

The necessity to discuss European integration implies the pre-existence of certain undesirable divisions. All those who appeal for an integration effort should first address the issue of the existing divisions—their kinds, origins, and resistance or susceptibility to integration. We cannot simply march around calling for integration on the left and on the right, possessed by a kind of pan-European euphoria. We cannot lose sight of the aims of the integration and union, which in turn require definition. Developing our knowledge of and making an attempt to understand the scars, at times even still open wounds, of Europe would seem to constitute the most credible proof of our love for Europe as (however weird it may sound) a "supra-national homeland" and provide testimony of a certain European patriotism. It will not suffice to turn our backs on the "demons of the past" and face an often unclear vision of the future. The divisions in Europe are by no means accidental or due to

Between East and West

The concepts of European integration, a united Europe, and European unity, inflected in various ways, have become a permanent part of and an important factor in current public discourses on a whole plethora of subjects. Europe and its integration are either a focal point of the discussion or linger in the background providing an indispensable context. Europe and European unity are in some respects obvious, comprehensible, and desirable, even for those who are sceptical about European integration in its present shape.

Borders of Europe—Borders in Europe

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Thus one could claim that the uniting of Europe should be mostly about overcoming the divides along the East-West axis, as they seem the deepest and most serious. If we assume that the borders which as little as thirteen years ago constituted "the iron curtain" mark the division of Europe, then what we are dealing with on the eastern side is a region commonly referred to as Central-Eastern Europe or Central and Eastern Europe (it should be noted that this is an issue which poses considerable interpretation problems). On the other hand, if the division criterion we adopt are cultural and religious factors, we end up with a division into Western Europe (shaped according to the western Christian tradition) and Eastern Europe (under the overwhelming influence of the eastern Christian, orthodox, and Byzantine culture). Few

The most distinct and temporarily relevant axes of divisions in Europe are on the one hand "the iron curtain," or whatever is left of it, possibly along the western border of the former USSR with the exception of the Baltic states, and on the other—the threshold area marked by the closely set groups of both Catholic and Protestant centres of worship. The first division is of a political and military nature while the second has cultural and religious characteristics. The true Europe—according to those thinking in stereotypes—lies to the west of one or the other of the boundaries. One way or another, it is true that dividing Europe into western and eastern parts is definitely much more common than the division by parallels which dominates in analyses of international relations in the global domain.

An excellent lecture on the history of European divisions can be found in Norman Davies' work entitled *Europa* (Kraków, 1999). Adopting and applying cultural, religious, political and economic criteria, he lists more than ten various axes of divisions in Europe, mostly dividing the subcontinent into eastern and western parts. He notes that what seems most irritating [in the discourse] is the persistent tendency to ascribe the attribute of "Europeanness" only to the western part of Europe. Unfortunately such reductions and simplifications—says Davies—are often expressed by scholars and politicians, i.e. the people who to a large extent mold public opinion. Pope John Paul II speaks along the same lines, saying that "The tendency to think and speak only in 'western' terms is characteristic of individuals and groups who represent that part of Europe, though not only of them."

simple twists of history. They are created by human beings and marked with human fear and suffering.

The proponents of the integration of Europe in the broadest sense of the word first and foremost have in mind "eliminating the division" into Western and Eastern Europe. In their opinion the common European home starts at the coast of the Atlantic and ends in the Ural mountains. This definition of Europe is not, however, commonly accepted—overcoming the division into the East and the West is a difficult task and by definition must be left to successive generations. Contemporary man is above all impatient and demands immediate results—measurable and quantifiable in terms of growing economic affluence. It is by no means rare to hear people grumbling about the Eastern Europeans and their poverty and lack of resourcefulness, often underlined with the conviction that to an extent—hard to say how great—they have themselves to blame for their situation. On the other side, as a reaction, we hear opinions similar to that expressed by Andrzej Stasiuk, who notes that presently "what has replaced the commonwealth of fates (of the nations of Central and Eastern Europe), experiences, cultures and mentalities is the rat race towards the Brussels table. I am sick—says Stasiuk—of the whole circus and doublespeak about the European values which integration is supposed to be based on. According to what they used to tell me in school, the foundation of the Europe that I know is Christianity, which invites (or is supposed to invite) to its table the hungry, not just those who know how to use a knife

Understanding the Essence of the Divisions

political scientists have problems identifying Western Europe, whereas drawing the borders of Central and Eastern Europe on the map poses considerable problems. I believe that we can assume here that the cultural and religious division into Western and Eastern Europe is much more serious, clearer, and deeper than the political division into Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe. This results from the considerable differences in the organisation of social, political, and economic life which arose as a consequence of the influence of different culture-shaping centres (Rome and Byzantium). This division often manifests itself in contempt and envy, open or concealed, and mutual reproach over the harms of the past, as well as in objective factors such as the level of affluence, development of civic institutions etc. Someone applying only an economic criterion could, quite rightly, claim that Europe is divided into the rich West, a moderately affluent Centre, and the poor or even very poor East.

and fork and wear decent aftershave. If Europe really is what it wants to appear, i.e. a commonwealth, it would have acknowledged the burning and bleeding Balkans to be its integral part, while in fact what it did was treat the Balkans as a lethal disease, threatening its beautiful body" (*Przełom Polityczny*, No. 50). To some extent Stasiuk obviously caricatures the efforts made by the Central and Eastern European states aimed at joining the states of the highly developed West, nevertheless his intuition seems valuable as it makes us face the question of the kind of Europe we want and the vision of its future we have in our minds. When we speak of integration, do we mostly mean a broadening of the European market? What should be the main motive in overcoming the divisions between the East and the West of Europe, and how do we actually go about it? Finally, aren't "the unionists" perhaps obsessed with the idea of moving the borders of "the West" eastwards and eliminating the rich cultural heritage of that very East?

What seems in the deepest sense to sanction the existing division of Europe is neither a political factor, i.e. the tension between affluence and poverty, nor a political one, i.e. the tension between stable democracies and uncertain political systems and democratic façades. It is not even a religious factor, i.e. the tension between Catholicism and the Orthodox church. It is about something completely different which to some extent remains related to all the factors mentioned above. It is about (and this is a cliché) understanding and a genuine, non-superficial respect for one another. Unfortunately, as the contemporary discourse on the future of Europe and the implementation of the idea of a united Europe have been dominated by petty accountants from various provenances, poor countries have been allotted the role of needy relatives asking for alms. This is the way in which they are perceived in Germany, France, and Great Britain. Asked about their associations with Romania, most will speak about the incredible poverty and filth, and maybe the legendary Count Dracula. Few will mention Mircea Eliade, one of the most distinguished anthropologists in the world, Cioran, or many other philosophers and writers. Are we really trying to understand another nation if we use words such as "poor" and "filthy"? The failure to understand, and even worse the reluctance to understand, are the widest gaps. What results from that are stereotypes, disrespect, and condescension towards other nations, viewing them from the position of the better organised, the wiser, and the richer.

Norman Davies, already cited in this paper, says that "the true sin, committed by almost all descriptions of the 'Western civilisation' lies in the fact that they offer is an idealised (...) depiction of the past events. Not only do we attribute all the good to the West, denouncing 'the East' at the same time, but also the picture of the West is not fair: some textbooks give an indelible impression that everyone in 'the West' was a genius, a philosopher, a pioneer, a democrat or a saint, and that it was a world populated exclusively by Platos and Skłodowska-Curies". Reducing the concept of Europe to its western, rich, and well developed part is a contradiction of one of the principle sources of Europeanism—

A discourse dominated by economic analyses and various rankings of political or economic growth, according to which the political readiness of the Candidate Countries is assessed, is by no means adequate. What seems most unpleasant is the fact that on the one hand the rich states of the West comment on and evaluate the economic and political progress of their "poor relatives", giving tips and good advice, and on the other hand they make little effort to understand their mentality. The nations of Eastern Europe are expected to present their values themselves and advertise what they are in front of the Western European audience. Western Europeans want knowledge of the eastern culture served up on a silver tray, preferably attractively packaged. And this is where the problem lies, as what they get as a result consists of cheap fake folklore and colourful easy to swallow gadgets presented to the mob at various international fairs.

The concept of a border is an important element of the discourse on the future of Europe. What seems to be the problem is the fact that borders are perceived as something to be almost ashamed of, at least by those who dream about a common and united Europe. The issue can be analysed in two respects: the external borders of the future Europe as a political project and the borders inside a united Europe.

As far as the first issue is concerned, there seems to be no common agreement concerning the future shape of the European Union borders. Some see room in the organisation for no more than a few countries associated with Central Europe, while others are ready to accept the membership of certain countries of Eastern Europe, e.g. Ukraine, Bulgaria, or Romania, with the reservation that this should only happen in some far and actually undefined

The European Charter of Border and Cross-border Regions, adopted in 1981 and amended in 1995, begins with the phrase: "Borders are the 'scars' of history". Political borders—in the light of this document—seem to be a consequence of the appearance of modern national states, which originally believed in the idea of effective separation from the neighbouring states. This was

Political Borders

On the other hand in the discourse on the internal borders of the future united Europe a certain confusion of concepts may be observed. Different, often contradictory, characteristics and traits are attributed to borders. The confusion generally seems to stem from, firstly, the lack of an ultimate definition of the sense in which we discuss borders—political and economic or social and cultural? and secondly from the reduction of a political border to its disintegrating function, which seems to be considerably inaccurate as political borders also have activating functions.

Not long ago we witnessed a shameful dispute between the Polish government and the European Union concerning the degree of tightness of our eastern border, related to the near prospect of Poland's membership in the EU. The dispute was not hyped in the media, which was no wonder as the topic did not seem too attractive to them. The EU wants the borders as tight as possible and the procedures governing eastern border crossings to be as rigorous as possible, demanding that Poland introduce visas for CIS citizens without delay. Poland, on the other hand, trying to maintain good relations with its neighbours and protect the still fragile results of trans-border cooperation, opts for a "preferential option" for CIS citizens (especially the Ukrainians and Belarussians). Consequently we have different visions of the role of the external border of the EU. A certain tension in the relations between Poland and EU could be observed especially when it turned out that the EU side was planning to staff some of the border crossings with German border specialists, which in Poland was perceived as distrust of the professionalism and honesty of our border control services. The question of where the future external border of the EU should be and of its character (i.e. permeability) remains open and a spectacular compromise here should not really be expected.

A characteristic feature of European political borders is their still high level of diversity. On the one hand we are dealing with completely permeable borders in the West of Europe, where the most you come across is a speed limit and a notice welcoming a tourist in the new country. Borders are mere symbols here, although signals of either an external danger, e.g. Arab terrorism, or an internal one, e.g. mad cow disease, may quickly remind us of the borders' barrier functions and a traveller may be surprised and annoyed by the interrogation of the border control officials, whose existence he had managed to forget entirely. The disappearance of

manifestation of "the European paradox", post-border areas, a product of many centuries of divisions and a borders, should come true, there will always be border of of the inhabitants of our continent dream of, i.e. a smaller number of borders is not an automatic, easy, or fast process. Even if what many history of European nations and their aspirations. Liquidation of will always exist, if only as monuments documenting the complicated will be ever able to eliminate them from the lives of societies. They carry the trait of disintegration, it would be naive to think that we crossing is by definition suspicious. Though political borders do borders with low permeability, where everyone deciding to make a divide. Everything depends on their character—on whether they Political borders do not, however, have to disintegrate and places, with warning notices and threats on every side.

would go for their Sunday walks overnight became dangerous turned into strongholds, and rivers along the banks of which people annihilation of multiethnic societies. Cities bursting with life were—especially where they led to the disintegration of families or the interests of local communities, became monuments of wrongdoings borders, often set arbitrarily and without much regard for the state. Thankfully, the process has not caused them to disappear. State communities consisting of regions and national groups. centuries resulted in the division of many European historic The creation of political borders in the Europe of the 19th and 20th the areas adjacent to a border.

borders tighter were often accompanied by planned destructions of border was its "crossing difficulty". Actions aimed at making perceived as potential frontlines. What was characteristic of a good generated by its protective, defensive function. Borders were a given territory. Thus the traditional concept of a border was designed to make possible the efficient exercise of independence in

external borders is, however, accompanied by the phenomenon of treating borders as an instrument of "cultural defence". There is a clear relation between borders and identity, regardless of whether the identity is national, regional, or local. On the other hand, it is hard not to notice the huge difference between western European borders and those in Eastern Europe. Here we will often come across the necessity to queue for hours on end awaiting the control, and encounter sluggishness and meticulousness on the part of passport and customs' control officers, which often surprises western tourists (unaware that it's supposed to be stimulus for them to make a pecuniary contribution). In Eastern Europe border crossing is always an experience. A traveller should never fear that he might forget which country he is leaving or entering. He is informed about it on a current basis either by stamps put in his passport, inquisitive questioning (or rather interrogation), or the necessity to pay some incomprehensible fees ("disinfection fees", "ecological" or "climatic fees"). Border crossing points in Eastern Europe are often a mixture of an obnoxious demonstration of national pride and bribery. In certain states of the region there even exists an unwritten rule according to which a customs officer must not keep his job for more than a few months or years; after that, as a well-off person, he should give up his position to make room for others. Borders in Central Europe are in fact a result of these two tendencies. Not a penny less, not a penny more.

The most remarkable example of the importance of borders in Central and Eastern Europe is the Danube River, which during the times of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy used to constitute a travel route joining the countries of the region and now serves as a natural border which the nations turn their backs on. This can be clearly observed in the far from perfect Austria-Slovak relations, the chilly Slovak-Hungarian and Yugoslavia-Croatian relations, and in the traditionally tense relations between Romania and Bulgaria. What seems a perfect indicator of the state of neighbourly relations is the number of border-crossing points, and above all the number of cross-border bridges. It is hard to consider a situation in which there is no more than one bridge per hundreds of kilometres of coastline as normal (until recently there was only one bridge on the 150-kilometre Slovak-Hungarian border, in Kormana-Komarom, and one on the 465-kilometre Romanian-Bulgarian border, in Giurgiu-Ruse). The 165-kilometre Romanian-Ukrainian border does not have a single bridge. The argument about high costs does not really apply here, as it sounds absurd when one takes into

Cultural borders are of primary importance compared to contemporary, linear political borders. They have existed since the beginning of time—since the time man started to introduce order into his living space. The way of organizing and feeling space is one of the most rudimentary human characteristics and one of the most significant cultural traits. The division of space and the way in which it is performed is a record of the relation between man and his territory. The borders between local or religious communities etc. are an important identity-defining factor. Quoting the Slovak

Apart from political borders there also are social and cultural ones, which sometimes overlap with national state borders but are by no means identical. Such cultural and social borders are countless in Europe. Thanks to globalisation political borders are opening up more and more to facilitate trade and the movement of people; while at the same time we can observe a revival of ethnicity and regionalisms leading to redefinition and strengthening of cultural borders. Race, language, religion, regional feelings, or historical memory operate as demarcation lines to define the identities of the individuals accepted in a given group and determine those who are excluded from it for being unable to adopt their cultural patterns.

Cultural Borders

account the prospects over a few decades, especially if long-term benefits are factored in. The Danube thus seems to be an unpopular river, one where the societies living along it seem to have forgotten the eternal truth that rivers teach us: that ultimately everything becomes one great whole—diverse perhaps, but indivisible. The Balkan writer Ivo Andrić was right to observe that bridges are “more important than houses, street lamps, and temples, needed and useful, purposefully built, belonging to everyone, and are more sustainable than other constructions, doing nothing but good”. Houses, after all, are built for a few generations of family use, temples for dozens of generations to serve a religious community, whereas bridges are erected for the generations of our own people as well as strangers. It is worth noting that thanks to the persuasion and financial assistance of European institutions the construction of temporary bridges on the Danube River was eventually started. One such bridge was recently opened at Sturov-Estergom (a Slovakian–Hungarian border crossing) and another is being built on the Romanian–Bulgarian border and will join Calafat and Vidin.

Political, economic, social, and cultural borders can be to a greater or lesser extent experienced empirically. They are indicated by, firstly, posts and barriers, wire entanglements and observation positions, and secondly by the various ways of expressing feelings, both at play and at work, and opinions concerning the role of an individual. Borders generated in and thrive in human minds constitute a separate topic, as it is impossible to set those borders in carefully guarded state borders. Such borders are manifested by stereotypes, biases, and an unwillingness to understand. Whereas political borders, as well as social and cultural ones, may play a positive role as forms of space organisation, the borders in our minds can only lead to the rejection of those who think differently, make their living differently, or celebrate and play differently. John Paul II has drawn our attention to this issue in a particular way. In 1997 in Gniezno he warned against the often unconscious process of building new borders: "Can we not say that after one visible wall was torn down, another one, invisible, was revealed to an even greater extent—a wall that still divides our continent and goes through people's hearts? It is built from fear and aggression as well as lack of understanding for peoples of different origin, skin colour, and a weakening of sensitivity to the value of human life and every man's dignity. Even the undoubted economic, political, and social achievements cannot obscure its existence. Its shadow is cast over the whole of Europe. We are a long way from the genuine integration of the European continent."

Borders in "Hearts and Minds"

Borders, after all, do not only divide. They also facilitate contact between various cultural, political, and economic systems. Cultural borders are in a sense indispensable and irremovable, as they help identify and situate the identity of one culture through its encounter with another; they are positive because they give real shapes and dimensions to identity. This statement applies equally to the so-called open or pluralist identity, as it is more about crossing than removing borders.

publicist Juraj Alner one could say: "We want borders. Borders marked by communities, languages, morality, democracy, science, freedom. We want neighbours who are different from us. We want to understand them and learn from them."

In the context of the above remarks the current discourse on the unification of Europe, on overcoming the next borders and barriers on the way to complete unity, is worth reconsidering. What borders are we actually discussing? Are we talking about the common market, shared consumption of greater quantities of goods, produced together, and common European propaganda picnics, or are we talking about overcoming the barriers that close us to universal values, over which Europe has no monopoly even though it undoubtedly contributes to their creation and propagation? The way we define the appeal to cross borders will have considerable impact on our condition as Europeans, Poles, and individuals.

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