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UKRAINE AND EUROPE PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF CO-OPERATION.¹

Grazie! Buon giorno to everybody! Tutto bene!

During these 2 days I enriched myself with a couple of expressions in Italian and I enjoy very much this language. Similarly I enjoy this initiative and the efforts of the organisers of this conference devoted to Ukraine, to be frank, to my beloved subject. The very fact that in this beautiful city of Naples the conference is being devoted to Ukraine and its history is a very encouraging event for me, as a person who devoted much of his efforts and activity in trying to bring Ukraine to the outside world and to make the outside world acquainted with Ukraine, what Ukraine is, what is about it. I listened with great interest to the statements which were just delivered and I am impressed with the deep glance you gave to us.

When I was ambassador to Brussels I had the opportunity to see a map of the 17th century. Such maps are usually accompanied with pictures. The map itself was called "European concert" and in the picture on the top of this map designed by a Dutch author I saw the representatives of European nations sitting around a table, and the picture was like a European conference. To my happiness I found the Ukrainian Cossacks there, sitting with the representatives of other European states. This was in the 17th century! Moreover, in this map the whole land mass which is known now as Ukraine was referred to as "Ucraina. The land of Cossacks" I was trying to find where Russia was on this map. I could not find Russia! There was in the Northeast a small piece of land referred to as "Moscovia". So I just try to remind you where Ukraine was, where Ukraine is, what is the correlation between Ukraine and Russia, who is whose mother, and – needless to say in

¹ Questo testo è stato trascritto da una registrazione su nastro. È possibile che non tutto sia stato riportato in maniera perfetta. Inoltre, il testo è stato pronunciato senza essere letto: nella nostra trascrizione abbiamo mantenuto il suo carattere orale, parlato, senza intervenire stilisticamente. Per gli eventuali errori di inglese ci scusiamo con i lettori.

La relazione è stata tenuta il 22 Novembre 2002: i rimandi agli avvenimenti immediatamente precedenti vanno quindi riferiti a tale data.

this audience – that Ukraine or Kievan Rus' used to be the mother of Russia, not vice versa. The name of Russia appeared at the beginning of the 18th century. These are just a few realities, to start with.

And now: What is going on in Ukraine? I try to give you my vision. Morality and immorality, patriotism and mercantilism, democracy and autocracy, European choice and Eurasian orientation. These are just a few concepts around which the political struggle is taking place in Ukraine now. Who is representing which of those concepts is quite obvious. The current authorities on the top with the President and the political parties which are actually controlled by him: these are the forces which are representing the second type of behaviour and values. The democratic forces led by "Our Ukraine" which I have the honour to represent and to belong to, represent the group of political forces having the first kind of values. So what is going on in Ukraine now?

Until the year 2000, the internal situation of Ukraine was characterised with deep economic crisis and decline, year after year, accumulation of social problems, unpaid pensions, wages, etc. on the one hand, and on the other political stability. This is perhaps a simplification of the situation, but this simplification gives the chance to characterise the situation: deep economic crisis and relevant political stability. Against this internal background, the foreign policy was most successful in the sphere of the statehood building. I remind you: it was the definition of the European Union (EU), that Ukraine is a key factor of European security and stability, that Ukraine is unique and strategic partner of the EU, that Ukraine is a distinctive partner to NATO, that it has managed to establish by the year 2000 five strategic partners, most important among them USA, Poland and Russia. Ukraine became a non-permanent member of the Security Council, which was rather an indication of the merits and achievements of Ukraine in international sphere; that Ukraine became one of the leaders in peacekeeping operations round.

What country are we talking about? We are talking about a country which is the largest in terms of territory in Europe, which is the fifth largest in terms of population in Europe, we are talking about the country which is in the centre of Europe – believe it or not: In the Western city of Rafil there is a stone which was installed there during the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which testifies that this is the centre of Europe. And sometimes in Brussels there are discussions whether Ukraine is a European country or not! So this surprises me a lot, because those in Ukraine who are saying that we, Ukrainians, have to join Europe, and those in Brussels who speak about "we Europeans" meaning 15 nations, are wrong, because Europe geographically are 47 countries, and Ukraine is in the centre of Europe. So, any European scenario has to take in account this

reality. This is not just the negative contest in which Ukraine is mentioned during the most recent times. I would like just to mention that Ukraine belongs to the rare 10 top countries in the world capable of producing the most sophisticated rockets, the most sophisticated out-space equipment, aircrafts – the largest aircrafts are being built in Ukraine. Ukraine possesses shipbuilding industry, electric power energy industry, and also agriculture: the EU, for the first time, expressed a real concern over the grain which appeared from Ukraine in the European market. I just refer to these facts in order for everybody to keep in mind that Ukraine is not only the Chernobyl disaster, it is not only the discredited leader, but it is also a great nation of close to 49 million people.

Now, coming back to our reality, since the year 2000 the situation has changed dramatically. Due to the government of V. Yushchenko, the country and the people for the first time in the history of independent Ukraine started to feel the changes for the better: people started to receive pensions, wages, and all the areas in pensions and wages were covered by the government of V. Yushchenko for just one year of its activity. The economic recovery started. Ukraine demonstrated one of the largest GDP growth in Europe, in combination with industrial and agricultural output growth. Both nationals and foreigners were encouraged. At the same time, this obvious economic recovery was overshadowed by the deep political crisis, which started this same year 2000. Let me remind you about the Gonzage case, the gas scandals, the notorious referendum on so called "people's initiative" at the beginning of the year 2000, the mass protests in 2000-2001, the dismissal of the most successful government in the history of Ukraine, the government of V. Yushchenko (April 2001). These were just a few facts which demonstrate that Ukraine has produced a unique situation: economic recovery and deep political crisis. As a result of fundamental mistakes in foreign policy and internal crisis, the trust to Ukrainian authorities evaporated and the international image of Ukraine decreased considerably.

With such a baggage we approached the election campaign of 2002 (march 31st elections). A few words about the election and the election campaign: it is very unpleasant for me to speak about this, because I use to mention the merits of Ukraine, but I have to recall also the negative sides of our realities. The "administrative resources", so called, which means the use of local and central authorities of their potential in order to give the preference to their candidates during the elections, the pressure exerted on the opponents, on us in "Our Ukraine" and other opponent parties, the intimidation, the non-access to national mass media, the registration of candidates (meaning that the registrations of candidates were cancelled), the use of quarts against the candidates considered – so to say – "non-loyal" to the authorities, the interference of Russian

Federation which was unprecedented before the elections. Thus, the Russian official of the Kremlin, Mr. Voloshin, divided the political forces immediately before the elections into "good" and "bad". Referring to "goods" he mentioned the Communists, the Social-democrats and "For United Ukraine"; the "bad guys" were "Our Ukraine", meaning that the latter was anti-Russian, which is an absolutely false idea; the very purpose of this false messages was to discredit those forces who were actually demonstrating their ability to recover the economy of the country and to keep and defend the national interest of Ukraine.

The Parliament elections of march 21st ended with the overwhelming victory of the representatives of democratic forces, "Our Ukraine", the democratic block which gained 23.56% of votes. The pro-presidential block gained only 11.77%. That is the verdict to the authorities, to the existing executive power in Ukraine. Despite all criminal efforts, the pro-presidential block has completely lost the campaign, having gained only 11.77%, while the representatives of democratic forces have overall gained more than 60% of the votes. Having lost in the open campaign, the representatives of the executive power had initiated the shadow-revision of elections: from the members of Parliament who were elected in the single-vote system, a mega-faction was formed: Ukraine-United Ukraine. It was formed using the methods of bribery and blackmail. Those MP-ies who expressed no desire to join this mega-faction have suffered from administrative financial pressure exerted by the law enforcement agencies and tax administration of Ukraine. The election of the speaker of Parliament was also accompanied by the pressure on the deputies, consequently the Presidium of "Verhovna Rada" was formed by the representatives of those political forces who had the minority during the elections.

The political situation after the Parliament election was far from being a democratic one. "Our Ukraine" block has proposed a certain ways out in this difficult situation, among others things the block suggested to sign the agreement on Common Actions, to be signed by 3 parties: the Parliament, the Government and the President as a guarantee of the implementation. Among other provisions, this agreement stipulated a legislative regulation of the activity of Parliament majority and Parliament minority. The agreement envisaged the establishment of the proportional vote system, and forming the coalition government by the Parliament majority. The proper amendments to the Constitution and Ukrainian laws had to be added according to this agreement, but unfortunately these proposals were rejected by the executive power.

In September "Our Ukraine" tried to establish again a dialogue between the government and the opposition. When this attempt failed, Ukraine saw the widespread opposition actions in September-October. Four major political forces: "Our Ukraine",

Socialist Party, Y. Tymoshenko's block and Communists have united to show the disapproval and the rejection of the existing situation in Ukraine. After those events another coercive process was taken in the Parliament: the creating of an artificial pro-presidential majority, formed by some little bit more than 230 members of Parliament. Nevertheless, the representatives of this majority declared the desire, despite of the cohesive matters of formation, to form the coalition government, and even to propose the nominee of the candidate for Prime Minister. On November 16, President Kuchma sent into the resignation the government of Anatolij Kinakh, and nominated instead of him the candidate V. Yanukhovich, the Head of the Presidential administration in Donetsk region. Yesterday there were elections in Ukrainian Parliament and this candidate was supported by 234 votes, thus meaning that, since yesterday we have a new trend in the history of independent Ukraine, a new Prime Minister V. Yanukhovich, which is another set back for Ukraine, for Ukrainian people and for Ukraine's European choice.

The projection of international situation on foreign policy and the international situation of Ukraine: How does it look like? Just a few observations. The image of Ukraine apparently is the lowest in the history of independent Ukraine. The reasons: The first reason is the discredited head of State, and I refer to some examples – tape scandals, the Kolchuga case, the non-democratic methods of rule and the attempts to violate the balance of power, to try to control other branches of power, the Parliamentary and judicial powers, and the last case in which the head of State further discredited himself, that is his desire and actual trip to Prague despite of a very clear message he received from the North Atlantic Council, that he was not invited to the Prague summit. What is very important in this regard? I would like to say that fortunately the leading politicians in Europe are not associating the discredited head of State with Ukraine and Ukrainian people: this is a very important message to the Ukrainian people.

How I see the relationship between Ukraine and EU. Very briefly: On the part of EU we are still observing the lack of adequate conceptual answer to Ukraine's European aspirations. Let us look at Ukraine strategically, non at this current situation: this is strategically a very important country for enlargement of democracy, civilisation and prosperity in Europe. Recently we have witnessed from the EU the idea of so-called "special neighbourhood status" to Ukraine. From my point of view this is a step back in our relationship, in comparison with the status Ukraine enjoyed before as a unique strategic partner to the EU. And taking into account that this status is going to be proposed in company with outsiders of the European integration process like Moldova and Belarus, this is obviously a very negative signal we are receiving from the EU. As a head of the Parliamentary Committee on the European Integration we have a rather

positive response from the representatives of the parliamentary branch of the EU, that is the European Parliament, and I have reasons to claim this because just two weeks ago in Brussels we had a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee of the Co-operation comprising Euro-parliamentarians and the representatives of the Ukrainian Parliament. To give you my very brief prognosis, I claim that it would need from 4 to 6 years for Ukraine to become associated member of the EU, provided that we will put in order our house and re-establish democracy in Ukraine. Yesterday, again on the initiative of our Committee, the Parliament voted a resolution which proclaimed for the first time in the history of independent Ukraine, that Ukrainian Parliament is in favour of Ukrainian membership in NATO. Without any fear I would say that this is a historic decision of the Ukrainian Parliament, and this decision has been taken on the backstage of a discredited leader and of a deepening crisis in our relationship to NATO. At the same time our Parliament has demonstrated that there are positive forces in the Ukrainian political spectrum.

Let me remind you that there were reasons for our partners in NATO not to believe Ukraine, because since the year 2000 there was a deviation from the cause of the Euro-Atlantic integration, which was changed to the term Euro-Atlantic co-operation, which is – as they say in Odessa – "dve bolshie raznitsy" (i.e.: two big differences). Finally, at the beginning of this year, the authority's retent to this foreign policy course, the course of Euro-Atlantic integration, and May 23rd there was a confirmation: for the first time the authorities announced the readiness to join NATO in future. This was a very important decision, the reaction was rather cool because of our internal problems, because of Kolchuga case and our leader's behaviour against the Prague summit. Today we expect the signing of 2 very important documents which would put the Ukrainian-NATO relationships train into the rails of actual membership. These are the documents "Action Plan" and "Target Plan", 2 documents which are going to be signed to-day. Provided that we will come back to the road of democracy, we may expect Ukraine joining NATO – as I said – in some 4-6 years.

Russia: Russia was mentioned here today and yesterday. It is a very important geopolitical reality for Ukraine. Russia is our immediate neighbour, and not a single country in Europe is that interested like Ukraine in having a predictable, prosperous and democratic Russia. So we are interested in having a very good, neighbourly relationship with this country. At the same time, one cannot but notice that during this crisis in relationships between Ukraine and the Western community we are witnessing the attempts by the Russian authorities to use the momentum and to gain the profits. One of the examples of this profits is the signing of a treaty on gas-transportation system, and the

creation of a gas-transportation consortium between Ukraine and Russia. As a people's deputy I sent a request to the government demanding explanation. The Parliament supported my request and I expect the answer. Obviously I expect that this answer will not change my characteristic of this accord as being anti-constitutional and unlawful, and as such to be cancelled by the Constitutional Court of Ukraine.

(Unfortunately, due to a technical failure, we are not able to reproduce the last part of Mr. Tarasjuk'a speech. We consider it useful to write down here the discussion which followed, where he explains again some of his ideas about Ukraine and its international situation).

DISCUSSION

Prof. Andrea Graziosi asks Ambassador Tarasjuk:

What is the assessment of Russian policy? Is there a coherent Russian policy towards Ukraine, or do they have alternative strategies, or they have just one and make their mind on this? How do you assess the Russian intentions towards Ukraine? I have to say – this is a very free consideration – I agree that Ukraine needs internal reforms first, but Mrs. Wolczuk has a very good point: Europe is making now its mind about the enlargement, and once the mind is done, it will be done. Internal problems are important, but this is the moment to press very much from outside, and Ambassador Tarasjuk is conscious of this. You cannot break the neat now, because if they decide that the hard frontier is in Poland – what is apparently being done – then to change the decision of the EU may take a long time, it is not very easy, it is very important to push now.

Ambassador Tarasjuk answers:

There is a coherent policy of Russia towards Ukraine, and this policy in a few words is: to return Ukraine, to draw it in a kind of union similar to the former Soviet Union if it is not feasible and attainable – and this is the case – to establish domination over Ukraine. This is the strategy of Russia, this strategy was known, and there was an attempt of this strategy in September 1995. I am basing my judgement on Russian policy on Ukraine out of experience, because I had to deal with Russia since 1991, and was involved into the solution of unprecedented questions like the fate of nuclear weapons, the Black Sea fleet issue, the heritage and the assess of the former Soviet Union, and it was very difficult to negotiate with Russians. But what is the difference and the problem? We were talking about the official policy of Russia, there is another level of problem we have in Russia, that is the attitude of the political elite: with some very few exceptions the predominant majority of Russian political elite cannot live with the idea of independent Ukraine, the imperial temptations are very deeply rooted in Russian elite, and this is the real problem. So we have to work. I think that it is possible to recuperate from this illness and I think that gradually, year after year, with the good messages from Ukraine, this is the best medicine against the imperial temptations within Russian political elite. Allow me to add just 2 comments about the previous statements. About the possible partition or division of Ukraine: I would like to refer to the report of the CIA which was issued in 1993, actually it predicted that in 2-3 years Ukraine was going to be divided because of the differences between East and West, South and North. Approximately in this same year the Russian Ambassador was floating among his colleagues in Kiev trying to persuade them not to invest into the premises for embassy buildings in Kiev because Ukraine was going to be divided and there will no longer be an independent Ukraine. Surprisingly this 2 "prognoses" appeared from both Washington and Moscow. Fortunately our own history and future development proved that these predictions were wrong and non justifiable. About the problems and the perception in Brussels about the weakness of institutions in Ukraine, this is the problem, that Brussels looks at Ukraine's weak institutions, not in

terms of geography and history, and of its importance. What about the war-devastated countries in the Balkans? What about their institutions? I think that this is one of the examples of double standards which is demonstrated by Brussels, seeing no difficulties in very weak, economically weak countries of the Balkans as future members, and not recognising this even hypothetical possibility for Ukraine. So, I agree with you, it looks like the EU is being politically motivated against Ukraine, rather than economically motivated, and I would say even further that the Americans in their Ukraine policy are much more Europeans than the Europeans are, I mean in terms of EU.

Prof. K. Wolczuk:

I would like to come back to the question "Ukraine-EU relations": what should come first? and what sort of reform standards should come before any sort of membership? I think this is very much a "chicken and egg" situation, and my colleagues of European Studies break their heads to find out what kind of impact has the whole conditionality of the EU made on the candidate states in East-Central Europe. One of the most frequent arguments is that Europe very much congratulates itself of stimulating reform in East Central Europe whereas actually the countries answer: "Yes, we needed and very much wanted the reforms, but the EU stimulated us a bit more to carry them out". One of the latest arguments I came across when it was about countries as Poland, the Czech Republic or Hungary, was that actually the internal impulse stimulation was great enough to bring about the change. On the contrary, in South Eastern countries like Romania or Bulgaria, it was very much conditionality which had a much greater impact. So, from that point of view Ukraine would obviously fall into the second category. In some cases everything looks really paradoxical. As an example: in July 2002, in the EU summit, the Ukrainian delegation asked for the Copenhagen criteria to be applied to Ukraine, and the EU said: "No, no, we will not this". If you look at this, the whole looks quite paradoxical: Ukraine says "please, say that we should fulfil the criteria", and the EU answers "no, we do not want you to be democratic"! And obviously the EU does not hold horses when it is interested in any particular country. A very clear cut message regarded the potential election of Sl. Mechar in Slovakia: we could say, it was almost an interference in sovereign politics of the country, but nevertheless the EU expressed very clearly what would be the consequences if Mechar was to be elected. So, from that point of view, I think this is very much a mixed message, it has basically both the external and the external push. Ideally they should coincide. But also I am trying not to be negative. The situation is open-ended. Let us not to be too negative about EU policy towards Ukraine, because the EU actually – let's not make a mistake here – EU has never been happy to admit new members, there is always something on the way, it always created obstacles. The only time when Europe was really open was in the early 1960s, and then it made what is now perceived as a mistake, with Turkey, and with Greece it was very generous, and Greece, it is believed, has not really benefited from it to the extent it could have. It's difficult, but it concerns not only Ukraine, and the current negotiations and the protracted enlargement very much indicate the difficulties involved. Speaking about the tunnel and the little light, it is admitted in the EU, that we have not a policy, but then we will have the new member states, countries like Poland which will promote Ukraine's relation

within the EU. This is one positive element. On the other hand, in private conversations, euro-bureaucrats may say "Poland is like Spain: Catholic, Poor and Large, but actually it will have a much lesser role to play". So, there is a contradiction between saying "yes, it will be up to Poland", but then actually the role of Poland is going to be apparently very limited. But this is potentially the role that not only Poland, but also Hungary and Slovakia have been interested in, but there is the possibility they will deliver that greater push.

Another factor, the institutional factor could be drawn attention to. The argument is: the Euro-bureaucracy is much too much too small to deliver all the tasks it is supposed to. Nevertheless, there is going to be an army of bureaucrats, who are going to be without any kind of mission. And I heard from several people from Brussels: "Yes, it is the enlargement of Europe which is the big challenge". So hopefully, when the enlargement will become a fait accompli, these bureaucrats will look for another mission, like any institution will look for a way to justify its existence. From that point of view institutions may also act as a stimulus to a greater interest in Ukraine.