

Attila Pók

European History – Still a Challenge

Following an initiative of Professor Jörn Rüsen, a small team of social scientists was invited by the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (KWI) in Essen and the Hamburg based Körber Foundation to look into the problems of European historical consciousness in five conferences between 1998 and 2000. The participants included 10-15 scholars at each conference from Britain, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Holland, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Sweden and the results were published in three volumes of a series called *Eustory Shaping European History*¹. This paper gives a short summary of the most important assumptions and conclusions of the project as perceived in hindsight and in light of close to ten years of experience. The reflections that are given here are combined with provocations to serve as food for thought on the feasibility of writing, remembering and teaching European history. The aims and methods of the project did not allow for a thorough empirical approach to all issues under discussion. We aimed instead to present what we defined as key areas of the problems related to European historical consciousness. Something similar applies to this essay, which also brings up points for consideration and, if possible, for further investigation.

Undertaking History

The key concept of the project was *historical consciousness*. It soon turned out that whereas this is a widely used concept in Germany (*Geschichtsbewusstsein*), Scandinavia and the Benelux countries it occurs much less frequently in historical discourse in other European countries.² The term refers less to the past than to memory as part of 'historical culture'. It is traditionally rooted in national history and played a decisive role in shaping modern national identities in Europe. During the late 1990s, at a time when different agendas for the enlargement of the European Union (deepening versus widening) triggered endless debates, the participants of the project started out by assuming that, in manner analogous to the process of political and economic integration, Europe's collective historical memory can also

¹ 1. Sharon Macdonald (ed.), *Approaches to European Historical Consciousness. Reflections and Provocations*. Edition Körber Stiftung, Hamburg, 2000.

2. Joke van der Leeuw-Roord (ed.), *History for Today and Tomorrow. What Does Europe Mean for School History?* Edition Körber Stiftung, 2001.

3. Attila Pók, Jörn Rüsen, Jutta Scherer (eds.), *European History: Challenge for a Common Future*. Edition Körber Stiftung, Hamburg, 2002.

² Sharon Macdonald and Katja Fasser: "An Introduction", in Sharon Macdonald (ed.), *Approaches to European Historical Consciousness. Reflections and Provocations*. Edition Körber Stiftung, Hamburg, 2000, 10.

be constructed generation by generation and will in turn reduce the intra-European conflict potential and strengthen Europe's place in the world. We interpreted history (in Bodo von Borries' words) not as a documentation of "past realities" but as "an attempt to orientate one's own life in the experience of changes in time". In the course of the analysis of this key concept we came to realize that 'undertaking history', as we called the ways this historical consciousness can be shaped, has at least four levels: the activities of the professionals within our 'guild'; the uses of history in political representation; collective memory; and teaching, education. We assumed that as the European integration process widens and deepens, these four levels would get closer and closer to each other and would share a European horizon, a European approach.

A provocative observation I would like to interject here is that during the last decade these four levels of 'undertaking history' have been moving in totally different directions. On the one hand, the mainstream profession has been heading towards specialized research projects in different areas of social science and in doing so has been nervously avoiding normative traits of any kind. On the level of political rhetoric, on the other hand, in spite of frequently heard passionate statements on shared European values elections to the European Parliament are still fought over national issues and 'European public opinion', a 'European demos' have not yet taken shape. Collective memories and education are also mainly nation centred. I think that we were basically right when we assumed that the European context of national history can be integrated into teaching only step by step, even though we were mistaken about the pace of this process, which we expected to be faster. Children widen the horizon of their perceived world gradually. It is therefore essential to strike the right balance for every age group. This is why it is so difficult to adapt any one book on European History to different age-groups and different countries. This seems still to be sholding true today, as is documented, in Volume Two in our Eustory series. The conclusion that one has to come to in this respect seems obvious to me while to others it might appear as another provocation is this: different books are needed for different age-groups to complement national history teaching.

European History – Global History

The last decade has also brought about a new challenge: numerous thought-provoking debates have taken place on the relationship between European history and global history. Most of these controversies relate to Dipesh Chakrabarty's challenging book,³ especially concerning the author's point on 'asymetric ignorance.' Chakrabarty uses this concept to

³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, 2001.

argue that European social scientists can ignore the work of non-Europeans without their competence being questioned. Theoretical skeletons are always substantially based on European scholarship. In this sense Europe is not a region but a modernization paradigm. 'Subaltern history' (as developed by Chakrabarty) proposes to split modernity into several equally valuable⁴ modernities. Another key concept is 'heterotemporality', which refers to a state of affairs in which modern and non-modern social relations coexist side by side both outside and inside Europe. Powerful statements of radical *Historismus* are loud: the notion that periods and peoples can only be justly appreciated according to their own standards rather than by the norms of a universal narrative of progress. In a step undertaken partly in the form of a dialogue with Chakrabarty, a 'Call for a History on Equal Terms' has recently been voiced by Carola Dietze,⁵ where the concept of modernity remains ostensibly applicable minus its normative traits. In the light of the experiences of our project, I do not think that the concept of modernity can be reasonably deprived of its normative traits. This is something like decaf coffee or non-alcoholic beer or fake luxury goods: it looks like and to some extent it tastes like the 'real thing' – without containing the essence, it is just an empty shell. Deconstructing the concept of modernity, i. e. historicizing it, might certainly "make room for the plurality of life-worlds"⁶ but will definitely not be lacking normative traits. Even if we add to the traditional list of 'modern' ideas and institutions – democracy, the rule of law, urbanisation, nationalism, liberalism, socialism, capitalism, industrialisation, high percentage of literacy and university graduates in a given society, etc. – social practices that have prevailed in recent Indian history or the belief in gods, spirits and other supranatural phenomena that enhance social cohesion in various parts of the world today, the concept still remains normative. As in Ranke's time, radical *Historismus* today points out that "periods and peoples can only be justly appreciated according to their own standards rather than the norms of a universal narrative of progress".⁷ The members of the 'historians' guild', the professional historians, certainly stand to profit from this radical *Historismus*, as it encourages extensive research in all fields of life during all time-periods and may appear to be non-normative. Politically, educationally 'usable' European history and collective memory, however, can hardly avoid being normative. Whatever we think of the principles of *Historismus*, the experiences of the project lead us to conclude that respect for human dignity can in principle be accepted as a universal norm. Still, in radically collectivist, populist, nationalist thought of the kind that is in evidence in current European debates this is refuted on the practical level: the human dignity of the 'other' is frequently called into question. My provocation in this respect: an educationally and politically unavoidable normativity is hard to

⁴ Carola Dietze, "Toward a History on Equal Terms: A Discussion of Provincializing Europe". *History and Theory* 47 (February 2008) 69-84.

⁵ Carole Dietze, *op. cit.*

⁶ Carole Dietze, *op. cit.* p. 78.

⁷ Carole Dietze, *op. cit.* p. 79.

combine with empathy, political correctness and a broad horizon. The provocative practical conclusion: if we are to encourage the emergence of a European historical consciousness that in turn might strengthen the cohesion and performance of a European community, a carefully balanced, non-normative European master narrative *cannot* be the proper means. Our debates at the conferences of the project and my later experiences tended to show that conflicting national, class, gender, etc. narratives in case-studies not hiding but exposing conflicts can help the development of empathy and in turn the emergence of larger regional identities of very differing groups and individuals. Naive as I may sound, I believe that a great number of such projects might shape a European historical consciousness step by step. The FUER (Förderung und Entwicklung von reflektiertem Geschichtsbewusstsein an der Katholischen Universität Eichstatt-Ingolstadt)⁸ approach can serve as an experiment in this direction. Here the students are given an assortment of data, primary sources and conflicting interpretations and evaluations on some crucial issues, as for example on the forced migration/expulsion of Germans after World War Two and are encouraged, in the spirit of ‘one past, several histories’, to engage in discussions and to try and understand the points of view of the conflicting parties in the debate.

Suffering and Defeat in European Historical Consciousness

In exchanges of this type the problem of how to integrate negative historical experiences into the self-images of Europeans frequently comes up. We do not pay enough attention to giving suffering and defeat their place in the construction of a European Historical Consciousness. How can the history and memory of destructive wars, genocides, the harm Europeans caused each other be integrated into a collective European identity? Should we encourage forgetting here? Should we be trying to build a purely heroic and positive European identity? How shall we deal with continuities and discontinuities in this respect – can the Europe of the European Union be heir to a society that gave birth to Auschwitz, to genocide and modern slavery? Auschwitz has become a prominent *lieu de mémoire* for present-day western civilization.⁹ The Holocaust has a central role in shaping the new European identity. It can hardly be described as a purely German concern but is an issue of European history and therefore, as Prof. Dirk Rupnow put it, its evaluation is by now an entrance ticket to Europe. Rightly so but it should be food for thought why this is not overshadowed by positive memories. The tendency seems to be the contrary. Prof. Rupnow and others have observed

⁸ www1.ku-eichstatt.de/GGF/Didaktik/Projekt/FUER.html

⁹ cf. Frank van Vree, “Auschwitz and the Origins of Contemporary Historical Culture” in Attila Pók, Jörn Rüsen, Jutta Scherer (eds.), *European History: Challenge for a Common Future*. Edition Körber Stiftung, Hamburg, 2002.202-220.

that since 1989 there has been a competition between the memory of Stalin's criminal deeds and communist rule in Eastern Europe and the memory of the Holocaust to determine which gets the larger share of public attention and political recognition of their respective victims.¹⁰ Still, as research is showing more and more convincingly, the roles of victims and perpetrators are far from easy to define.¹¹ This is closely connected to the normative character of European history: the basic ethic, moral values, such as respect for human dignity, can hardly be attributed solely to Europe. The project included papers on how non-Europeans perceived what Europe is and it was argued that "instead of using light colours in painting the historical image of Europe as a feature of oneself and dark colours in order to draw the images of the non-Europeans, we have to use both kinds of colors in representing these two realms and their interrelationship"¹². A most interesting case study was presented within the framework of the project: the construction of Europe in Japanese theme parks. These parks recreate European landscapes and townscapes with utmost perfection, using cutting-edge Japanese technology, so they separate technical modernity from its western aesthetical equivalent and, as an expert argues, thereby "crack open the idealizing unit of Western culture as the origin of any and every modernization"¹³ ".

Borders of Europe

Another attempt by our group of researchers to come up with definitions of a European historical consciousness involved drawing the borderlines of Europe. In addition to the rather vague concept of non-European countries mentioned above that basically meant the Third World, Asia and Africa, the US and Russia were important points of reference for contrast and comparison in this respect.

Our project had come on stream before 9/11, at a time when the US was basically perceived and more or less taken for granted as a successful contributor to European peace and stability, especially due to its outstanding role in the Balkans peace-making process. Much more attention was paid to Russia. After nearly a decade the US seems to be as important a problem as Russia if we want to define the peculiarities of European historical consciousness in comparison with other large regional identities. The Iraq war has opened a rift between

¹⁰ Dirk Rupnow, *Aporien des Gedenkens. Reflexionen über Holocaust und Erinnerung*. Freiburg/Br.-Berlin (Rombach), 2006.

¹¹ Cf. István Deák's essays in his *Essays on Hitler's Europe*. Nebraska University Press, 2001

¹² Preface in Attila Pók, Jörn Rüsen, Jutta Scherer (eds.), *European History: Challenge for a Common Future*. Edition Körber Stiftung, Hamburg, 2002. p. 17.

¹³ Jörg H. Gleiter, "Die Exotisierung des Trivialen: Themenparks in Japan – Reservate des Glücks", in: *Bauwelt* 35 (1998), pp. 1938-41. Cited by Joy Hendry, "Constructions of Europe. Japanese Theme Parks: Power or Parody?" In: Attila Pók, Jörn Rüsen, Jutta Scherer (eds.), *European History: Challenge for a Common Future*. Edition Körber Stiftung, Hamburg, 2002. 174

Europe and the US. The first stage of the NATO-US intervention in the Balkans was promising in that it led to the Dayton agreement of November 1995. Dayton had the message that you can intervene from outside efficiently in the interest of protecting human rights and human lives without imposing an alien political system on the perpetrators and victims. Later developments, however, gave food for more worries than hope. Four events can be pointed out in this respect: the air-raids against Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999, 9/11, the beginning of the Iraq war and the accession of the 10 new EU member states in May 2004.

In philosophical terms, for many intellectuals in search of a European historical consciousness the War on Terror seemed to signal the termination of longed for pluralism and it inspired the resurrection of a messianic “grand narrative”. Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria joined NATO in order to fill a security gap, to find safety under a protective umbrella. A few weeks after the festivities in Washington, in April 1999, NATO planes were dropping bombs on Yugoslavia, destroying also one of the most important bridges over the Danube, a few miles away from the Hungarian border. Refugee Serbs from Kosovo started flooding into this region with a substantial Hungarian minority, adding ethnic tension to material suffering. Intellectuals of the region were divided on the issue. One of the most prestigious Hungarian intellectuals, György Konrád, wrote numerous articles in German and Hungarian papers arguing that although there was clear evidence of the crimes committed by the Milosevic regime, external interference in the conflicts of radical nationalisms could only worsen the situation and would support radical Albanian nationalists. He heatedly refuted any argument in support of the intervention as merely preempting even greater disasters looming in the immediate future.¹⁴ Others praised the intervention and went so far as to say that this was just a repeat of what we had seen in both World Wars: again it was only America that was prepared to help freedom-loving Europeans in times of crisis. 9/11 had a great echo among intellectuals in my part of the world. Many of them felt that a most promising period of time that had started with the fall of the Berlin wall and free elections in the countries of the former Soviet Bloc, had now come to an end. During the 1990s the democratic changes in Eastern and Central Europe together with similar Latin-American developments, with the new waves of international NGO movements that tried to increase the awareness of the world's decision makers of health, social and environmental hazards in what used to be called the Third World, seemed to offer a chance to make our globe a better place to live in. In the aftermath of 9/11 fears, anxieties, and strategies of self-defence with all kinds of preemptive activities surfaced.¹⁵ When dealing with this situation

¹⁴ E. g. in the most widely read Hungarian daily, *Népszabadság* on July 12, 1999.

¹⁵ Miklós Tamás Gáspár, ‘A katasztrófa. (The Catastrophe)’, *Magyar Hírlap*, September 13, 2001. A good survey of reactions to 9/11: László Andor: “Nekünk New York kell” (We Need A New York, in Hungarian this is reference to a tragedy of historic dimensions in 1526, when Ottoman Turks defeated the Hungarian army at Mohács. “We need a Mohács” means in Hungarian that it is only after a great disaster that we are prepared to face up our problems). *Eszmélet*, 52 (2001).

Europe both on a political and an NGO or social level turned out to be very much divided. In the course of trying to look into the underlying causes for the felling of the Towers, much political and scholarly interest was devoted to looking for structural differences between the US and Europe.

This tendency continued after the beginning of the Iraq war, long after the conclusion of our project, in the spring of 2003. Some outstanding minds, however, have changed their views concerning the legitimacy of external intervention. For example, György Konrád, who four years earlier, as I have mentioned, powerfully criticized the air raids against Yugoslavia, now argued as follows: “We Central European dissidents are interested in reducing the number of dictatorships in the world. That is why we do not like the renewed anti-imperialist propaganda [...] that – just as during the Cold War – shows a grotesque understanding for murderous dictatorships. That is why we do not support the despot of Iraq against his own country and the neighbouring peoples... The world needs policemen, just as much as cities do. We demand security and not rhetoric from the policeman.”¹⁶ He also added that hostility towards America was a new kind of anti-Semitism. He was here arguing not only against those who were against the war by definition but also against those who demanded UN authorization on the basis of clear evidence on arms of mass destruction in Iraq, as, for example, Gunter Grass and numerous former East Central European dissidents.

The splits further increased after May 1, 2004, the day of the largest ever EU enlargement, a date lots of European citizens had been looking forward to, for so many years. The restraints on sovereignty resulting from EU membership turned out to be substantial, and the help that had been anticipated with such fervour came with bureaucratic strings attached and with great delay. The debates about medium- and long-term perspectives of our region's social and economic development – and this finally takes us to the present – have centered on assessing gains and losses during the post-communist transition in the countries of the former Soviet Bloc.

In these debates the US frequently appears as the incarnation of the worst and most appalling features of capitalism: imperialist expansion, lack of sensitivity for social problems, especially as regards welfare, a cavalier disregard for human rights. Much less attention is paid to the United States' impressive indicators of economic efficiency that were regularly referred to during the Cold War, to its cultural diversity and its stories of cultural and scholarly success. The European community, the EU of the 27, is generally perceived as a tamed form of capitalism, where social solidarity is still much more highly valued than in the US. *Mutatis mutandis*, this evaluation, this approach could be compared to the debate on *socialism with a human face* in the 1970s,¹⁷ in comparison with the harshness of “real” socialism in pre-perestroika SU and Eastern Germany. Now the US presents the brutal aspect of capitalism,

¹⁶ *Népszabadság*, March 1, 2003.

¹⁷ Cf. the works by Rudolf Bahro, especially *Die Alternative*, Köln, 1977.

the EU *capitalism with a human face*. For numerous leading politicians (both on the right and on the left) in East Central Europe the rising stars are China, India, smaller Far East and South East Asian countries and, strangely enough, the lack of social care is rarely referred to when praising these small and larger tigers.

Whereas 20 years earlier it was widely believed that capitalism is basically the same in the US and Western Europe, with the US taking the lead politically and economically and Europe trailing the US at a distance, it is now, as Tony Judt put it in a New York Review of Books article, "becoming clear that America and Europe are not way stations on a historical production line, such that Europeans must expect to inherit or replicate the American experience after an appropriate time lag."¹⁸

What similarities and differences with foreign cultures shape European and American identities? This is an important question. Generally speaking, defining what one does not share is more important than a normative list of the ingredients of this identity. Jürgen Habermas has suggested¹⁹ that focusing on transatlantic value differences could be of great use in generating cohesion in Europe but this could hardly be a successful scenario at a time of global threats of all kinds. Strangely enough, from an East Central European angle the US in some ways bears a closer resemblance to Russia than to Western Europe. Tony Judt lists the following similarities in his New York Review of Books article: "... its suspicion of dissent, its fear of foreign influence, its unfamiliarity with alien lands and its reliance upon military strength when dealing with them". In other reflections on the differences between the basic values of the US and Europe the large-scale use of the death penalty in the US (not tolerated in EU member countries) and the role of God and religion in American politics, which may ultimately be even more significant, are given prominence. For numerous East Central Europeans, however, the US is still the country of the Jeffersonian compromise (in Richard Rorty's words: trading a guarantee of religious freedom for the willingness of religious believers not to bring religion into the discussion of political questions) and it is a fact that all of us are the disciples of the United States when it comes to civil rights, the civil society, anti-racism, feminism, the idea of self-government, protection of the environment and protection of the consumer from the US.²⁰ I think that some of our great debt to the United States could be repaid in the spirit of Timothy Garton Ash's "Declaration of Interdependence", if America were to allow "Europe to be a benign check and balance on its own solitary superpower".²¹

The West's faultlines include, in addition to the obvious US-Western Europe divide, the demarcation lines created by clashing political, economic and military interests within the European Union. It may suffice here to refer to the Declaration of the Eight in support of

¹⁸ *New York Review of Books*, vol.52., No. 2.(February 10, 2005)

¹⁹ Quoted by Tony Judt in the article referred to in footnote 18.

²⁰ Miklós Tamás Gáspár, "A katasztrófa" in *Magyar Hírlap*, September 13, 2001.

²¹ Tony Judt: op.cit.

Bush's policy in 2003²² that showed major differences between France and Germany on the one hand and Britain, Spain, Italy and Portugal on the other.

During our conferences our Russia experts pointed out that traditional topics concerning Russia's geopolitical position reappeared in Russian political discourses during the 1990s: Russia's uniqueness, its independence of the West, its geostrategic position between Europe and Asia, its Eurasianism. We observed how Gorbachev appealed to the intelligentsia to fill in the blind spots of history and how historical memory was mobilized to evoke traditions and continuities with pre-revolutionary Russia. Already at that time it was however clear that official Russia made no serious effort to come to terms with its Stalinist past. By now, after another decade, a peculiar combination of Russian glory, including the nostalgic memory of pre-revolutionary Russia as a great power (see, for example, Stanislav Govorukhin's film *The Russia that we have lost*) and Soviet patriotism is communicated. In this process a prominent role is played by the Paris based Russian Institute for Democracy and Cooperation, headed by Natalia Alekseyevna Narochinskaya, and its New York counterpart, with its director Andranik Migranian. Most recent English and French publications on defending Stalin's policy during World War Two are written, edited or coordinated by the director of the Paris Institute²³ and her colleague John Laughland.²⁴ One of the points that is frequently made is that the Soviet sacrifice in the crushing of Nazism is not properly appreciated today according to these publications. Laughland argues the opposite is the case, to the point where "overt support for Nazism" is expressed. One of his examples refers to Latvia: "In 2001, and partly to encourage support for NATO membership, the Latvian state supported the creation of a vast military cemetery in the village of Lestene to commemorate tens of thousands who died fighting for the Latvia Legion, i.e. the Waffen SS. Meanwhile, an old Soviet memorial on the site of a German concentration camp has been allowed to go to rack and ruin. Every year, veterans and supporters of the SS lay a wreath at the national monument in Riga, undisturbed by the national police or international busybodies because the imperative is to underline Latvia's basic hostility to Russia. Men who were decorated as war heroes in Soviet times have been convicted as war criminals by Latvia because they executed Nazi collaborators; and books are published rehabilitating (among others) Friedrich Jeckeln, an SS Obergruppenführer in the occupied Soviet Union who led one of the most murderous Einsatzgruppen which killed 100,000 people. Best of all, the current president of Lithuania, Valdas Adamkus, boasts on his own presidential website that he fought the Soviets before escaping to Nazi Germany in 1944 where he studied before

²² A letter signed by the Prime Ministers of Britain, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain published in the *Wall Street Journal* and *The Times* on January 30, 2003.

²³ See for example her book, *Que rest t-il de notre victoire?* Foundation for Historical Perspective, Moscow, 2009.. She also edited a collection of essays on who started World War Two under the title *Partitura*, Foundation for Historical Perspective, Moscow, 2009.

²⁴ See for example his "The Geoideology of Westernism". www.idc-europe.org/publications.asp

emigrating to America. Adamkus is the only serving European head of state to have fought in the war - and he is proud of the fact that he did so in German uniform.” Another sample of Laughland’s arguments: “According to this (i.e. the current ‘western’) vision of history, the suffering visited on people in Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union was simply the result of the brutality inflicted on subject peoples by a semi-Mongol horde. Communism was not, therefore, a creed embraced by people all over the world from Havana to Hanoi, but instead merely a cloak for the malignancy of a Moscow permanently bent on domination and expansion. The expansion of liberalism and the geopolitical project of breaking Russia’s back are therefore one and the same thing.”²⁵ On a directly political level, the most recent event is the creation of a commission under the control of the President of Russia to fight ‘attempts at the falsification of history.’²⁶ This type of argumentation is not fully representative of current Russian historiography but definitely does not contribute to the making of a European historical consciousness encompassing Russia²⁷.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Participation in this project was extremely rewarding, as historians who also think of themselves as public intellectuals can hardly avoid facing the issue of a European historical consciousness, European integration being a key issue of contemporary history. How can all parts of Europe be integrated in one narrative (if that is feasible at all) without presenting just an inventory? What should be the guiding concepts and actors (peoples, nations, regions, states, ideas)? How can we apply the concepts of progress and decline? To what extent can scholarship be reconciled with political and moral judgements? How far can history be presented as a social science? Is Histories of Europe, i. e. coming up with a series of smaller monographs on various aspects of European history the best option?²⁸ with the fast emergence of the Internet as the main carrier of information? How are we supposed to cope with the fact that Internet resources are more widely used than print media? All these issues will definitely be the subjects of numerous upcoming projects. For the time being, I have a few practical recommendations, based on reconsidering our project after a decade. Here they are:

²⁵ John Laughland: *op.cit.*

²⁶ ‘Ukaz’ 549 of May 15, 2009

²⁷ For a survey of current Russian historical scholarship on this issue, see Teddy J. Uldricks, “War, Politics and Memory. Russian Historians Reevaluate the Origins of World War Two”. *History and Memory* 21/2. Fall/Winter 2008, 60-82.

²⁸ Within the framework of our project Bodo von Borries gave an excellent survey of recent approaches: “European History Written by Various European Historians”, in: Attila Pók, Jörn Rüsen, Jutta Scherer (eds.) *European History: Challenge for a Common Future*. Edition Körber Stiftung, Hamburg, 2002., 22-44.

Instead of devoting resources, time and energy to working out a standard manual of European history with a nationally neutral narrative we should focus on facilitating 'learning by doing', i.e.

---support the preparation of volumes with parallel essays on personalities whose activities were of major significance for more states and nations by historians from the countries concerned (for example Benes from Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, German perspectives);

---support the publication of source editions to enable students and other readers to identify with particular points of view on conflicts, with special regard to crises;

---encourage students to find out how global or European issues shape regional and local developments;

---increase the mobility of students in the most sensitive 14 to 18 age group;

---and, last but not at all least: present history not as something abstract that an average person can hardly shape but keep reminding whoever is listening that all the good or evil we are involved in is part of history. One of the greatest Hungarian poets of the twentieth century, Gyula Illyés, put it as follows:

“...Talk to yourself and hear
Tyranny, your inquisitor,
You have no isolation,
Not even in imagination...

For it is in all that you intend
In your tomorrow, it is at hand,
Before your thoughts it is aware,
In your every movement it is there...

Where seek tyranny, think again:
Everyone is a link in the chain:
Of Tyranny's stench you are not free:
You yourself are tyranny.²⁹

This paper was originally prepared for and will be published in the collection of essays edited by Oliver Rathkolb: *How to (RE)Write European History*. StudienVerlag. Innsbruck-Wien-Bozen, forthcoming in 2010.

²⁹ Ádám Makkai (ed.), *On Quest for the Miraculous Stag: The Poetry of Hungary*. Budapest-Chicago-London, 1996, 643-649.