

Twenty Years of Independence:
Reflections on Freedom and Democracy

Michael Van Dusen:

Good afternoon. I'm Mike Van Dusen, executive vice president of the Woodrow Wilson Center. It's my pleasure to welcome to you to today's Director Forum with Martin Bútorá, the former Ambassador of Slovakia to the United States. The Wilson Center is privileged once again to host the annual Czech and Slovak Freedom Lecture, which commemorates the aspiring struggle for freedom by the Czech and Slovak peoples. This lecture series is sponsored by the Friends of Slovakia and the American Friends of the Czech Republic as well as the Embassy of Slovakia and the Embassy of the Czech Republic. I would like to recognize and thank the ambassador of Slovakia to the U.S., Peter Kmec.

[inaudible commentary]

Michael Van Dusen:

-- Kmec. Kmec.

Male Speaker:

It's okay.

[inaudible commentary]

Michael Van Dusen:

Kmec. Kmec. And the ambassador to the Czech Republic, Petr Gandalovič --

[laughter]

-- both of whom are with us today.

[laughter]

Male Speaker:

The Czechs do better.

Michael Van Dusen:

Did I torture that one too, Petr?

Male Speaker:

It was perfect.

Michael Van Dusen:

Oh, you're both Peters. I would also -- wanted to welcome back to the center Ted Russell, the former U.S. ambassador to Slovakia and the founding chairman of Friends of Slovakia. The current chairman of Friends of Slovakia, Joe Senko, who's come in from Pittsburg moments ago and Tom Dine, former president of Radio Free Europe and old friend of the Wilson Center and current president of the American Friends of the Czech Republic. Thanks to all of you for the work you do in support of this program.

Over the last 13 years, this lecture series has given the Wilson Center and its European program the privilege of hosting, among others, a former secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, the Solidarity leader and prominent newspaper editor, Adam Michnik, as well as the current Czech President, Václav Klaus. It is fitting and right this year that we will hear from one of the architects of the Freedom Lecture series. As many of you know, we owe the existence of this program largely to the work of Martin Bútora, the work he did when he was ambassador here in Washington from 1999 to 2003. I would also like to recognize the work done by the ambassador's wife, Zora, who is with us -- with us today. During the period that followed the electoral defeat of Vladimír Mečiar, Zora and Martin Bútora worked tirelessly to ensure that Slovakia stayed on its democratic path and restored its country's image as part of the international community of democracies.

After graduating with a degree in sociology from Comenius University, Martin Bútora was the editor-in-chief of student newspapers and later served as deputy chief editor of Reflex Magazine and a weekly publication called Cultural Life. When the Velvet Revolution began in 1989, he founded a political movement entitled Public Against Violence and crafted the movement's 1990 election program. From 1990 to 1992 he held the position of human rights advisor to President Václav Havel.

In the 1990s Martin Bútora taught at Charles University in Prague and from '93 to '98, I believe he taught at the Department of Political Science at Trnava University. In the Wilsonian tradition, Ambassador Bútora continued to straddle the academic and policy worlds. In 1997, he cofounded the Institute for Public Affairs, IVO, and served

as its first president. He received a number of awards for his work in consolidating democracy in Slovakia, including the Democratic Service Medal, awarded in 1999 by the National Endowment for Democracy; the celebration of Freedom Award by the American Jewish Committee; and the Order of Ludovít Štúr for his contribution to the defense of human rights and development of civil society -- from, receiving that award from the president of Slovakia. Since Ambassador Bútorá helped to found IVO, the institute has grown to be among the most respected independent research institutions in Europe. He now serves with great distinction as IVO's honorary president and director of the European Integration and Transatlantic Relations Program there.

Please join me in welcoming Martin Bútorá. After his opening remarks he has agreed to answer questions. Thank you.

[applause]

Martin Bútorá:

Thank you, Dr. Van Dusen for such a very, very friendly introduction. The ambassadors, Peter Kmec, Dr. Gandalovič, and other distinguished excellencies, the ambassador at large Wendy Luers.

[laughter]

Dear Ted Russell, Joe Senko, Julie Slavic [spelled phonetically], Tom Dine, Bob Dobek [spelled phonetically] and other great figures from Friends of Slovakia and American Friends of the Czech Republic, from all things this fascinating triangle of friendship. Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, I have to tell you it's a really moving moment for me to be here with you. I still have before my eyes how Sasha Vonver [spelled phonetically], my friend and colleague from the Prague Castle [spelled phonetically], where we worked together for President Havel and then we both served as the ambassador when we visited Lee Hamilton then-president of Woodrow Wilson and asked him to establish this lecture forum. Obviously, we valued him very highly, even if I have in my vivid memory his cautious response, when he as the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee was asked about his views on NATO expansion. It was October 1993 before President Clinton's trip to Prague. The debate on enlarging the Alliance had

hardly started and Lee Hamilton said, "Am I prepared to send young men from Indiana to defend the borders of Slovakia?"

[laughter]

Looks like centuries have passed since that time. Instead of U.S. battalions, we have U.S. steel as our eastern borders. Slovak troops were deployed in Afghanistan together with American forces. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Bratislava is one of the most active in the region. Anyway, Lee Hamilton agreed, and since that time every Czech and Slovak freedom lecture takes place.

And again, we are also thankful to the Friends of Slovakia and American Friends of the Czech Republic, not only for relentless efforts to make this lecture series happen, but those ought to keep both countries on radar screen here in Washington. We are blessed to have Ted Russell, not only as the first U.S. ambassador to Slovakia but also as the first founding chairman of the Friends of Slovakia. Our gathering takes places at the threshold of two anniversaries, the Velvet Revolution of November '89 and the birth of two new states, Czech and Slovak republics 20 years ago. And at this occasion the citizens of our countries are asking similar questions as people were asking before the recent U.S. elections: Are we better off? What have we achieved? What are the tasks ahead? But it is not only about those milestones. We might be surprised to hear that today's event takes place right in the middle of two historic timelines.

Over the past period of less than a century, more precisely since founding of Czechoslovakia in 1918 until now, Slovakia has undergone unusually dramatic developments. Six models of state government, three political systems, and within them several regimes have taken hold on its territory. And at the moment of this gathering in the building devoting to the legacy of President Wilson, who has contributed to self-determination of Czech and Slovaks, the ratio of nondemocratic to democratic regimes in our two countries has evened out. For approximately one half of this period, the inhabitants of Slovakia lived under authoritarian, at times even totalitarian conditions, while they spent the other half in the conditions of greater freedom and the same is true for the Czech lands in the period of 1993 to '45 was even more painful than for most

people living in the wartime Slovakia. And I think it will be certainly not only the economy but also the quality of democracy or the rule of law and of civil society that will co-decide in which direction the pendulum that measures the coming decade of Slovakia will swing.

Most scholars of politics, experts on international affairs and future historians will probably evaluate Slovakia's last two decades favorably. To quote one of them, the prominent Slovak historian, Roman Holec, "A country's development in the 20th century is a successful story with a fairytale ending." The Slovaks started from nothing, obtained an independent state, and then became members of the European Union and NATO. While we know the road to this success has not been uneven, but rather a bumpy development with ups and downs, with victories but also defeats. A battle was fought over freedom and democracy, over human dignity, and over far-reaching societal reforms. However, one feature was present all the time: the ability of society to recuperate, to reinvent itself, to stand up after the fall, to carry the flag again and again.

What has followed is well-known for people in this room: Slovakia had to cope with authoritarian temptations. The country has matured. And besides the international recognition, the independence has brought us one experience: we had to be responsible for ourselves. We couldn't blame anyone else for our misfortunes, neither the Hapsburgs nor Budapest, neither Moscow nor Prague. Our future fate lies in our own hands.

Let me now briefly mention five remarks about the recent developments. First, if you look at economic data, both countries are doing -- are not doing that bad. Czech Republic, according to recent global competitiveness report prepared by World Economic Forum, is a well-developed economy performing close to the European Union's average. Relatively low income inequality as measured by Gini coefficient, one of the lowest level of unemployment in the E.U. Slovakia, according to European Commission's autumn forecast published a week ago, experienced one of the fastest recoveries within the Eurozone and the growth higher than average should continue this year and the next year too. And moreover, though Slovakia and the Czech Republic are doing relatively well in international comparative surveys assessing the quality of life, it means not only economy. By the UN Human Development Index, like

OECD Better Life Index, Legatum Institute Prosperity Index, where prosperity means also governance, health, safety and security, personal freedom, education, and social capital. In all of them, those countries are located in the first group of the most successful countries in the world.

But, and here comes the first paradox, in spite of all those ratings, the public moods at home contradicts the favorable findings. The general public is rather pessimistic and skeptical. In Slovakia people are concerned, not only with unemployment and living standards, they are also critical of issues like rule of law, judiciary performance, corruption. All in all, the phenomenon, which was called by Václav Havel [unintelligible], sort of disenchantment or malaise is still widespread. Indeed, according to global competitiveness report in both countries, corruption and inefficient government bureaucracy presents the most problematic factor of doing business and both countries receive bad evaluations regarding favoritism in decisions of government officials. There is one area where Slovakia is really doing not well: judiciary. It was not by chance that judiciary independence in the report was ranked substantially lower than in the Czech Republic, 116 place among 144 countries, 74th place in the Czech Republic. And while the next indicator doesn't show an ideal situation in the Czech Republic either, efficiency of legal framework in settling disputes, is ranked 113th; Slovakia's position is worse. Their ranking was 129th place among, as I said, 144 states.

The report was published in September 2012, so the evaluators couldn't take into consideration the most recent events, and I'm afraid it will change their minds on the country. The first case can be summarized in a telling title, as the Slovak Spectator weekly did it a week ago: "Ex-spy chief evades ex-president's apology." Bratislava region court ruling from June 2012 has now been confirmed by constitutional court. Slovakia's first president, Michal Kováč shall pay damages to the former head of the country's intelligence agency Ivan Lexa. I'm looking at Pavol Demeš who is three weeks in the United States and who served as the Director of Foreign Department of Michal Kováč if he knows about it. Kováč is required to write a letter of apology to Lexa and in addition he should pay more than €3,000 in damages to Lexa. The former head of Slovak Information Service intelligence agency sued the

former president for statements originally made in 1996 after the abduction of his son, Michal Kováč in 1995. "I insist on what I said. I'm not changing anything," the former president said after the ruling. And he is ready to take it to and international court. But it's clear the court ruling, Slovak media comments, is a mockery. It is like an evil grin directed at the students who took to the streets in 1989 and stood in the cold November air to bring down a regime where justice was only for those who kept their mouths shut and applauded when the privileged ones spoke.

The other case that had generated public outrage is criminal prosecution, a possible criminal prosecution, of Zuzana Piussi, a documentary maker, for creating a film about the critical state of Slovakia's judiciary. The film maker could face up to two years in jail if found guilty on charges she violated the rights of a Slovak judge by using unauthorized courtroom footage in her documentary called "The Disease of the Third Power."

So it doesn't come as a surprise that a large part of the population doesn't trust the country's judiciary. A survey by the Institute for Public Affairs published in July 2012 suggested that mistrust in judiciary institutions continues to prevail in Slovakia. The Supreme Court, led by Štefan Harabin, the former justice minister, and the nominee of Vladimir Mečiar was trusted only by 37 percent of those polled. And only 28 percent of respondents said they trusted the regular courts.

To put it in a broader context, the achievements of the last 20 years can be viewed with reference to the metaphor of the glass being half full or half empty. The more favorable view envisions Slovakia as a successful country that has suffered many defeats but managed to pick itself up again to renew democracy rules and to return on the road to integration into [unintelligible] structures. The other view sees situation as glass half empty. Slovakia suffers from an ineffective state bureaucracy, widespread bribery, problematic judiciary conduct. A network of public institutions has been put in place, but some of them are not infused with authentically democratic content and too often they are not occupied by genuine democrats. If we add to it the fact that political parties and politicians often command little public respect, credibility, and esteem, it can get a picture of a rather gloomy -- a rather

gloomy real capitalism, which for many people might be so unattractive as the infamous real socialism has been some 30, 40 years ago.

What sort of a specter, what type of a ghost is this real capitalism? I believe it is not a regime, but rather a metaphor about the society in which specific beliefs and the rules of behavior prevail. According to them, corruption and clientelism are simply the part of the new order and everybody who wants to enter public offices or to do business has to accept it. It is a kind of standard state of the public space. While it cannot be changed, it will be meaningless and hopeless to strive for it. One should better learn to comply with the rules, to live according to them. Obviously, if you accept these rules you can become quite successful, accomplish useful things, and implement your ideas and projects. If you decide not to do so, it is okay, but don't expect that you will reach your goals. However, if you wish to play the role of a hero and let everybody know that king is naked, be sure that the affected networks, structures, and mafias will find you. Everybody has something to lose. We remember well the old brother of real capitalism, the so-called real socialism, which took after the Soviet invasion of August 1968 when Soviet tanks suppressed the attempt at building democratic socialism in Czechoslovakia. "Forget about other types of socialism," repeated the Czech and Slovak communists, reinstating the oppressive regime. "Do not talk us about Willy Brandt, Olof Palme, Bruno Kreisky. Socialism equals a system which we have nowadays. This is real socialism and we will not be, and we will not be any other socialism except this one. There will be not any other socialism except this one."

Secondly, we are talking here about the lack of trust to democratic institutions, but it is not only this issue. For quite a lot of people of all generations, the question isn't whether we are better off. Many of them are asking: Have we made a good choice? Is the current regime really better? And it will be too simplistic to explain the criticism of the regime in terms of material disillusionment alone. One of the most comprehensive surveys conducted recently by Institute of Public Affairs revealed that there have been also political disappointments. On the one hand, when asked to compare their current situation with that before 1989, vast majority of Slovaks praised the increased freedom to work,

study or travel abroad, better access to information, more freedom of expression and association. However, other aspects didn't get such grounds for enthusiasm: only about a third of respondents thought that they had a better chance to be successful through honest work. Moreover, only one fourth of them were convinced that the equality of citizens before the law has improved in comparison with the era before 1989. And despite the appreciation of individual political freedoms, only 2/5 of people in Slovakia believed that they had a stronger influence on political decision-making now than before 1989.

In other words, and this is the second paradox, more freedom doesn't automatically mean more satisfaction and less civic alienation. We know and remember how passionate our forefathers, like Tomáš Masaryk and Milan Rastislav Štefánik were about freedom and liberty. These were sacred things for them. According to General Štefánik there's always a price to be paid. Although nowadays he would see that it is not enough to achieve the freedom, another demanding struggle has to follow. Tomáš Masaryk believed that some 50 years are necessary to firmly anchor democratic habits of the heart. And Václav Havel, as so often was right, "After an atheism and communism, we have now to cope with post-communism."

Let me now mention the third paradox. In the last three years we have been facing a unique situation: the current crisis and simultaneously existing waves of skepticism hasn't been caused just by one or two reasons. It is rather a special consequence of simultaneously emerging phenomena. There is, beyond any doubt, deep economic crisis and decline of living standards; increasing trust of the ability of any government or public authorities to handle it; inability of politicians of all orientations to fulfill promises and to deliver; decline of trust towards European institutions to master the changed circumstances do not help either. The memories of communism are evading, with the only exception: jobs and basic social benefits for everyone. Only now, this results in declining trust to democratic capitalism per se. The era of liquid modernity, analyzed by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, is followed by the emergence of liquid anger, described by Czech philosopher, Václav Bělohradský.

Last but not least, we have been witnessing the absence of grand and convincing narratives. And if we add to a

generation change, a phenomenon so brilliantly painted by Tom Brokaw and his famous book, "The Greatest Generation," we see even more deeply what is missing. Through the stories of individual men and women the author could tell the story of American citizens who came of age during the Great Depression and Second World War and went on to build North America. This generation, we see in the book, was united not only by a common purpose, but also by common values: duty, honor, courage, service, love of country, and responsibility for oneself. Now, gradually, the generation of young people in former Czechoslovakia who spent their formative years in struggling for greater freedom and independence in communist regime, who joined dissident groups and later become active participants in those designing and building the new world is not so strongly present on the public scene, another type of politicians took the helm. Not mentioning the departure of Václav Havel, which is not only symbolic, it means an end of the era.

Now it's time to speak about the fourth paradox. For the first time since the fall of communism after early elections of this March, Slovakia has one color government. The previous cabinet of Iveta Radičová primarily collapsed due to the disagreements and domestic efforts rather on truly European issue, on Slovakia's participation in the European Financial Stability Facility, another visible proof of the Europeanization of the Slovak politics. What can we expect from this new government? First of all, the good news: it doesn't include the bad guys. The fiercely nationalists from Slovak National Party, led by Ján Slota and the infamous Movement for Democratic Slovakia of Vladimír Mečiar. Secondly, it is a pro-European cabinet, and Slovakia evidently wants to be a part of a core-Europe, more integrated Europe, perhaps under the German leadership.

Thirdly, there are also some more problematic aspects. In accordance with realization of a corporatist model of government, the crucial decisions are done practically outside of the parliament. The political opposition is too weak and fragmented to convince the dominant Smer party that in the long run implementation of some of the intended changes in the budget, and tax policy, and the labor code, and the health policy, and pension system will probably not contribute to the proclaimed goal to the decrease of budget deficit support of economic growth, reduction of

unemployment, and strengthening of the material well-being of the middle class and lower class. Since the elections, several collective processes have emerged demanding better incomes for some categories of employees: health care workers, teachers, employees of some companies. Another problematic trend is the inclination of the ruling parties to expand its power or ability. A telling illustration can be the disputes over the election, or rather the nonelection of the new prosecutor general, Jozef Čentéš, blocked by the president with the silent approval of the current cabinet. And of course, fairly urgent problem is the living conditions of Roma and their relationship with the majority population.

Unfortunately, Slovakia hasn't done this significant progress in cooperating with it, and to give you an idea of the size and depth of this issue, let me quote some findings of the World Bank's study published recently, I don't know if Katarina Mathernova is here, because she was the author of the study with other associates. Roma in Slovakia are the least likely to find a job among all E.U. member states. Only 20 percent of Roma men have a job, only 9 percent of Roma women earn money on labor market. Roma women in general can hardly afford to send their children to kindergarten, and Roma pupils too often end up in special schools. Uneducated and low-skilled Roma who often have to face discrimination on the site of employers find it very difficult to find a job. Also, a vast majority of them would like to do so, and the labor market is definitely not the only sphere where they are disadvantaged and discriminated against. Roma live 15 years less than the majority of the population. In the recent period, we have witnessed an increased tension between Roma and the majority population. While more and more, politicians admit the fact that Slovakia doesn't have a more explosive problem, they often only come up with proposals based on myths and convictions that repressive measures are the most appropriate. So, let's hope that the new government plenty potentially for Roma first, but [unintelligible] and of Roma origin will be able to move the whole agenda forward.

I think all those problems present also the challenges for Slovakia's NGOs. Pavol mentioned yesterday at the Slovak embassy presented the story not only of cooperation between America partners and the Slovaks, but also the story of Slovakia's NGOs and really it just should be confirmed that

over the last two decades the civil society has created a uniquely rich, diverse, and flexible network of forms, organization schemes, initiatives, and ideas which have moved society forward. It has built up intellectual foundation for societal reforms, provided a mechanism for control of power, defended the interests of various groups of citizens, offered useful services and joined in resolving environmental, social, and health problems, and reacted to the needs of communities, towns, and regions in Slovakia. And I think active citizens in the next period will be needed probably more than ever.

If we return briefly to economy, we can see a relatively clear picture and there is both good news and bad news connected with it. The good news is that while in the whole E.U. industry branch is declining, Slovakia's increasing. In September of this year it was more 2 percent decrease in the E.U., and 13 percent increase in Slovakia. In Slovakia we always thought we stick to the auto industry, car industry, Volkswagen in number one -- is number one among the largest exporters in Slovakia. And also Kia and Peugeot are doing quite well. In January, a relatively small economies with a high share of export earnings in industry are doing the same, while in the whole E.U. 70 percent of employees work in the services, in the Czech Republic and Slovakia 38 and respectively 37 percent work in industry. Well, it will gradually slow, but even then the problem isn't in so much what is the path and proportion of this industry. Let's put it in different language: we are too dependent on global industry players. We import managerial and logistical procedures, we export products designed there as well. We are not exporting ideas, technologies, knowledges. We are lagging behind in knowledge economy and particular in innovations. It's not that our people wouldn't be able to produce innovations, look at the success of an antivirus program asset, originally small software designed by two young IT genius, which is now used in more than one million PCs worldwide. Look at the promising hubs of startups, look at many qualified researchers in the academia and the universities. It's rather about the fact that due to the current situation it is not sufficiently expected and required from them to work in this orientation.

And this directly and indirectly leads me to the last and fifth paradox that I would like to touch at least briefly. To simplify, due to the crisis, not only but certainly it's

one of the consequences of the crisis, the United States and European Union got closer to each other more than ever. And if European leaders are calling for negotiations to reduce barriers to transatlantic trade and investment, they do it for several reasons. Even if President Obama flies to Asia, he and his foreign policy team should think of it. I agree with the experts who believe that even in the upcoming era of a Pacific president, creating a stronger economic partnership with Europe is the best way to build a stronger American economy and to create more shared prosperity.

And this should take place in spite of Eurozone crisis because there is enormous capacity in the strengths of the United States' E.U. common market and it is not only economic but it is also strategic and security implications. In this context, we are not very happy that U.S. steel is thinking of leaving Slovakia because it was not only about jobs, it was about certain type of business culture, corporate responsibility to the community, about zero tolerance to violations of company etiquette code, and also about preparedness to initiate as the only company in Slovakia a Roma employment project. Now if we return from eastern Slovakia to Central Europe, you might be interested to know how some scorers from this region see the upcoming period. As it was expressed by Bartosz Wiśniewski from the Center for International Strategic Studies in Washington -- in Warsaw, "Everything should be done in connecting, promoting, supporting, and nurturing the context between the U.S. export official and civil servants and the partners from Central and Eastern Europe." According to István Balogh from the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs, "Visegrád four countries should intensify cooperation so as to jointly develop military capacities."

And during the debates in Bratislava at the Central European Institute founded by Tomas Valasek another idea has emerged, but at a time is not ripe to have the new future NATO Secretary General from our part of the world. While President Obama is launching negotiations with his partners in Congress on fiscal cliff and other urgent economic issues, this thing might test the waters and find out what the important players think of this idea. A joint Democratic-Republican push for a Central European Secretary General of NATO would certainly be a relevant voice to be heard also in Europe. We might even suggest which person might meet the criteria, a politician not only well known

here in Washington as the head of the New Atlantic Initiative, but also in Berlin and London, and not only due to his recent speeches but also thanks to his vision of the cooperating transatlantic community, and I know that you all know whom I have in mind: Radek Sikorski.

Regardless of concrete ideas and proposals, one thing is indisputable: the United States and Europe have very similar challenges and to discuss them more regularly on the highest possible level in an imaginative way might bring benefits for both sides.

Let me end on a personal note, my wife Zora and myself were privileged to watch many activities of Slovak-Americans here in the United States. The changing mood was reflected in the badges which they produce and sold. The typical badge in mid '90s said, "It's tough to be a Slovak, but someone must do it."

[laughter]

Then the year 2000 came, we won the world championship in the ice hockey, the mood became a bit more optimistic, so the transcript said, "Some of my best friends are Slovaks."

[laughter]

And in the new century, we are pleased to see and read another badge, another inscription: "I'm proud to be a Slovak." For many people in Slovakia this is still rather an aspiration, a dream. And let's hope that the circles of people who would be among those who could be proud and could have reasons to be proud of their homeland will broaden and let us believe that it will be also to un-neglectable path, thanks to the cooperation and friendship between America and Central Europe, between United States and the Slovak Republic. Thank you very much.

[applause]

Michael Van Dusen:

Thank you very much, Martin. I'll open the floor if we have a few minutes for questions. Raise your hand, identify yourself very briefly, and ask a brief question. We have a gentleman -- yeah, you will get a microphone and identify yourself.

Dan Fried:

Dan Fried. Various former jobs connected with Central Europe.

Michael Van Dusen:

Many. Welcome.

Dan Fried:

Martin, thank you for that. One observation, one -- and a question. Democracy was never supposed to be either the end of history or paradise on earth. It's messy and ugly, look at our country: developed democracy. I mean, really. But it gets you further than anything else. You were one of the people who thought through and crystallized the moral dimension of democracy back in the communist period. So I understand the disappointment you must have contrasting your hopes for a moral transcendence -- a morally transcendent system and the reality. But does it -- are you encountering the messy reality, and is the current wave of disappointment as -- truly as deep as the numbers suggest? I don't know the answer. With respect to your suggestions for American policy, I certainly would subscribe to the view that a pivot to Asia must be accompanied by a reaching out to Europe. I certainly believe in the transatlantic community, which was -- which your work and the work of your colleagues and our mutual friends has so wonderfully advanced.

So I welcome the lecture as a cautionary note that not all is completed. And I like your call for a recommitment on the part of the United States. I think that's fine. And -- but being an American and therefore an optimist, if not as you would say a blind optimist, how well it has turned out compared to the projections and the fears of many in 1989. And right now, the period after the end of communism has lasted longer than the interwar period and turned out better, despite it all. So have heart and remember that you have nothing but friends in this city and, I think, in this country. And thank you for everything you've done. Thanks.

[applause]

Michael Van Dusen:

I don't know that I detected a strong question there; it was a wonderful statement. Shall I go to the next question?

Martin Bútorá:

Yes, yes and I will --

Michael Van Dusen:

Down here in the front row, Wendy Luers?

Wendy Luers:

Mine is a -- mine is a two-finger question to follow on Dan, as another optimist. Last night, Martin, in front of many of us, talked about how Vaclav Havel got out of jail and came down and was the optimist with a whole group of dissidents in 1983. And I would like to follow on with Dan, and as I was talking to Pavol Demeš about our elections the week before in New York, I pointed out that only 9 percent of all the people contacted by our polls were -- responded to the polls. And so -- and we all know how flawed or manipulated those polls were, depending on whether it was the Republicans or the Democrats that were issuing the polls. Or the Democrats filling our inboxes with pleas for money, saying it's 48 to 48, and it's 47 to 49, and in my town -- state of Connecticut where we vote, Chris Murphy won by 10 percentage points when it was supposedly 48 to 48. My question for you, Martin, and to Zora, who's one of the greatest researchers and sociologists I've ever met, is are the respondents that IVO and all of you are looking at 9 percent? Is there another way of gauging what's going on? We don't live there; we don't know what it's like day-to-day, but all of us that have been involved feel that things look pretty damn good. So, that's my question.

Michael Van Dusen:

The glass is half full.

[laughter]

Wendy Luers:

[inaudible]

[laughter]

Martin Bútorá:

Yes. Maybe one more and then --

Michael Van Dusen:

Yes, okay. Ambassador Gandalovič, down here in the front.

Petr Gandalovič:

Ambassador Bútorá, thank you for your great and candid account of the situation in Slovakia. I rather missed a little more elaboration about the European prospects of Slovakia because, obviously, this is, I think, where Czechs and the Slovaks differ to some extent. But on the other hand, it is also a thing where -- or over which the last Slovak government fell and probably it was some sort of a turnaround in the political landscape for many years into the future. So I sort of missed this part in your presentation and I might want to encourage you to elaborate on it a little more.

Martin Bútorá:

Well, first of all, then thank you what you said and for your comments and for your dedication, because you the man who really helped it all to make happen. As for either pessimistic or optimistic tone, I personally am definitely not a pessimist. So it's rather, I would say, a position and combination of a certain skepticism and hope, and cautious skepticism because we have to be aware how the public feels about this even if we might think that this inappropriate. Two weeks ago I attended with Carl Gershman, First Congress of Democracy in Peru. And if everyone would listen to people who are really fighting for very basics, it means for freedom and escaping of torture, for just human dignity and everything else, for them, Czech Republic looks like it's a dream country, so they would love to be there and they would do everything if the situation in their countries could be better.

And I think in my eyes it's something like Arthur Schlesinger described in those cycles in U.S. history. After 20 years of, I would say, more emphasis on the individual, then comes another period which is inclining to the concept of community. We have been following it. After Reagan era then come another, and I think this is in that part of the world, Czechoslovakia, former Czechoslovakia, we know what the 20-year cycles mean, yes? 1918, 1938, 1948, 1960, 1989. So, I'm not that pessimistic as for the future, but we have to be realistic and also the politicians need to know how to address those people. If we had hundreds or thousands of Bill Clintons on the scene, I'm quite sure that the results would be much better than they are, and Zora can tell perhaps -- can say perhaps a word about what Wendy was asking how those results are

appropriate or not. And as for your question, well this is something what worries me a bit because of the fact that I would like to see all Visegrád countries, all Central European countries to proceed together.

So from this perspective, Slovakia is evidently now on a strong pro-European line and I think it's a -- in my estimate -- in my humble estimate at least, it would be good also for the Czech Republic to sit at the table and to co-decide about everything. From this point of view, we are still struggling for getting a better condition for the next budget, the next seven years' period. Here the Visegrád countries are cooperating in some cases, and in some issues, I think Slovakia was able to get quite far, and I am glad to see the Poles and the Poland that they also want to be sitting at the table and to co-decide. This is, I think for us, the eminent issue: to be there. Nothing can be decided without us. I think this is important and we could elaborate on it a bit later. So I would like to say a word about the service.

Zora Bútorová:

I can only say that unfortunately the service are done in a very correct way, and in the comparative service done in the part -- in our part of the world, the Visegrád four countries, so Hungarians are even much more pessimistic than Slovaks are, and Czechs and Poles are doing a little better. But it's nothing surprising we were able in our country to carry out important reforms despite the frustration of population and despite very critical evaluations. So I would not think that this is the predictor of some huge changes in the political system. On the other hand, we have to listen to reasons of frustration of people, and for people who care about democracy it is important to know that it's not just a question of bread and full table of things. But it's not just a question of consumerism and a willingness to have what my neighbors have, but it is really also the question of the system, political system, which somehow doesn't make people feel that they are the part -- that they are participating in shaping the system.

Martin Bútor:

Maybe one word more. There is, you know, the famous question of Henry Kissinger, "Which number should I call if I want to know more about European decision-makers?" But I don't think there is an answer. By the way, I'm not so

sure that the number here in the U.S. is known that to whom call who.

[laughter]

Michael Van Dusen:
There's no number.

[laughter]

Martin Bútorá:
But at any rate -- but I mean yes -- but maybe if, even if one number is unknown, what gives me a sort of optimism is if Mr. Secretary would like to call and to talk, to encourage civic leaders who are able change their communities, who are able to serve as an actors of change, if he would like to talk to the reformers who are able in an incredible short period of time to transform their countries. If he would like to call to encourage the judges in Czech Republic who said enough is enough, we are going to behave like free people and we will do it. So there are examples and there are good numbers in Central Europe to be called.

Michael Van Dusen:
In the second row, yes?

Martin Bausch:
My name is Martin Bausch [spelled phonetically]. I had the pleasure to serve here as Czech Ambassador with Martin Bútorá in the early 2000s. I applaud Dan Fried for informing us that we still have a lot of friends here in Washington and in the United States. But still, being realist, I know that our relationship with the United States is pretty asymmetrical; Czech Republic, Slovakia, even all Central European countries combined. So I would like to ask you, Martin, would you have any advice for all of us how to deal with this asymmetry and to maybe improve our communication, if it needs be, with the government of the United States that obviously has global issues on the table.

Martin Bútorá:
Maybe one other --

Michael Van Dusen:

Yes, we could have one other question over here. Yes, the gentleman, yes?

John Feffer:

Hi, John Feffer from Open Society Foundation. And I also thank you for your candor, it's very, very appreciated. I had a question about judiciary reform. Obviously, Slovakia had to pass through a lot of hoops to get into the European Union and some of those hoops were related to judiciary reform. And I'm curious whether you think that there should have been more hoops, whether there should have been different hoops, or whether E.U. accession was largely irrelevant to this issue of improving the judiciary and the trust in the judiciary? Because, obviously, it's not just a question for Slovakia, but for the other countries that are on the verge, perhaps, of joining the E.U. and also face similar questions with their judiciary.

Michael Van Dusen:

Yes.

Michael Mosettig:

Mike Mosettig, PBS Online News Hour. We get a fair number of visitors, even here at the Wilson Center, who insist to worried Americans that we have the Euro situation under control, and there are some people and some distinguished think tanks here who believe the same thing. Given that we can always count on Central Europeans for realism in the place of blind optimism, what is the assessment in Bratislava about is the Euro going to hold together? Are these measures that have been taken so far going to work, or are they only a temporary thing that pushes the real problems down the road, and then what are the implications if it doesn't work?

Martin Bútorá:

Yes.

[laughter]

I think it's clear that these are the issues for the next agenda of next lectures. But anyway, just to try to reflect upon some of them. I think as for the judiciary the picture is pretty mixed. It depends on which government is dedicated and devoted to the reforms, but it depends also on the features which are not directly connected with the government but maybe with judiciary

personnel, about the characters of the judges, about their education, about their ability to handle with their independence because they got it, they have autonomy, and one of the results of that autonomy that the newly emerging clientelistic structure is among them.

At the same time, it is not in so much about the majority of the judges, it's rather only about several of judges who are, unfortunately, very influential in doing bad things. We know from other surveys that the vast majority of judges would love to do things appropriately, and again I mention this trend -- emerging trend in the Czech Republic and there are positive examples. And I think it's not -- it's not impossible to gradually to change it.

And then, the -- I would say the European communication, it usually ends when the countries are entering the E.U., and this is one of the reasons why the mechanism should be designed and prepared how to communicate further on issues like this, because it is not about environment, there simply it's easier -- you want to get -- you want to get European money and you simply have to comply. It's not quite the case with the judiciary.

My question to -- my response to your question is I'm afraid I do not know and I don't know if anyone knows in Europe. But there are several camps -- there are several groups of opinions, and two of them are, I would say, clearly visible. There are people who are basically by and large Euro-optimists in that sense that what has been achieved after 1945, building this European house after the horrors of the 20th century, and building it brick after brick, the first floor, the second floor, and the third floor, in spite of the crisis, in spite of shaking, in spite of earthquake, all the countries and politicians in the region should do everything in order, not only to protect the building, but also to further build it. And for those people, they are realistically evaluating each and every decision, sometimes they are very critical to it but they are convinced that genuine pro-Europeans in the European political scene they really want and wish Europe and the European Union to succeed.

Then there is another group, which is rather focusing on finding all the details, why this or that particular solution is either obsolete or bad or poor or simply unmanageable. And I think it is really the crisis, and

here I move to the answer to Martin Bausch, that that's the reason why the U.S. and the Europeans should talk more because, yes we have the crisis, but to leave it just on the watch if the U.S. or E.U. does better and what tools are used, it's not enough. I think this is the time for rethinking of each and every, I would say, point of each and every item of both domestic financial and economic issues and also of possible cooperation and possible exchange. We are really missing this dialog. So I think here it shouldn't contradict. I don't think the natural inclination of the U.S. to other areas of the world shouldn't contradict the continuation and nurturing of the E.U.-American ties. It's rather on us, Central Europeans and Europeans, to insist, persevere, to be prepared, to come. As I was quoting this Polish friend, I think he painted it quite appropriately.

Michael Van Dusen:

I think we have time maybe for one last question. Yes, Martin?

Martin Bausch:

Thank you very much. This would be rather a comment, since I'm alumni of Woodrow Wilson Center. I was here in '99, spent six incredible months here, and at that time, with Martin Bútorá and his team when he was ambassador, we celebrated 10th anniversary of Velvet Revolution and Czech and Slovak Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda and Miloš Zeman unveiled a bust of Alexander Dubček, which you can see outside. So this house has very special meaning for many of us, Martin and myself in particular. I wanted to thank you, Mike, very much, thank friends of Slovakia and Embassy of Slovakia, under leadership of Peter Kmec, for putting this together. And, Martin, congratulations for a remarkable speech. I'm not only proud to be Slovak, but I'm proud to be friend of yours. Thank you, very much.

[applause]

Michael Van Dusen:

Thank you very much, and the only thing I would add that I forgot to mention, is that we have a senior scholar here writing a book on the political philosophy of Maserak. And it may be some time in the making but it is happening here and I look forward to seeing it. Thank you all for coming.

[inaudible commentary]

Michael Van Dusen:

Yes. I know you do, I know you do. This was being filmed and that ended the film.

[inaudible commentary]

Michael Van Dusen:

[laughs] Now I'd like to invite Ted Russell and Tom Dine, representing Friends of Slovakia and the American Friends of the Czech Republic up to the podium. Sorry, that was all. [inaudible]

Ted Russell:

Martin, thank you for what has been appropriately described as a remarkable, and candid, and provocative survey of the state of Slovak society. I would say that your many friends in this room very much see the glass as half full. We count on Slovak resilience to move things forward and we thank you for carrying high the banner of transcendental values which you have done consistently throughout your long career. We also want to honor you for your service here, where you moved Slovakia towards and into NATO and the European Union, and for all your other services to U.S.-Slovak friendship. And so to honor this, we have actually had designed by a very fine medalist and artist here, Klara Sever, a Friends of Slovakia Medal of Honor with Milan Rastislav Štefánik and the American eagle on the front, and on the back our national symbols. And we would like to present you with this Medal of Honor to honor all that you have done for U.S.-Slovak friendship.

[applause]

Tom Dine:

We at the American Friends of the Czech Republic do not have gold.

[laughter]

But we have sentiment and we have purpose. I have here, Martin, a Certificate of Appreciation to be awarded to you from both the Friends of Slovakia and the American Friends of the Czech Republic. But before I read this out, I'd like to just say to you, you know, I've known you since I met you in Bratislava in the mid '90s with Zora. Wherever there's Martin, there's Zora, and vice versa. And you

struck me as brilliant, on the right side of history, filled with fantastic values, and I want to be your friend. And I still feel that way about you, and it was a brilliant presentation, so we all want copies so we can quote you accurately in the days and weeks ahead. So a Certificate of Appreciation awarded to Martin Bútorá, in grateful appreciation for the promotion of understanding of the Czech and Slovak legacy in the struggle for freedom, overcoming 50 years of foreign domination and emerging as a free, secure, and democratic nation. Czech and Slovak Freedom Lecture series, Friends of Slovakia, Ted Russell, American Friends of the Czech Republic, myself.

[applause]

Martin Bútorá:

It's something very special to get it from a person who was a gentleman named Štefánik and the son of [inaudible].

[laughter]

Tom Dine:

It is true. And he's a lieutenant colonel in the Marines, not quite a general. We don't have gold, as I mentioned, but we have something else that's more useful on a day-to-day basis. So from the American Friends of the Czech Republic, this is for you.

Martin Bútorá:

Oh, thank you. In the times of crisis this should be appreciated.

[laughter]

Tom Dine:

Not in Euros.

[laughter]

Martin Bútorá:

So, thanks.

Tom Dine:

Sure.

Michael Van Dusen:

Thank you all for being here. You're welcome at the Wilson Center anytime, come back.

[end of transcript]