

Internal strength, external security

Developing European identity / Support for Ukraine

20.03.2022

Andechs. The 57th Andechs Europe Day dealt with the topic "Europe – a home?" and at the same time was dominated by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. Bernd Posselt, the president of the Pan-Europa-Union Deutschland, which organizes this international meeting on Bavaria's Holy Mountain twice a year, saw no contradiction in this. According to Posselt, in order to be able to cope with external threats, it is important both to strengthen the European institutions and to develop the European identity: "One is the body, the other the soul of Europe."

A special guest of honour was Rafal Dutkiewicz, long-standing Lord Mayor of Wrocław and one of Poland's most popular politicians. After the Second World War, his city suffered an almost complete population exchange due to the complete expulsion of the Germans and the settlement of Poles from today's Ukraine, who also had to leave their homeland. Today it plays a role that unites peoples and is European. Overall, Dutkiewicz sees Poland on a good European path. He called the policies of today's ruling nationalist forces "the dying pains of an old time."

At the traditional stage talk in the monastery inn, Dutkiewicz acknowledged his regional identity: "I am Silesian." His compatriots not only have a close connection to Saint Hedwig of Silesia, who came from Andechs, but also to the German Jewess Edith Stein, who was briefly seen again at the train station of her native city of Breslau before her murder in the Auschwitz concentration camp and is now venerated by the Catholic Church as one of the three patronesses of Europe. For the current Polish citizens of the historic Silesian capital, it is a matter of course to identify with what its German inhabitants had created before 1945.

Father Martin Leitgöb, former pastor of the German-speaking community in Prague and now pilgrimage pastor on the Schönenberg near Ellwangen, emphasized that as a Redemptorist he was not bound to a fixed place like the Benedictines, but could be sent anywhere within the "world family" of his religious community. Therefore, from his point of view, the concept of homeland is two-layered – on the one hand, his original home in the Lower Austrian Waldviertel, which he perhaps appreciates all the more from a distance; on the other hand, a home that he gains in a foreign place by building relationships with the people there. This "homeland in faith" led the Steyl missionary Josef Freinademetz from South Tyrol, who got to know and love Chinese culture in order to lead "his beloved Chinese" to Christ, to say: "I want to be a Chinese in heaven." Likewise, Mother Teresa, born as an Albanian named Agnes Gonxhe Bojaxhu, had voluntarily become an Indian. "If you carry the homeland in your heart, you can also make the big bow into the world." For the Christian, the first and last home is heaven.

The Professor of Bavarian History at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU) in Munich, Prof. Dieter J. Weiß, examined the Bavarian state idea of King Ludwig I, based on four tribes, as a food for thought for the cohesion of Europe. The father of Ludwig I, King Max I, had built modern Bavaria together with his minister Montgelas as a centralist, functional civil servant state in the sense of the Enlightenment. The goal was the formation of a Bavarian state nation. Ludwig, on the other hand, recognized that rationalism was not sufficient as an integrating element. That is why he has developed his kingdom into a cultural state in which Old Bavarians, Franks, Swabians and Palatinates could have preserved their identity. After the Second World War, instead of the separated Palatinate, the expelled Sudeten Germans would have constituted themselves as the fourth tribe. In the 19th century, the Wittelsbachs strove

to consolidate cohesion by expanding their sovereign title and by residing in different parts of the country. Thus, Louis called himself "by the grace of God King of Bavaria, Count Palatine of the Rhine, Duke of Bavaria, Franconia and in Swabia". Through monument preservation, the creation of today's districts, the extension of the coat of arms with various historical symbols and the strengthening of historical awareness, it has been possible to strengthen the bond of the four tribes to the larger community. The king's motto was: "Patriotism through Fatherland Studies".

Prof. Jana Osterkamp from the Collegium Carolinum and the Chair of the History of Eastern and Southeastern Europe at LMU pointed out that the Habsburg Monarchy was a "Europe on a small scale" for contemporaries in the 19th century and for many historians today because of its diversity of peoples and languages, religions and historical regions: "As is currently the case in the EU, at that time in the Habsburg Monarchy, too, the question arose as to whether and how in this empire different homelands of its citizens and inhabitants could be combined to form a 'homeland of the homelands', as Václav Havel called it." A dozen state-recognized languages were also taught in elementary schools, whereby the monarchy promoted the "idea of a multilingual homeland". The answer to the growing national tensions since the revolution of 1848 was "ordering diversity", i.e. federalism. Osterkamp juxtaposed four models of federalism: the large-scale dualism or trialism, the historical Kronländer federalism, i.e. the division of the federation as in today's Germany on the basis of the historical imprint and not out of board of directors, the nationality federal state divided by language boundaries and the non-territorial personal autonomy, in which in mixed populated areas the individual professes a language group in each case without this calling into question the unity of the Country. This fourth model was mainly known through the Moravian Compensation of 1905.

Florian Hartleb, an extremism researcher from Bavaria and living in Estonia, described how extremist right-wingers and leftists, often promoted by the Russian Putin regime, have been igniting the foundations of Europe for more than twenty years. One of the most important instruments is hybrid warfare through targeted disinformation and propaganda, especially via social media. The successful author referred to Putin's chief ideologue, Alexander Dugin, who had drawn up the vision of a Eurasia steered by Moscow. Functionaries of Dugin's Eurasian Youth had become active in the staff of the AfD in the Bundestag. The increasingly radicalizing AfD is also networking not only with Reich citizens, but also with anti-vaccinationists and esotericists. After the storming of the Reichstag made possible by this party, several of these demonstrators were subsequently guests at the Russian Embassy. Marine Le Pen's French right-wing extremists have massively supported Russia financially. These forces are currently trying to distance themselves a little from Putin's war, but continue to try to undermine the cohesion of Europe. The Baltic states are threatened above all by the fact that Moscow is instrumentalizing the Russian-speaking ethnic groups there.

Bernd Posselt, a strong advocate of European unification, stressed that it should not become "a train to nowhere". It needs a clear goal and a concrete roadmap. This includes the development of a European patriotism that does not suppress national and regional patriotisms, but "complements and crowns them". As important as economic success is for a functioning Europe, one must bear in mind in its further development that man does not live on bread alone – as stated in Sacred Scripture. Culture, symbols, civic engagement, federalism and an identity that unites peoples are indispensable for cohesion. Ukraine is also a deeply European country, although the Council of Heads of State and Government has tried for years to deny it Europeanness out of fear of Moscow. Munich has a very strong Ukrainian community due to the American freedom stations "Radio Free Europe" and "Radio Liberty", which were located there until 1990, as well as the Ukrainian Free University, which teaches in the Bavarian capital. According to Posselt, he himself was there when Franz Josef Strauß proclaimed the partnership between Bavaria and the Ukrainian people in the mid-eighties. On the initiative of the Augsburg Pan-European Bishop Josef Stimpfle, a large diocesan pilgrimage to the Ukrainian Catholic underground church had already taken place in 1988. Out of this solidarity, it is important to stand by the oppressed and persecuted Ukrainians and to work together with them as soon as possible on a better European future, which the war criminal Putin wants to prevent by all means. The European

Union must be strengthened both internally through a sense of belonging and effectively fulfil its security and protective function externally.

Father Valentin Ziegler OSB welcomed the participants from various European nations and thanked them for their commitment. Europe must face the storm emanating from autocrats who "have completely different goals than reconciled diversity in a common Europe." In the current situation, "God's silence is almost unbearable," but as in the biblical story of the storm on the lake, "Jesus is and remains in the boat." Saint Joseph is also a role model with his courage and willingness to serve. The two days spent in Andechs should lead to "us going home with confidence and not forgetting the people who are in need every day and can no longer continue."

In the Andechs pilgrimage church, Father Cyrill Schäfer OSB celebrated a supplication service for Ukraine. From the Rule of St. Benedict, patron saint of Europe, to whom the Mass was dedicated, he quoted the invitation, for Lent: "A little more effort than usual; but actually for Christians it is always Lent." Here the right measure is combined with the opening to a wider framework – the whole life is placed in the expectation of something greater, the hope of the great Easter, forgiveness, redemption, and the encounter with the Risen Lord. "Heavenly glory, translated to human conditions, means readiness to serve." Where people argue bitterly, however, hardly anyone will believe that God is taken seriously.

The service was followed by a demonstration for Ukraine in front of the monastery inn, with Pan-European and Ukrainian flags and signs reading "Stop the War" and "Hold Europe together". Pan-European Vice-President Michael Gahler MEP, the European Parliament's Ukraine rapporteur, condemned the Russian war of aggression and called for full solidarity with the Ukrainian people. He called for tougher sanctions and arms deliveries: "The Ukrainians are threatened in their existence and must be able to defend themselves!" As a sign of hope and as a sign that Ukraine is inseparable from Europe, the Ukrainian and European anthems were played.

The concluding panel "Cohesion in Europe" was moderated by the Ukraine rapporteur of the German Bundestag, Pan-European Presidium member Knut Abraham MdB from Brandenburg: "Pan-Europe always makes it clear to me what Europe is – in cultural, human, political and religious dimensions. When you put all that together, it's a home." He had just seen cohesion in Europe at the demonstration, you can see it in Premysl on the Polish-Ukrainian border or in Berlin at the main train station, where thousands of refugees, but also hundreds of helpers from all over Europe come together. In order to discover and recognize Europe – "to experience the European moment" – mediation is necessary as well as knowledge of history and geography, which he called for school lessons. His personal experience of Europe, however, was the confrontation with the Latin language in the fifth grade, a supranational language that could no longer be attributed to any people, but was used throughout Europe. As a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Strasbourg Council of Europe, he recalled the central importance of minority rights and the European Convention on Human Rights.

Elisabeth Dittrich, President of the European Political Education Association "Europtimus", AEDE Austria, had travelled from Vienna, who expressed her sympathy for Bavaria with a quote from Bruno Kreisky: "I like to go to Bavaria so much because it is not at home and yet at home." She remembered the recently deceased President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli, who in his last speech, which she delivered in Italian, described that his father had gone to war against other Europeans at the age of 20, that his mother had lost her house and had to seek shelter with other families, etc. - in view of which "The EU is not an accident". "kein singuläresVeranstaltung der Geschichte". The soul of Europe is not to be found in purely economic or legal matters, but is "connected to our values, views and history", as Karl von Habsburg emphasized in his speech on 11.01.2022. At AEDE-Austria and in the Association of European Teachers of AEDE-Europe, of which she is Vice-President, she strives to introduce colleagues and young people to the values and the "experience of the European Spirit" with events and study trips, a virtual club and participation in numerous European projects. Their youth task force has also already been discussed with Bernd Posselt, in which "everything from Morocco to Poland to Serbia is represented, we are in Vienna."

Herbert Hofauer, mayor of Altötting for 25 years, told how he had experienced "unpleasant encounters as a German as a German" as a teenager during a tent trip, but this impression had changed due to the German-French Youth Office and trips to Taizé. In Altötting, he had taken over a partnership with the Italian Loreto from his predecessor, where he had met the Lord Mayor of Częstochowa and through him those of its twin cities Lourdes and Fatima. From the cooperation on the question of how to reconcile huge numbers of pilgrims with the concerns of the citizens, "Shrines or Europe" has emerged, a Europe-wide network of Marian pilgrimage sites, which now also includes Marizell and Einsiedeln in Switzerland and soon perhaps also Kevelaer as well as pilgrimage sites from Ireland and Latvia. In addition to joint advertising, youth and cultural exchange and economic cooperation, some were involved in the selection process for the European Prize. From there he knows the mayor of Kharkiv - "a beautiful city of two million, which now looks like a rubble dump, with many dead." Next week, he will bring medicines and other things to Ukraine with an aid transport. Hofauer proposed to establish a global fund to rebuild Ukraine's cultural heritage.

Father Cyrill Schäfer OSB, who heads the EOS publishing house of the Archabbey of St. Ottilien, spoke of his enthusiasm for the Holy Roman Empire as an approach to Europe and for the Pan-European Union. It has an important task, and because it does not look at political and economic positions of power, but relies on values and understanding, it tries the only thing that can have a future. Optimism is an important quality, "otherwise no one would act." For monasteries, which are organized globally, Europe is a region – although, as one American visitor noted, "history here is incredibly dense. As a result, one may think more complex and differentiated", which is also necessary. He described his recent contacts with Russian Orthodoxy as "depressing". At first, he wondered why no church conference house wanted a lecture by the envoy of the Moscow Patriarchate. After all, the event took place in St. Ottilien itself – a statement about the decadence of the West and the rescue from it in Russian tradition and spirituality. "Certainly there are broken marriages and homosexuals in Russia as well," Father Schäfer commented somewhat ironically. Especially in this situation, however, he saw it as a problem that the objective knowledge of the history and tradition of Russia and the Slavic world as well as the knowledge of Slavic languages were missing.

Alfred Theisen, who set up the magazine "Schlesien heute" in Görlitz, reported on the profound de-Christianization caused by National Socialism and Communism – there are still as many youth consecrations there today as there were 30 years ago. That's why he named his publishing house after the biblical "mustard seed" that he tried to plant there. On the other hand, the situation of freedom has succeeded in reducing prejudices and mistrust between Germans and Poles, even in the long-divided city of Görlitz/Zgorzelec. The Euroregions and the support for cross-border associations have helped in particular, but also the displaced persons. Old expelled Silesians, who never wanted to hear a Polish word again because of their bad experiences, had finally gone to their home region and often found real friendship there. Those expelled from eastern Poland also have empathy and understanding for the restoration of cemeteries and monuments. Despite some setbacks, such as the recent cancellation of funds for the German minority by the Polish government, the efforts to come together have transformed the region, also economically through the creation of jobs and German investors. An important role model in this context is Saint Hedwig, who was born in Andechs and buried in Trebnitz in Silesia. Through cultural tours, Theisen conveys that "the density of European culture" is not exhausted in Germany, France, Italy or Spain – Poland, the Baltic States, "the Marienland Slovakia, the Ukraine and Belarus, where the center of the Jagellon Empire was located, are also equal cultural nations. He condemned the West's turning a blind eye all the more strongly, "when Lukashenko imprisoned the opposition, when Putin struck in Syria and eastern Ukraine?" Theisen also encouraged learning languages in order to understand peoples properly: "English is good, but if you know one Slavic language, you learn the others easily."

*Paneuropa Press Office, Dachauer Str. 17, D - 80335
MunichPhone +49 89 554683, Fax +49 89 594768, paneuropa-union@t-online.de*