

Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung
Center for European Integration Studies
Rheinische Friedrich Wilhelms-Universität Bonn



Jerzy Buzek

Poland's Future in a United Europe

**Discussion
Paper**

**C 6
1998**

Prof. Dr. Jerzy Buzek, 57 Jahre, wurde nach einem Studium an der Schlesischen Technischen Hochschule Professor für Chemie am Institut für Chemische Technologie der Polnischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. 1980 gründete Professor Buzek in seinem Institut die „Solidarnosc“ und war dann Leiter des Regionalen Exekutivkomitees der Solidarnosc in Schlesien. Heute ist er für die Wahlaktion Solidarität (AWS), deren wirtschaftliches Programm er als Koordinator einer Wirtschaftsexpertengruppe vorbereitet hat, Mitglied des Sejm. Seit November 1997 ist Jerzy Buzek Ministerpräsident der Republik Polen.

Dokumentation eines „ZEI-Europaforums“ am 3. Februar 1998 in Kooperation mit der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V.

Jerzy Buzek

Poland's Future in a United Europe

Occasionally we may hear some doubts as to whether the development of Europe is going in the right direction, whether the process of European integration is not too dynamic. The scepticism, also expressed in the fears and anxieties of ordinary citizens of European Union Member States, often comes as a surprise to people in my country, and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. If we were to look back at the Europe of ten years ago, what picture would stand before our eyes? Europe was divided into the democratic countries of the West and the economically and functionally backward satellite States of the Soviet Union. The western part of the continent enjoyed the fruits of freedom, democracy and economic growth, when at the same time the countries on other side of the Iron Curtain were deprived of participation in the development of the continent, of expressing their sovereign will, unable to establish principles of coexistence, or to define their interests. Germans were most painfully afflicted by the consequences of the division of Europe, since the barbed-wired frontier between the East and the West passed through their country, artificially turning them into two alien nations. When we realize only ten years have passed, we will understand that the times in which we are living are a true breakthrough. I am extremely glad that Poland has been, and wants to continue being an actor of the historical performance, in which Providence is building the unity of free European nations.

I

The momentum of Europe's development in the recent years has become an immense challenge for all of us. Poland can finally participate in the European integration process. This opens the question on the role of our country in a united Europe. In Luxembourg the European Union made the decision on the initiation of membership negotiations with Poland, among other countries. This has set the final seal on the end of the post-war period in Europe – a disastrous period for our political aspirations and economic needs. This change is a chance for a new era – in Poland and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, but also, and to no lesser degree, in countries of the European Union.

Poland is recovering from a functional and political breakdown. The communist period turned out to be not only a time of constraint. It was also a time when opportunities for Poland's development were wasted, and human initiative dissipated in an unprecedented manner. Today, we are getting closer to the membership of Europe as a country of an enormous growth potential. Our attributes are a 6 per cent economic growth, an increasingly stable currency, favorable for savings and investment, a dynamically developing private economic sector, and above all an exceptional potential of social dynamics.

Nevertheless, a great deal remains to be done. We are facing the necessity of reforming the pension system, the education system and health care. We need to conduct a basic reform of our administration, in order to decentralize the country and delegate as much power as possible directly to the local communities. Our objective is to transform the social and administrative system in Poland and turn it into a modern State with strong civil and local bonds, a country of freedom and solidarity. In a few years' time, we want not only to contribute an effective economy to the European Union. We hope to actively take part in the shaping of its political and cultural presence of the third millennium. We consider this as our strategic goal, although we know, how much we still must change in order to adapt to the requirement of European Union membership.

//

Poland's future in a united Europe is closely tied to the question about the nature of the European Union Poland is aspiring to, and the nature of the Union of which it will be a member. These two questions are, in fact, inseparable.

The idea of European freedom and unity may become reality as a result of such events as the breakthrough, which occurred in Poland owing to the social and trade union "Solidarity" movement. The first Chancellor of the Federal Republic, and with him many Christian Democratic politicians in Europe, as Robert Schuman or Alcide de Gasperi, understood already 30 years ago, that the true unification of Europe will only happen once the West and East are united. Many years later, during the celebration of the 40th anniversary of signing the Treaties of Rome, Chancellor Kohl said, that the European Union cannot end on the Oder and Neisse, and Prague, Krakow and Budapest are just as strongly embedded in European culture as Rome, Paris, Berlin, or Amsterdam.

Europe must be strong, and it must open accession prospects to other European countries. To make it possible, Europe must be based on the shared values of freedom, solidarity and security. These values flow from the deepest layers of Christian universalism, the essence of European identity. The Pope John Paul II reminded this at the meeting of Presidents of Central European countries and Germany in Gniezno. An important instrument of the implementation of those values is the economic integration of European countries and the monetary union.

///

The monetary union constitutes an enormous challenge, not only for Germany, or France. It is of utmost importance for the entire European Union. We believe that the Monetary Union will allow Europe to effectively compete on the global financial market. The Monetary Union will provide a strong, positive incentive for those EU States, that will not joint

it on the 1 January 1999. The establishment of a common currency will create a new quality in Europe and the world at large. Therefore Poland, and other countries aspiring to EU membership are carefully following preparations for the introduction of the EURO. Poland should participate in the Monetary Union in the future, although today it is difficult to responsibly predict when it will be ready to fulfil all the economic and financial requirements. We are convinced that the EU will be guided by interests defined in the long run, embracing the future membership of Poland and the remaining five candidate States. We hope this will be the case in the negotiations between the European Union and Poland, that are due to begin the 31 March, and in the area of financial and institutional reforms of the EU itself. Poland is not interested in excessively lengthy transitional periods in the process of European integration. Our principal common goal is to fulfil the requirements related to the *aquis communautaire* as quickly as possible.

We fully understand the weight of individual, short term interests. We appreciate how strongly they may be rooted in a specific social and economic situation. We are also aware of the temptation to postpone unpopular changes. The coming year of accession negotiations will therefore require great efforts, not only on the part of the candidate countries, but also on the part of the present EU members. The governments of the Member States will have to consistently explain to Western European societies why the adhesion of Poland and other new members lies in their interest.

IV

Polish foreign policy is not entirely focused on Poland's accession to the EU. Another strategic element of the policy is our membership of NATO. We do not perceive these two issues separately. I would even go as far as to say that our membership of the European Union is a logical consequence of our NATO membership. Without participation in the European Union our presence in the Alliance would sense only partially. Our place

in European structures would be uncertain. Accession to the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union are strongly bound elements of the same policy that we have been consistently adhering to since 1989.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is presently the most important political and military, capable of providing security guarantees to its members, but also to counteract the proliferation of conflicts beyond the borders of the Alliance. In the situation that emerged after 1989, NATO has become an essential element of stability and security in the world. Its mission is not limited to defense. It also includes peace keeping in areas of conflict. The presence of NATO troops often offers a chance for stability, democracy, and for solving a conflict without having recourse to violence.

V

Is it possible to speak of the future of Poland in a united Europe, without mentioning the future of Polish-German relations? For Poles the answer to that question is quite obvious. Once Poland enters NATO and the European Union, it will for the first time find itself side by side with Germany, in the same geographic, political and strategic area. Our relations will become closer. We wish to jointly fulfil the tasks resulting out of our concern for security, and the establishment of European unity. We are aware, that Germany have often supported us and strongly advocated the admission of Poland to the European Union. Poles appreciate the involvement; may the systematically growing sympathy and trust of the Polish population towards Germany as a democratic European State be the best evidence of that.

Yet in our perception of Polish-German relations we must still hold account of certain facts and phenomena, that will perforce have an impact on them in the years to come. Germany is, and will continue to be our important partner in the European Union, but it will be a difficult partnership. It is easy to predict, that as Poland intensifies its participation in the

integration process, more and more problem areas will start appearing. Many of them will be Polish-German controversies. The Union has indeed put in place mechanism to deal with such issues, yet considering the relatively sensitive nature of Polish-German relations, solutions may not be easy to find. All the more do we value the role of the Weimar Triangle, as a forum for informal political consultations between Poland, Germany and France. We would like to add new quality and new momentum to these contacts, also, or perhaps especially in the context of the coming negotiations between Poland and the European Union.

The second important element of relevance for the future Polish-German relations will be Poland's participation in the NATO. We believe, that Poland and Germany should actively take part in the military out-of-area action of the Alliance. We should also jointly work on the high political and military, operational dimension, but also be reflected in joint military maneuvers, or the creation of a joint Polish-German-Danish unit. We should build our relations on the basis of complete trust, readiness to defend each other, and the capacity to jointly form a security policy in our part of Europe.

The third important factor, that will soon become decisive for Polish-German relations, is the change of a generation in the political elite of both countries. Historical arguments will weaken, giving more room to the practical approach to Polish-German relations, when faced by the growing number of specific problems, that the two countries will be discussing within the framework of EU accession negotiations, and of the NATO Alliance.

A qualitative change in our relations must therefore be underpinned by a more general reflection on the part of the Polish and German people. They will be the actual carriers of change. Reflection will no doubt be part of the "Jugendwerk" youth exchange program, that will allow young Poles and Germans to find good mutual relations on personal experience. In the years to come we must devote more attention than ever before to the reinforcement of the image of a good neighbor. We must fight

stereotypes, increase mutual trust, enhance friendly, good neighborly bonds. Here I would like to highlight the role that is played by Polish and German universities. A symbolic example of this kind of cooperation is the Viadrina University in Frankfurt and the Collegium Polonicum in Ślubice, which we visited with Chancellor Kohl last December. In the context of transformations that are taking place in the Polish-German relations as a result of the process of NATO and European Union enlargement, we should make additional efforts to promote research and publications on contemporary political, social and economic problems in Poland and Germany. We still know each other quite superficially, and we meet only occasionally. We should make sure that the agreements on cultural co-operation signed between Poland and Germany in the past year be filled with substance.

I am deeply convinced, that at the threshold of the new millenium Poland and Germany have common challenges, similar interests, many shared and proclaimed values; together we stand before the task of preparing European integration and the security policy. Our situation offers great potential and great opportunities for the future. I trust, we shall use that potential well.

ISSN 1435-3288

ISBN 3-933307-06-6



Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung
Center for European Integration Studies
Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn

Walter-Flex-Straße 3
D-53113 Bonn
Germany

Tel.: +49-228-73-1880
Fax: +49-228-73-1788
<http://www.zei.de>