quite know where to start. How can the West fill the vacuum which Communism left? The present inhabitants of the countries of the former Soviet Union have no experience with integration whatsoever (see the difficulties of forming the Commonwealth of Independent States, the CIS in Minsk in 1992!).

## IS INTEGRATION AN ANSWER?

It is a question of great dispute how much the West can do to actually combat any of these grave problems, and whether the countries of the former Soviet Union, mainly Russia, would also want the help of the West. It seems to me that much of the money which the West has allocated to the East (and Germany has played a major role in providing credits) has not been put to the best of use.

One major goal is to stabilize the difficult internal situation and thus stop disintegration in the post-communist countries. What is certainly needed in the East are:

--Know-how (i.e., Western experts who would teach the Russians and others how to cope with new technology, machinery, etc.--see what the Turks do in Turkmenistan, for example);

--Conditions attached to the money or the credits;

--Joint ventures;

--Scholarships for visits to the West, etc.

The West is already working on this, albeit on a small scale only. If we are teaching the Russians our banking system, our legal system, our school system, we must also be aware that we have a great diversity of such systems in the West--which one is best for Russia--the French, the German, the British, or the US model?

But the West can actually do more for Russia and the other former Soviet Union countries:

1. Help establish a viable transport system--the size of the rails in Russia is different from the one in Europe;
2. Give them help to help themselves;

3. Teach them "know-how";
4. Create a functioning infrastructure, including telecommunication; but most importantly;
5. Open our own Western markets for their goods!

This certainly falls short of integration, but incorporates the possibility of stopping further disintegration!

The West should also in my view--even though this will be very difficult--put less emphasis on supporting personalities (Gorbachev, Yeltsin, Shevardnadse) but encourage the formation of democratic structures, like a democratic party system, e.g.--there is much talk in Russia about democracy, but still few deeds!

#### DISINTEGRATION IN CENTRAL AND SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

Countries like the three Baltic States, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, belong to a different "East." Most people in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have not had any experience of national and political independence in their lifetime. The unfortunate nationalism of the 19th century was transcended in Western Europe by creating supranational institutions to overcome separatism and parochialism. Nationalism in Eastern Europe was eroded and replaced by communism and totalitarianism. This not only transformed the minds of the people, but also kept any aspiration of ethnic groupings for their individual self-determination, for tolerance of different religions, or for the respect of their human rights under tight political control and supervision by the Communist Party--an example of "negative integration" one might call it.

#### *The situation in the Baltic States*

When "freedom" suddenly broke out, the urge to break free from any kind of suppression, be it religious, political, economic or human, proved irresistible.



Priority was given to autonomy. The best examples are the three Baltic states: Each of them, albeit ever so small, did not want to unite with the others, even though they were aware of the political and military threats from their big neighbors. They each want to have their own currency, they each want separate agreements with Russia about the withdrawal of Russian troops from their territory, they each want to formulate "minority rights" for their former occupants. What they really want is decentralization, not integration!

For the Baltic states, just as much as for the Balkan states, the acquisition of "freedom" was first and foremost in their minds. They want to find their national identity and believe that to create a sovereign nation state is the natural order of things. For them, nationalism means patriotism, self-confidence of their people, independence. Integration for many of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe seems to mean assimilation or even subordination--which they do not want and which certainly is not the driving force behind Western European integration.

#### *The situation in the Central European countries*

Both the Warsaw Pact and Comecon disintegrated in 1991; a political, security and economic power vacuum appeared. The three countries, Poland, Hungary and--at the time--Czechoslovakia, did not want EFTA-membership as a first step towards EC-membership. Therefore, on 16 December 1991, Association Agreements (Europe Treaties) were signed between the EC Commission and the three countries. A concrete date of membership is not written into the Treaties. However, all three countries have to accept, in case of full membership, the *acquis communautaire*, i.e., the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty.

In mid-1997, an examination of the state of affairs in these countries will take place, and the question will have to be asked, whether the basic conditions of democracy (i.e., human rights, multi-party system, free elections, etc.) have been fulfilled. Also, the EC Commission will want to find out whether the transition to market economy has been successful, including monetary convertibility, the right to acquire private property, freedom to set up one's own business. The right of free movement of persons (because of the fear of "poverty migration" from East to West) remains restricted.

However, one has to be honest: Membership of the EC is not so much a political but an economic goal of these countries. And it will be very hard to meet: because of the complete break-down of the Eastern market, they are looking for outlets in the West. The West, however, especially the smaller EC countries (Spain!), is reluctant to open its markets for their competitive goods like steel, textiles and agricultural products, as these are the major industrial crisis sectors in the West!

The major mistake in the West is, in my opinion, that we are not telling our own people about the cost involved in the "widening" of the Community, to which the EC has already agreed in principle, and I don't mean money alone. We may actually see a "waking up" of the people when they are told that they will have to be made redundant, because the EC wants to stabilize the democracies in the Central European countries by strengthening their economies, and this means letting their (competitive, cheap) products into the West, thus driving French, Spanish, German and Italian workers out of their jobs!

### *Regional Cooperation*

One suggestion the West has put forward both to the Baltic States and to the Central European states is: Regional Cooperation. Regionalism leads, according to Western European experience, to a diminution of conflicts, helps to overcome national and ethnic conflicts, and should be the first step towards integration into the European Community, which has been pronounced as a foremost political goal of politicians and leading industrialists from these countries. The West is trying to persuade the Central European countries that Regional Co-operation is a much better way towards forming a solidarity community of equal partners, than "going it alone."

The Baltic States have agreed--on certain matters--to co-operate within the Baltic Council, which includes all the countries bordering the Baltic Sea. The Central European countries, however, who were (and are) in competition about integration into the European Community, only reluctantly (and at the express desire of the EC) formed the "Visegrad Triangle." The so-called Visegrad countries, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are still unhappy about the demand/oktroi (as they see it) by the West that they learn how to cooperate amongst themselves first before they actually qualify for integration in the European Community. Co-operation among these former Communist states, which never were an entity in either Comecon or the Warsaw Pact, still does not come naturally to them--and let us be aware of the many ethnic conflicts in each of these countries!

### INTEGRATION IN THE WEST?

The "new world disorder" is not confined to the East. At the moment, the integration process in Western Europe has come to a certain pause, even though

there are ever so many countries that want to join. Having overcome the division of Europe, having lost the greatest driving force of integration, i.e., the threat from the East, the EC is trying to find its new role. Is the European Community, is integration into a European Union really the answer to the problems in the East when the Community is just going through a period of self-doubt, of economic recession, of domestic priorities?

*Widening versus Deepening*

The Treaty of Maastricht was, in a way, the final stone to a development towards deeper integration, which had started with the Single European Act in 1986. French President Mitterrand's answer to German unity was to tie a united Germany as quickly as possible into an Economic and Monetary Union, so that Germany "was irrevocably integrated into the European Community." He pursued the aim of deepening the Community. When the heads of state and government accepted Economic and Monetary Union at Maastricht, especially stage 3, which is to come automatically into effect on January 1, 1999, they also endorsed the deepening of the European Community. In addition, they endorsed Political Union, i.e., a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)--still a vague concept but to be reviewed by all EC countries in 1996. Building European Union was and is the goal of a deepened Community.

Maastricht also expressly specified the enlargement, the widening of the EC, stressing that all applicant countries for membership have to accept the *acquis communautaire* of the Maastricht Treaty. When the members of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) filed their applications, though, they (Austria, Finland, Sweden, Norway) accepted this but made quite clear at the same time that they desired certain opt-outs! Also, Association Agreements between the EC Commission

and the three Central European countries, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia were signed on December 16, 1991--which mention the future accession of these countries as full members of the EC--a further widening! This development of widening rather than deepening was especially endorsed by the British who seem to be fairly keen not to see too deep a European Union, dominated by the French.

For the time being, the momentum in the European Community seems to have been lost, amongst others because of the Danish Referenda, British reluctance to commit themselves unconditionally to the European Community, German fears of losing the D-Mark, etc. Are we witnessing a gradual "disintegration of integration" (as Swiss political scientist Curt Gasteyer has pointed out)? And, can we really have widening and deepening at the same time? The first widening with the EFTA countries will take place pretty soon, before 1996. Will the Central European countries qualify for full membership by the year 2000?

The hardest question we have to put to ourselves in the European Community now is: Do we mean by "integration" still economic and political integration? Can we expect to have a European Political Union of 24 by the end of this century or not? What is probably more likely is a hard core of SIX (concentric circles, geometric variable, multi-speed, two tier) with a common foreign, defence and monetary union, and not a loose Community of 24 plus, as the British want. Germany will certainly be a member of the hard core, together with the French. Integration has served us well!

#### -----NEW WORLD ORDER -NEW WORLD DISORDER?

Integration is certainly a much better prospect than disintegration. However, it seems to me that integration into the European Community cannot be the only answer to disintegration in the East. Regional cooperation, regional

integration are just as much possible solutions as are close association and cooperation agreements, constructive and conditional help from "the West" to "the East," and this means not only Europe, but also the United States and Japan. Most important is the opening up of the Western markets for Eastern products. Otherwise, the antagonisms between East and West may well reappear.

There is certainly no "new world order" yet. Both East and West are trying to adjust their political strategies, their institutions, above all their people to the new situation. There is certainly still too much disorder around. As long as the West Europeans have not gotten their own house in order (i.e., have not defined whether they want to deepen their Community first, or with only some EC member countries, or whether they want to widen it first and water down all political aspects of integration), they cannot offer their model of integration to the East. For its part, the East would be well advised to find out whether it wants to strengthen its national identity or rather strengthen partnership.