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TRANSCRIPT

"DEFENDING MINIMUM HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS IN EUROPE: WHY ARE WE FAILING?"

A Conversation With Gerald Knaus

Moderator: Leonard Benardo

ANNOUNCER:

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LEONARD BERNARDO:

It's a great pleasure to-- have Gerald Knaus here-- the executive director and founder, since '99, of the European Stability Initiative. Gerald goes back and forth-- Istanbul, Paris, Berlin, rough life, (LAUGHTER) but he's got-- someone's gotta do it--

SANDY:

Harvard.

LEONARD BERNARDO:

Harvard. And published-- is-- two years ago this came out?

GERALD KNAUS:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LEONARD BERNARDO:

Eighteen months? "Can Intervention Work," with Rory Stewart. Better known some-- some people "Rory the Tory--" (LAUGHTER)

GERALD KNAUS:

"The walking Tory."

MALE VOICE #2:

Pretends to be--

LEONARD BERNARDO:

Pretends to-- (LAUGHTER) is-- is he in ampere (PH) right now?

GERALD KNAUS:

Yes, he's in Amperes.

LEONARD BERNARDO:

Okay. But f-- we're fortunate to have Gerald here, this is being taped and-- Gerald's gonna talk-- about broader challenges to the human rights narrative, something that clearly we are contending with on an ongoing basis here. Successfully or otherwise. And you'll-- Gerald's gonna talk for maybe 15, 18 minutes? You wanna talk more?

GERALD KNAUS:

M-- well-- (UNINTEL)

LEONARD BERNARDO:

Or 25? But then we'll-- this is-- I just wanna make sh-- sure there's time for-- good questions and answers as well, so welcome. (KNOCKING)

GERALD KNAUS:

Thank you. Well, thanks a lot for this opportunity, I have lots of good friends here.

So it's almost like a conversation in a pub. And I-- I-- think I can assume a lot-- about the issues I'll-- I'll talk about. But lemme still start with-- some very concrete-- a very concrete story, the story-- as anybody who talks about human rights today should probably f-- be placed in Ukraine.

A Ukrainian woman, about which I know relatively little-- but like-- would like to know more-- her name is Vera-- I was told-- her family were Cossacks. She was Russian-speaking, was born in Ukraine in the 1920's. Allegedly a good student, and like millions of Ukrainians in the second world war she ended up in Germany.

There was this massive program of transporting millions of-- initially-- voluntary, but then it turned into slave laborers-- to Germany. She gave birth to a child in Berlin in 1944, she named her "Peace," but Berlin in 1944 was not a good place to grow up. The father was a German who was married, who was actually involved in moving Ukrainian laborers to Germany. I know very little about him and he disappeared.

The child was taken to the countryside. The Red Army came to Berlin-- sentenced her and executed her in Berlin in 1945. So the child remained stateless, was never picked up, grew up in the Austrian Alps and was my mother. She got her citizenship-- age 14, until then she didn't know who her real parents were. And-- she grew up as a good Austrian Catholic.

Now the th-- interesting thing about this story, of which there are millions in Europe, is that anybody who scratches the surface, in-- in Europe, actually has a story like that. So if we talk today about European values and-- you know, defending-- European democracy and human rights as-- under the-- the blue and-- and stars tr-- flag of the European union-- we often forget just how extremely recent this association of Europe, of human rights, really is.

There've been a great number of books and you probably know most of them from Mark Mazower's, *Dark Continent*, about-- his great description of the 1930's, to Keith Lowe's book, *The Savage Continent,* about Europe after World War II. And if one reads these books-- if one discovers that in Germany in 1945, when the war ended, there were literally millions of slaves.

Of course, torture had been reintroduced on a massive scale, slavery, executions, genocide. Then one realizes on what a recent, fragile basis-- the human rights architecture really rests, that we have today. Another Ukrainian woman I met in 1993, when I went to work in Ukraine-- also symbolizes this. Her name was Lydia, she was born in the ol-- last year of the Hapsburg monarchy, a refugee of the first world war-- in Vienna. She grew up in Romania. She-- her-- her religion was literature, but since she was Jewish she was also taken to a Romanian camp.

On the wall of her apartment, where she was teaching students languages in the 1990's-- was Thomas Mann, her native tongue was German. And again her life, of course, shows us that this-- as we all know, this repression continued in half the continent until-- until the end of the Soviet Union. In fact when she was teaching in the 1990's she was one of the very few women in her village in Ukraine, on the border of Romania, who kept the vision that somehow one could go back to the old days, to

the early 20th century, when indeed she was told by her parents one could easily go to Vienna.

There were no borders. And there was this-- very benign-- monarch, Franz Joseph, (PH) and I couldn't quite convince her that he was not the solution for the European future. If we talk-- if-- if we look at European politics in the last few years, one of the most powerful myths was really this: This myth of a return to a normality in which Europe would be democratic. But if we think, for a second, about what we are currently engaged in, what has happened in the last 20 years, we discover that the idea of-- a Europe of open borders and liberal democracies, integrated and peaceful, is a radically new option.

Completely-- unprecedented. And-- and that it is extremely recent. I mean, this is why I like this book because what Samuel Moyn (PH) describes is-- a world-- and I think it's very much true for Europe, where for a very long time, until literally yesterday, the idea that human rights were the basic mobilizing philosophy-- was-- was very alien. (SNEEZE)

I mean, I live in Turkey now, and again, just to put it into context, Turkey of course saw the expulsion of its Christian Istanbul community, the Greeks of Istanbul-- exactly 50 years ago. It started in 1964. They were spared the population exchange at the creation of the republic. They were expelled when Turkey was already in the council of Europe. When Turkey was already a member of NATO. 200,000 people within 15 years.

And there was very little complaint. So what is it that protects-- first of all what is it that has driven the change in the last 20 years? And what is it that protects us from falling back? This is all the more urgent as, clearly, in many parts of Europe things are moving backwards. Again I come from Turkey where the narrative the last 15 years-- well, the last 10 years to be more precise-- was based on real facts of-- of a gradual extension of, again, European values.

Torture, which was ubiquitous-- was being stopped. There was more freedom of speech, taboos were being discussed openly. Politics became more inclusive. The military was pushed out of politics. As we see today this-- this-- trend is very much under assault. And all the old questions about zeroes and politics, autocratic rule and the destruction of leading institutions are back on the agenda.

We see that in the Balkans and of course we see it in Ukraine where the option-- the certainty that Ukraine is moving in a-- in a given direction and (UNINTEL) suffice as to look at the news and we know that-- it is completely unclear if the vision of Leudeharnic (PH), that she had 20 years ago, is still true. So what do we have on which we can base, as an activ-- as activists, as enjols (PH), as intellectuals-- the project of completing, or rather to-- to-- to take the myth of returning to a Europe that never existed. The Europe of liberal democracies, based on human rights.

And there is this document, Europe Convention of Human Rights, which was signed in November 1950 in a Roman palace. The idea behind that convention, again Simoine (PH) describes it as a rather radical document-- it is one of the most rigorous

human rights regimes, it had-- brings with it a court, European Court of Human Rights, 800 million people can, in theory, all individually appeal to that court for the protection of their rights.

The idea behind this was-- to create a spiritual union, as Churchill put it at the time. An early warning device against autocratic restoration, against the drift to authoritarianism. The original idea behind this was not yet that individuals would go to a court, but that states would take each other to court. So that states would actually protect-- rights by interfering in each other's affairs. Where are we now with this?

Well, the obvious thing is, of course, that-- in-- there is an incomplete enlargement of these European institutions created in the '50s. But some of them have been enlarged and there we discovered that-- the drawbacks-- or the challenges of an enlargement that has gone wrong. And here I'm referring to the Council of Europe. It's an institution that is not often focused on mon-- policy makers, not or-- the media, but it is one that we've stumbled across in the last few years in the context of our work in eastern Europe.

The Council of Europe is, allegedly, as I've said, a spiritual union of democracies. It's linked to the court, it's linked to the convention. It's only part of the very dense network (COUGH) of forest of institutions we have in Europe. There is, of course, also the OACE, there are many commissioners for different aspects of human rights and then there's the European Union.

But the Council of Europe is-- is particular because it-- it also includes countries like Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and of course has included Turkey almost from the very beginning. From 1950. And what we've seen in-- in the last few years, the Council of Europe embodies this idea that enlargement would be the solution to problems. You know, you-- you join and then once you're in, even if you're not perfect at the beginning, you would gradually move in a certain direction through peer pressure and through the existing instruments.

What we've seen in the last five years is that the opposite has happened. The autocrats of the east have discovered, while the democrats of the west have been largely indifferent-- that it's very useful to have the legitimacy of democracy-- as a battle in their domestic wars against dissidence. So to have election observers from Strasberg come and say the elections in Azerbaijan are free and fair is an extremely useful instrument when you're confronting young dissidents because it shows them just how isolated they really are.

So what we've seen in the last few years is that the autocrats of the east have used their membership of these institutions in concerted campaigns very well strategized building up alliances. And what we've seen, just in the last year, has been really quite extraordinary. We had electi-- votes in the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasberg, which is made up of members of the parliaments of all the member states. So they are the Dutch and the German and the Swiss, but also the Russian and Turkish and-- and Azerbaijani MPs. And we've had votes there where

every time Azerbaijani's on the agenda, a new record, in terms of the quorum is reached. There're never more people there than when it involves an Azerbaijan.

And Azerbaijan consistently defeats or wins with its allies-- every-- every vote that is in any way critical. This alliance is really an alliance of Azerbaijan, together with Russia, together with Turkey, they all-- they all vote together. But they also have a lot of supporters in the west. And the result of this is that-- in autumn 2012 we had a vote there-- on the concept of political prisoner and you'll know, from the 1970's, how-- how key this notion of political prisoners was for the early dissidents like Sacharof (PH) and, of course, the Czechs and-- a vote on the concept of political prisoners where the Council of Europe came within one vote, the assembly of all these Democrats, of ruling that the very notion is meaningless and that the parliamentary assembly and the Council of Europe should be silent on this and actually-- should leave it all to the court.

And what the Azerbaijanis and the Russians have found out is that the game of prisoner carousel, but you always arrest enough people, you intimidate them, you keep them in prison, then the pressure builds up, then you let them out. You pay the European court, you pay some damages, but you arrest the next bunch. That this is an extremely efficient way to manipulate the institutions.

Now in that vote the-- the-- the Democrats, the Italians, the Spanish-- the Poles, I mean, the central European MPs in that assembly were among the worst, in terms of voting. They've all been courted for-- f-- the last five years, systematically invited to Baku-- supported in many ways, we call it Kave-Diplomacy (PH). We can't write everything we know because our sources in Azerbaijan are-- are-- are-- are-- are afraid.

But it is very clear that this institution has been captured. But what is more interesting is that this ha-- happened to total indifference. Hardly any think-tank in Europe, hardly any media have really written about it. the same is true for election observation, which--

MALE VOICE #2:

Except GSI.

GERALD KNAUS:

--I think-- well, recently-- we also-- I didn't really know much about the cost of Europe one, two, three, four years ago. The same is true, I think, for election observation. Here too the last few years have seen-- the creation of an alternative industry. Lots of quango (PH) institutions in France-- in Germany, in Belgium, are former senators, are former politicians, who are basically for hire now. This is-- obviously-- you know, they go and-- and observe elections in Kazakhstan, Russia, and Azerbaijan. They always find the elections are free and fair, they spend two days

there, they get lots of gifts, they are very well paid. But the more interesting thing isn't-- isn't the mercenaries like this, it's that they always see parliamentary assembly or the Council of Europe parliamentary assembly which are consistent of elected officials are doing the same thing.

So we've had two recent elections in Azerbaijan where they've always found elections to be free and fair. So what we are seeing here is that we are losing-- our vocabulary. I mean if autocracy is democracy, if autocratic counselization (SIC) is democratic transition, if non-competitive elections are free and fair, then, in fact, it's not only about Azerbaijan, then what are the standards we're applying to other countries in much less obvious black-and-white situation?

Like Hungary. Like Turkey. Like Georgia. If political prisoners, if these ideas, if these notions cannot be defended by the institutions of which these countries are members-- Islam Malia (PH) recently went to Brussels, he stood next to the NATO general secretary. He was asked by journalists about political prisoners and with a big broad smile, and we have the video clip on our website, he said-- "Well-- the most respected human rights organization in the world, the Council of Europe, has confirmed there are no political prisoners here, so you journalists, what are you asking about?"

And, of course, neither DeBarossa (PH) in a previous meeting, nor the NATO general secretary have said anything. So we are, in a strange way-- further behind than we were in the '70s or '80s when we seemed to know what dissidents were. When the Council of Europe had some sort of idea of what a (BACKGROUND VOICE) democracy was. Until 2004, 2005, we seemed to have some sort of confidence that we could really tell a fake election from a real one.

And-- and I'm not really sure anymore whether this is true. But in a strange way what we are seeing here also is the power of ideas and concepts. Why are these regimes-- putting so much emphasis on manipulating institutions which actually have no real influence?

Council of Europe can do little else in the worst case than issue a condemnation. And why is it, then, that when there is sufficient pressure, moral pressure, media pressure-- pressure on the legitimacy that these regimes consistently and purs-- always release political prisoners so that it actually appears to work, the pressure, but it is not sustained.

It is that in fact being able to claim that you're a democracy, being able to claim that you have no political prisoners and free and fair elections, is a very powerful source of legitimacy. So what is to be done in this context by-- activists-- organizations or think-tanks that believe, still, in the notion of one Europe, whole and free?

Well, one thing is we need to work on not losing our language. If we are in favor of, for example, further European Union enlargement, and we then go to the Dutch or German parliament, what we are meeting is members of parliament who say, "Look we-- we don't believe any of these institutions anymore. Neither the Council of Europe nor the European Commission," when they tell us that these countries meet

European standards.

Because-- you know, we-- we don't trust it, because in our experience we've been disappointed so often. If we don't have a credible language and-- and-- and assessment mechanisms that convince skeptics in-- in the U.N. and western Europe, if we cannot make a success of Council of Europe enlargement, which is so much more a less-- less significant than EU enlargement, then the case for, for example offering a new perspective to Ukraine and convincing the Dutch or the Germans-- to take it seriously, is going to be very difficult.

And that, of course, is the key problem. The divisions of Europe whole and free is still there in the rhetoric, but en-- unless it is taken seriously and is credible on two sides, credible with the countries which offer the perspective, and credible with the-- with the politics-- and representatives-- members of parliament in-- in-- in-- in the EU saying to a country, "Well, you might join one day, Kosovo, Albania," is not going to be very mobilizing because nobody really believes it.

So one of the challenges for us, and this is where we have been very active in the last year, is, for example, working with the European Commission. So that when it writes its assessments, its annual progress reports on accession countries, these accession reports are actually-- and there are political criteria in there, these are actually comprehensible and are ready by anybody. What we've discovered is that very few people, even the commission, read these reports. It's not clear who they are for.

And when we talked with Dutch members of the foreign ministry, when they summarize them for the Dutch parliament, they say, "Well, this is really extremely painful. Basically, when the commission tells us Macedonia is doing fine, you know, we don't believe it. When the commission tells us Albania is ready to open accession talks we don't believe it. When the commission tells us something about Turkey, we don't believe it."

So one of the challenges is to make assessments credible to restore some clarity, less confusion, less fuzziness, to our concepts. To restore the notion that there are red lines which we can recognize against which we can hold countries. And not to do that in an intellectual way that is incomprehensible but in a way that a-- an intelligent 14 year old can understand. Not in a lawyerly language that would only prevail in the court, but in a way that journalists can pick up.

So if we say that Turkey today does not have basic freedom of religion because it is impossible for any religion to register as a legal entity, it's just-- there's no law that allows it, and state this clearly, we would actually have the sort of message that civil society in Turkey could rally around. It's the kind of message we gave to the Turks ten years ago in the military. The military must not interfere. That was a clear message.

Finding ways to say this about freedom of speech, however, of free and fair elections is-- is much more difficult. And I think here the conceptual work really needs to be done. In our discussions with the commission and the new director general of EG enlargement in the last few months on this-- we've recommended that one should

focus less on the mechanics, what's inside the box, and more on the outputs.

Because the game that these autocrats, and now I'm including some members of the European Union, are playing, when they criticize this they say, "Well, but this rule we have seen in Britain and that law exists in England and this is also a rule you have in Austria." But the end result, to just take the example of Turkey, is that when something very big happens in Turkey, like on Taksim Square, the protests last summer, and the mainstream media doesn't report, it doesn't really matter what the reason is, we know there is no freedom of speech.

So what we are recommending is to find the way to-- to-- to look at the out-- outcome. Less on the mechanics on the inside. So to say to a government in Macedonia or Turkey or, who knows in five years, in Serbia or Georgia, to say to them, "Look, we-- we will do what they old year (?) has done before elections. We will look for a month what is actually on your main television. You know, are there public debates with different opinions, are different voices actually being heard, and then we don't care whether it is self-censorship or commercial interests or laws or-- defamation laws or-- or-- or-- or intimidation. If you don't have free public debates it's your problem to create that, but for us this is a red line that cannot be crossed."

So I think there is-- it's quite striking, there is on some of these issues, and the same is true bu-- in terms of red lines for election monitoring on some of these issues, and almost the need to go back to-- to-- to-- first principles. They have a more clear language. To-- to take back the language of basic European standards from the experts and from the lawyers. And to recognize that while we have this dense jungle of institutions, and-- no other continent has as many as Europe, unless these concepts are not-- are clear and not muddled, they don't help us.

We also need to build more alliances. If the autocrats have built alliances in the Council of Europe, the democrats have not. So what is it that prevents the Swedes and the Germans and the Swiss (COUGH) and the Irish and the Austrians and others who've voted against Azerbaijan or Russia to come together more effectively.

We need to seize opportunities. One of the most interesting stories in the last year in defending of human rights-- was the ability to link some human rights-- to things like visa liberalization, which is extremely popular. The big battle in Moldova in the last two years was actually on non-discrimination of sexual minorities. Moldova was asked to pass a law on non-discrimination as one of the conditions of getting visa-free travel.

Why did the interior ministers insist on this in the EU, to say to Moldovans, "You can travel visa-free to Schengen and if you have a non-discrimination law." They said, "Well, if you don't have a non-discrimination law (THUMP) and we lift the visas everybody (THUMP) will come and apply for asylum, so you need to get your (THUMP) human rights in order."

For the NGOs in Moldova, however, this was-- and some of these NGOs were actually Russians, who came from (THUMP) Russia and some of these activists (THUMP) saw this as a way to take a stand (THUMP) against this wave of homophobic-- attacks

and-- and-- and campaigns led in Moldova, as well as in Russia, or Ukraine or Georgia by the orthodox church (THUMPS) together with the former communist party.

And to actually force politicians to take a stance by linking-- LGBT rights to visa liberalization. It was actually possible, and in Moldova, of course, the law was passed. The court actually also-- struck down-- certain other-- other regulations in cities which, like in Russia, declared themselves-- cities free of gay propaganda. It was possible to actually turn this issue into-- into one that-- that could get popular and political support.

And finally my last point, defend the credibility of the bigger vision. It is very easy at a moment like this to give up on the notion that Europe whole and free-- a continent in which borders are permeable and physical borders disappear, and in which liberal democracies interfere in each other's affairs and thereby hold each other to account in which red lines can be policed by institutions, that this vision is no longer possible.

But as we see after every shock in the last 20 years, and it was always a shock, the response by policymakers was to grasp for an instrument that might work and it always ended up being enlargement. And I go back to an American who actually articulated this philosophy best in 1993 and he didn't think of the EU then. Anthony Lake, who gave a presentation in 1993 where he said, "We need to replace the policy of containment. After the Cold War we have a policy of enlargement." And what he meant was, of course, the idea of enlarging all institutions of liberal democracies as the Americans had done so successfully after the second world war in western Europe.

So this vision is still-- is still the best tool we have and after the k-- Bosnian War it was only in 1997 that the EU decided to open accession talks with the Poles and the Hungarians and three others. After the Kosovo war the EU decided to open accession talks with Romania, Bulgaria, and others. When Macedonia stumbled into civil war in 2001, which was narrowly avoided, the EU realized we need to do something and promise the Balkans something. And our hope is that the image of snipers in Kiev and-- the prospect of a big and important country tumbling into civil unrest on the border of many EU member states, might lead the EU to think more seriously about a policy of enlargement, also for Ukraine.

And I think with this-- it has a very big agenda for activist NGOs and think tanks, and institutions like OSF-- to make a difference. So that perhaps one day even Ukraine and the former blood lands of Europe, as Timothy Snyder called them, are part of-- the liberal Europe of integrated democracies.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

LEONARD BERNARDO:

You-- you speak a lot about taking back the discourse, taking back-- the-- the-- the, sort of language-- currently-- dominating-- European political social debate. Wh-- s-- (PAPER) it's-- it's unclear, specifically, who the unit of analysis-- who-- who-- who--

who were specifically identified, who's going to be doing the taking back? Is it your assumption that NGOs and think tanks are in a position to, in fact, refashion and reimagine a language to have that kind of clarity to a 14 year old whom you'd-- would like to under-- have understand what the-- the-- the fault lines or-- or-- or the red line in which one cannot pass? Wh-- wh-- what is the actual unit of analysis-- that-- that-- that we're looking at?

GERALD KNAUS:

Well, I think what we've seen in the Council of Europe was very interesting in the last few elections. That was a very clear geographic-- sometimes it was ideological like in the U.K. but usually was geographic division. I mean in the U.K. it's very clear the British conservative party sides with the autocrats-- this is-- they are actually in a party faction with Yanukovych, Putin, and Aleehv (PH). In the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe which means much more than voting occasionally, they are-- they're literally al-- almost every issue they vote together. This is the strategy of the British Torres which I think, now I want to just embarrass them much more about-- I know they're very embarrassed when you talk to them in private, but it's not been enough of an issue in the British press.

But otherwise, in other countries, it's basically all the Spaniards are always with the autocrats. Most of the Italians are. In Italy it's purely commercial policy, you know, you visit the Italian foreign ministry and you have, you know, the big books of Azerbaijan, the future of-- of-- energy policy on the desk and, of course, you know (UNINTEL) is very active in the east, both in Russia and Azerbaijan. It's the Turks there.

But on the other side your question is who one could mobilize against this. And here the interesting thing is that countries like-- and-- and there are, of course, a lot of countries who-- who might care if they would focus on this and when we talk to them they begin to care. Like the Scandinavians, the Balks-- some of the central Europeans but not the new democracies.

Astonishingly, Poland is completely absent and I still haven't fully understood why-- (CLICK) why the Poles have been-- but-- but-- some of the Czechs, the Austrians, the Germans-- the Swiss, the Dutch, the Danes. I mean, there is a potential and-- and I think there is still-- there still is sufficient number of people who-- who care about these visions.

When you ask the Germans, there was a survey in Dersch-- in the IAD (PH)-- a month ago on Ukraine. When you ask them if they can imagine Ukraine in the EU it's very interesting that-- 60% think Ukraine will be in the EU in the next 20 year. Of course the questions is what kind of Ukraine? I mean, a Ukraine in democracy. But I think if you-- if you link-- if you link the-- the agenda of reform, if you mobilize the people who-- who-- who-- who believe and share this vision of-- of a Europe of democracies you can mobilize a lot of people.

Now the new anst-- human rights envoy in the German government-- was actually that envoy, I mean Kristof Schtresser (PH), I just visited him two weeks ago, he-- he actually was the envoy who proposed the definition of political prisoners in the Council of Europe and was almost voted down and then was voted down with his report in Azerbaijan.

Now he is now the human rights envoy in Berlin. He is interested in doing something. I know-- I know in Sweden they're interested because they find themselves (NOISE) constantly outvoted. I went to the Swiss foreign minister and the Swiss are always very careful, but they are worried also. Because these institutions matter to them more because they're not in the EU. So I think coalitions of-- of-- of intellectual think tanks-- civil society, but also governments-- to take back, otherwise, you know, these institutions are really useless. Otherwise, you know, we should really start a debate on-- but I actually think they are not useless because they-- the-- the debates in those institutions helps us to formulate our concepts which then can help dissidents in the new-- the new criti-- critical minds in those countries to-- to use that vocabulary.

LEONARD BERNARDO:

So the language right now is not so debased that it doesn't have an opportunity of being--

GERALD KNAUS:

No, I--

LEONARD BERNARDO:

(UNINTEL)

GERALD KNAUS:

--I think it's really like this-- this wonderful book on-- on-- on New York, *The World Without Us*. You know, if you-- if you stop for a few-- weeks to maintain the po-- pumps, the metro will be flooded. I mean, if you don't have engineers to maintain-- to maintain the infrastructure of a city-- if you imagine New York without people, within 20 years it's a jungle again.

And I think that's true for all these institutions. And I think what the think tanks haven't done enough and what-- what policy institutes in Europe haven't done enough is, you know, they've-- we've had these fantasy debates on Europe as a great power. And what Europe should do in Asia and what Europe should do-- I mean,

this is bizarre. In the meantime we haven't focused, in the last ten years, on the immediate neighborhood where we have some tools.

Our own institutions which have been, you know, a bit like, you know, a place that isn't-- that isn't maintained. The garden that grows wild. I think that's where-- that's where we need to start because all these institutions, right, this is, I think, the key-- the key lesson that what-- what Semoine (PH) is also pointing out.

All this vocabulary of human rights, all these values all the-- are constantly un-- under assault. The Orwellian vision of newspeak, you know, a language where these concepts become meaningless, that's always a risk unless we-- what is it Voltaire wrote in *Candide* at the very end? You know, "Let us all become gardeners." (LAUGH) He didn't believe the Panglossian vision of this doctor who told him this is the best of all possible worlds, but he didn't want to be a total pessimist so he said, you know, "Let's-- let's look in-- after our garden." And I think that's the philosophy we need also.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

IVAN:

First of all, thank you very much, I do believe it was a great presentation, but three questions. First, let's go to Ukraine because Ukraine also tells us an interesting story. One of the reason we have this revolution in Ukraine was that European Union was not being in support of human rights. If European Union was being in support of human rights they should not have offered-- because of the Timoshenko case-- any kind of offer to Ukraine if they're not going to be offering Ukraine, most probably, you're not going to have, at least at this moment, triggering of the crisis that we see there.

Ukraine is also interesting from a different point of view that the first thing that the new post-Yanukovych government did is, basically, went against the rights of some minority group. Basically the Russian-language speakers. And when, basically, Gerald is saying why the Poles, who normally should be very much interested in rights, are not interested, there is a very simple explanation: geopolitical interest.

They're interested in human rights, but they're interested in Russia more. So from this point of view-- Azerbaijan for them is much more perceived as a strategic ally, they're very much afraid. I-- I took it that this is extremely important because in a certain way-- I see the problem with the human rights now and I do believe your absolutely beautifully show of how certain institutions are captured.

But certain institutions are captured because we're trying to keep the human rights discourse and our human rights advocacy out of political context and this is the principle you sh-- we are not talking politics, we are talking human rights. But this creates a problem on two issues. As you know United Kingdom now are really very seriously discussing to get out of the human rights-- charter, European human rights commission.

They basically said, "We are not going to agree with the decision of the European-- Court on human rights because we, basically, do not believe-- that the legal norms can be totally divorced from the political process-- from the democratic political process."

I do believe this clash, within a genuine conservative democracy, because what the autocracy (SLURS) is doing is much more technical game. They are bribing, they are play-- it's a quite intelligent people there, but it's not fundamentally kind of erosive. But you have a major clash between the idea that politics should matter, that people should matter, and from this point if it is to go back to very important tradition coming from the French Revolution where people said, "Democracy is empowering not the individual but empowering majorities."

There is no positive idea of disobedience-- in the French revolutionary discourse. To be disobedient it means to be a minority which is opposing the majority. I do believe here is the major story and I'm going to be very much interested how it's going to go with your reading and-- my last point, it has a lot to do, also, with the enlargement.

To a certain extent enlargement was based on asserting certain principles and closing your eyes on certain kinds of irregularities. If people had been very tough on principles my own country probably was all going to be in the EU too. And, of course, this is going to be much stronger for places like Macedonia and others.

So here you can come for second abuse of human rights because do you know who had been to two countries, three, most oftenly (SIC) defending that the European Union should not sign with the Ukraine because of the human rights concerns. There was three countries which are not very famous for their human rights records, like Cyprus, Greece, and Italy, but being very well known for kind of a closed relationship with Russia. So human rights discourse, in a way, like any discourse, can be used tactically by anybody. And I do believe this is the major story, how we are not allowing this instrumentalization of the human rights.

LEONARD BERNARDO:

Ivan thank you. Will-- maybe some other comments or questions and then Gerald-- will-- will respond. Yes, Sandy?

SANDY:

Well-- I guess a specific question-- how have-- visa bans worked? And are there-- (CLICK) are there small concrete steps that you can see taking? And-- what do you see coming from the-- the European parliamental elections?

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

GERALD KNAUS:

Okay, well-- I think-- I think when it comes to-- to-- well, lemme start with visa bans then go to Ivan's question afterwards. When it comes to visa bans-- they-- we've been looking recently into why-- (CLANK) Bill Browder and (UNINTEL) project failed in Europe. You know, he traveled around. You know, this idea of having a Magnitsky List which was passed by-- by the U.S. Congress of asset seizure and-- and visa bans (THUMP) for certain people, and often human rights violations in Russia-- which was passed in the congress. But-- when this American and his team, and he has a lot of money to lobby for this, traveled around Europe, he failed to convince anybody to-- to-- to have similar visa bans or similar asset seizures in-- in other countries.

He went to Ireland, he went to the European parliament, he went to Germany, he went to the Netherlands and it didn't work. And we asked ourselves why-- why that is and whether, in fact-- a puns-- consistent policy of visa bans for human rights violators in the European east could work. I think one-- and I think it could. And it could have worked much if it is European. Because, of course, the autocrats in eastern Europe have their money in-- in Europe much more than in America. I mean, they have it in London and Paris and Vienna and Prague. And they have their children there and they have-- they have their-- their haven for security when they fall out of favor within their regimes-- in Europe.

I think one reason why that wor-- failed, this approach of Bill Browder, and why I-- I'm also supporting a Magnitsky List style approach in-- in Europe, but something different, is because it was perceived as being arbitrary. You know, you put together a list that wasn't very clear who's on that list, it was basically a political deal in congress, you know, w-- we offer Russia something on trade and then in return we pass this bill and you have a few congressmen holding it up against the state department.

What I think could work, and this is what we've been running around the last few months, is to say well-- I mean, what the Europeans could do or what, if the EU institutions can't agree now, some member states could do, is create a committee of eminent former judges. Such committees have existed in the past, of course Europe had one to look, for example, at cases of count-- of Azerbaijani political prisoners in the early 2000's, to-- assess them and give-- give an opinion.

So what a committee of judges, four or five human rights experts, good reputation, could do is they could look at-- submissions by human rights organizations and lawyers saying that certain officials in Russia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Georgia-- really have been named in European court decisions, have systematically violated human rights. And there is a strong enough case not to seize assets because that requires a level of legal-- you know, clarity that is very hard to achieve and most Europeans would refrain from that.

But withdrawing the right to travel, which is a privilege. So not to do what Bill Browder has done but to basically say there are many Russians who would like to travel to the EU that don't get to travel because of some reasons that don't have to do

with human rights. Because the EU, some country fears they might be illegal immigrants. So if they are human rights violators, if there is-- a mechanism to assess cases, and if this is transparent, if these individuals find out, in fact the very process of-- and you don't need to have large numbers, the very process of there being this option, I think, would work very well.

Why? Because what we saw in the reactions by Russia to debates in the Irish parliament on the Magnitsky List, for example, because the Irish came close to passing it, was huge nervousness. An enormous mobilization, great pressure on the foreign ministry in Ireland, then the argument, right, if you do this you won't be able to adopt Russian children. I mean, all the-- because, I think, this really does, you know, strike at the-- at the-- sense of security of some of those elites.

And by taking away the right to travel to Europe, in fact, you don't need to seize the assets. Now the U.K. is not in Schengen so they would have to have another mechanism, but I think if such a committee would recommend, once a year, to the European council, "Here are ten people this year we recommend for these and these reasons shouldn't be allowed to travel to Schengen," it would be very difficult for the European council-- for member states, and even for the U.K. we don't-- to-- to-- to ignore this, or if-- they would have to explain this.

So I think this kind of visa ban could actually work. But it needs to be transparent and visible. The whole point of it is that it's visible. If it's some sort of deal between some governments, let's do something as five Belarusians now and let's-- it's-- it doesn't have this effect. And it should be open-- open-ended, too, that you can add more people over time. So this is-- this is-- this is one recommendation. We also think the Council of Europe needs to create such a committee to assess cases of political prisoners quicker than the European Court does. Again, in a non-binding way, but with a similar sort of credibility.

There is no other fination in Council of Europe of political prisoners, and in all countries where they are is the suspicion of systematic abuse. Which, for example, the human rights commissioner could establish or the general secretary or the parliamentary assembly of a member state. You will then have-- a mechanism to assess more quickly. That has been done before, also. You know, whether in Azerbaijan or Russia-- certain cases, and you don't need to wait three or four years for the European Court.

Okay, these are technical proposals but I think it's very important to have the debates like this because if you don't have concrete proposals that can get a majority, you know, it's just-- I do-- I do, you know-- it-- it-- it's not-- it's-- it makes us feel good, but it doesn't work. On the bigger issue of-- of the human rights language in Ukraine, I think the fundamental problem was, and it was really bad luck in Ukraine, that when they had their orange revolution it was 2005 and 2005 was the year the EU moved away from the concept of enlargement. For a very clear reason, and I know it in Germany.

In the German Bundestag there was a resolution prepared by the then-opposition

which was lead by Angela Merkel, because she was leader of the faction in the Bundestag, the CDU, to call on the government to offer Ukraine a European perspective and do more for Ukraine. This was prepared in the spring of 2005. And then the French and the Dutch voted down the constitutional treaty.

And then there was, in the summer, this big sense in Europe, "Oh! Oh! We don't know what to do now." Later, of course, you had the Lisbon treaty and most of what was in the constitutional treaty had somehow been rescued, but the reading of that crisis, of this double-referendum in the Netherlands and in France, in Germany, (THUMPS) was that the CDU immediately withdrew this text and it disappeared. And I talked to the people that prepared it-- was gone.

So at the very moment when we had our two color revolutions, in Georgia and the Ukraine, when the EU might have offered just a very long-distance perspective that would have given it the right to then be more credibly involved in shaping the agenda, to tell the Georgians, the Ukrainians, more clearly, you know, what kind of behavior was not very constructive or what was not going-- going to lead them anywhere, the EU basically abdicated-- lof-- left. And so after-- Shachaf Fili (PH) is another example, he traveled, for his first year, he traveled all over Europe and he first went through France and Germany. He then gave up on Europe completely. And he found his friends in the U.S. You know, neocons and libertarians and people who believe in putting lots of people in prison--

LEONARD BERNARDO:

Wait, is there some causality here? The-- the fact that Europe didn't step to the plate led to Shachaf Fili going--

(OVERTALK)

GERALD KNAUS:

I-- I th-- I think-- I think there was. I think the-- the-- the fact that Europe became, you know-- offered no perspective at all. A lot of the Georgians I talked to in those years, you know, when I-- when I say to them, "Look, you should look to the Estonians." You know, the Estonians believe in a free market, they are liberals, right? But they also believe that their only real security, and way to economic development, was to create the regulatory institutions that allow for indirect investment which Georgia never got, except into real estate.

And the Georgians always say, "Yeah, but the Estonians had a perspective. I mean, we just don't have any. It's just not real." So they focused on NATO and they focused on America. And in Ukraine, of course, the big disaster was the complete lack of direction and incompetence of the post orange revolution governments-- I think. I mean, this was-- this was the-- so, in a sense, if there would have been a clearer perspective, and I think that's also true now-- now why-- what does the perspective

mean?

I think there the problem is also the instruments. At the moment I think if the European Union would set out, and this is a very-- (THUMPS) sorry, very technical proposal, but I think it's very, very important-- look at-- look at-- look at the OECD, a very boring organization of economists, and it's PISA test.

Here's an organization of economists in Paris that devised a way to assess countries that a 14 year old understands. You know, you do these tests, a 14 year old's people after eight years in school, you test how good they are in reading, math, and science, and then you can rank countries. That's all they do, since 12 years. It revolutionized the global debate on education.

Now lots of people are critical of the details, but lots of people discussed it. And in a country like Germany or Sweden it-- it-- it-- you know, talked to some Swedish MPs recently, they say this might decide the next election because Sweden has slipped very far and-- you know, that's-- it's a big topic.

The key about these kinds of rankings is-- is that they stimulate debates on issues. I think if the EU accession process-- and on visa liberalization that's what the EU also did, you know, defining 50 very concrete criteria which Balkan countries had to meet in order to get visa liberalization, visa-free travel. This was very strict because interior ministries in Europe-- you know, were very skeptical. They looked at this, they didn't want to give Albania visa-free travel. The French weren't for it until the very end. But there were very strict and clear conditions set out which wasn't just passing laws but creating institutions.

When these were met it was a trap for both sides. Governments had to meet these conditions and-- and when they were met EU member states found it much harder to resist the logic of allowing, giving them what they had promised. If this would be how we structured the EU accession process, if the EU would much more clearly spell out what countries actually need to do substantively and communicate this in ways that are understandable-- 'cause now it's a totally esoteric process. Talk to Turks about EU accession and you get into debate that is surreal.

It's about opening a chapter. Should the EU open a chapter? You ask and these are people who work on the EU and you ask them, "All right, what happens when you open a chapter? Where is-- what is this thing? Wh-- physically, who calls whom?" "Why-- well, there's a meeting." "And then what happens?" "Well, then-- well we have a negotiation?" "What-- what kind of negotiation?" "Well, there isn't actually a negotiation. Actually nothing happens when you open a chapter, it's a purely bureaucratic step."

Because, as we've seen, and I've shown in our last report, reforms in those countries happen as much in closed chapters as in opened ones. So we've taken a completely meaningless measure that has become a-- completely silly, you know, mark of progress that nobody believes in--

LEONARD BERNARDO:

Okay, but Gerald let's-- let's say you totally der-- sort of jettison the language of chapters and the like. At the end of the day the-- key itself, the defined enlargement, they're fairly straightforward principles, no?

GERALD KNAUS:

Well, I mean in-- take Turkey now. There is the issue of public procurement, you know, that goes away from human rights but I think it's pretty important seeing what's happening in Turkey now, in terms of spending public money. The issue of public procurement, where there is actually-- there are some very clear-- I can explain that to a 14 year old. What the EU principles on public pro-- procurement are. It's not a punicea (PH), there're problems with pub-- public procurement in-- in Germany and France, Bulgaria-- but it is much better having some of those mechanisms. I mean these principles already are clear. The EU hasn't spel--

IVAN:

How we know this? How we know this? To what extent the experience of Hungary, of Bulgaria, of Romania gives you a kind of an argument to claim that simply adopting these mechanisms leads to quality transformative change? Because your major assumption is that the major social age-- social change is the European enlargement. And by the way, very consistently saying these four years.

And in my view now this is more problematic than it was five years ago. Given European perspective to Ukraine probably is a good policy, but are you sure that this is a policy which is transforming the country in the way you assume, this is my question.

GERALD KNAUS:

Well, I think there are lots of caveats. And the first one is it must be credible. Now to be credible it must be credible in member states. That's the fundamental problem. Because the moment we have a EU accession process we have lots of countries that are all blocked by vetoes. Macedonia is blocked by Greece, Turkey is blocked by Cyprus, Kosovo blocked by non-recognition, Bosnia is blocked by some other strange conditions. So, in fact, we are having, at the moment, a non-credible process. So it's--

SANDY:

(UNINTEL)

IVAN:

But go back, go back. You assumed. My idea is the countries that there was a credible perspective, that they are now in the EU and probably the transformative power of the accession was much more limited than we assumed. So basically Hungary had it, this process of accession, you had this institutional transformation, and if you go on the rights issues I don't believe that you can claim that, for example, now they are better than they had been five or ten years ago.

So my idea is to what extent the outside pressure on which you're betting is enough. To what extent ignoring politics? This is why I am pushing on this. Can you have a successful human rights advocacy if you are totally divorcing it from the domestic, democratic political process?

GERALD KNAUS:

Okay, let's take Hungary. Is it really fair to say when a country has joined in 2004 and, at that time, had one of the best constitutional courts, and it was praised for its constitutional court, and then many years later, you know, this is, I'm done. By strange combination of circumstances where a strange election law leads to a str-- super majority with actually not that many votes. Is it fair to blame that on enlargement? I don't think so.

SANDY:

No?

GERALD KNAUS:

It's like-- it's-- you know, that's like blaming Berlosconi (PH) on-- on--

SANDY:

No?

GERALD KNAUS:

Any democracy can always move backwards. I mean, this-- I think-- I-- the idea that enlargement ends history and that, then, democracies are safe and sound and nothing wrong can happen, there I totally agree with you. The interesting debate then becomes, and this is why the issue of having clear-- clear standards for accession countr-- candidates is also useful for inside the EU. When the EU, or the Council of

Europe, then goes to Hungary and says, "We have a problem with your approach to media f-- or-- or-- or-- or-- or the judiciary." It's not that easy because, of course, now they are in, so you need to have very strong and convincing arguments.

Now I don't know the Hungarian case that well, but what I understand what they are doing is they then say, "Well, most of your arguments are just not-- not true because what we have we have elsewhere, you know, other European countries have such systems." So I think what we need to be better at is defining red lines that cannot be crossed also for EU members. And it is, in fact, then a political process. It doesn't become a legal process. Once you're a member you-- you know, the super weapon of suspending your voting right won't be used.

But as a political process to say, (BACKGROUND VOICE) "Here are some red lines and we find because of your-- the poli-- European parliament finds, the Venice commission finds that (THUMPS) they have been crossed," and that puts pressure in the European People's Party to talk differently to the Hungarian member of the European People's Party. That puts pressure-- I think this is actually the direction in which we need to go. The problem is that as the autocrats also inside the EU, or people (NOSE BLOWS) who've been playing with these standards, many years after they've joined and this includes some very old members, as they become (CAMERA SHUTTER) or as they are very sophisticated, it's not enough to just say human rights in Hungary's violating freedom of speech, we need to be more precise what that means. And as we see, even in the accession context, very often we are not very clear on-- on-- on what we mean. I think this is where the problem comes in.

IVAN:

Can I say one sentence? Because for me this is critically important. In the democratic process with rights we have certain types of rights and you are struggling for them, the same-sex marriage is a great story. Dividing issue all over difficult-- and then basically we're coming to a country like Ukraine or Moldova where this debate has not started yet. You have the orthodox church, which is very conservative, and you're coming with the highest level, high standards of human rights. (NOISE) Which is not supported by their democratic political process.

No, no, I-- I'm trying to make it-- because it-- I do believe it's going to be a very m-- major issue in some of these countries. And then basically they can adopt it. They're adopting this but there is no political constituency to defend it. I mean strong enough, politically strong enough. So when there's going to be a backlash that I totally agree with you that nobody can prevent the backlashes, this is how democracy functions. You end up with rights that nobody defends.

Domestically, politically, and from this point of view, for me my-- major stories, to what extent we are focusing (BACKGROUND VOICE) on building political constituencies. Voting constituencies of certain rights. And to what extent, basically, we use the European accession process much more to change the level of standards

and basically higher standards for this. And this is an interesting question, I don't know what is the right answer, but I do believe it's a real issue. It cannot be just taken for granted, yeah.

GERALD KNAUS:

Can I just say one thing? I-- I agree with you if the condition would be same sex marriage. But it is not. I mean, the condition that the EU is putting to Ukraine is basic non-discrimination. Which means no hate speech, no disc-- you know, what-- what the EU is discussing on-- on-- on-- on gay rights is in fact a red line and it has defined relatively well, which is basically, you know-- a core human right that all these countries have signed up to with the European convention already.

So I think-- of course the EU can't come to Ukraine and say, "We want you to do something which Croatia and Moldova don't have either." This would not be credible, I agree with that. So, you know, activists can do that but if-- it's not for the European institutions because, in fact, we wouldn't be credible. There's no constituency, they would say why should-- but if it is something as basic as, you know, (SNIFF) no-- non-discrimination, (CELL PHONE NOISE) you know, in a non-discrimination mechanism, which, in Georgia we had the Georgian deputy foreign minister recently.

At-- at an event we-- we did three weeks ago where he was talking about the visa story and the difficulty of non-discrimination law-- sorry, Moldova, the Moldovan deputy foreign minister-- the-- the visa story. He said for-- he actually defended this EU conditionality on this. He said it was very tough for us but it was (THUMPS) very useful for us because (THUMPS) in fact what we were talking about was no-- a non-discrimination mechanism which wasn't just for sexual minorities.

It was also for other minorities. It's very basic, it doesn't tu-- turn Moldova into a country of, you know. But-- but it is the kind of discussion which we had in our own country and it di-- does create some constituencies if it is led early enough. I think the skepticism that is completely just (UNINTEL) is one where the EU says-- or where it's perceived that the EU says, to countries, "Adopt these laws, then we-- we-- you know, it's a check, and-- and then you can join." I mean, that is absurd. Because that can be reversed very quickly.

But I give you one last example that we looked at, (COUGH) which is minority-- situation in-- in Slovakia. You know Kristoff (PH) did a lot of research on the Hungarians in Slovakia because in two-- Slovakia is a perfect case. They have a very autocratic government till '98, you know, Meciar. The EU says you can't join like this.

There is this coalition that overthrows him in elections. There is this reformed government, they do everything right, they overtake everybody, they finish accession talks, they give the Hungarians a state-funded university, public university, they join the EU and then they are overthrown and the bad guys come back.

So it fits perfectly into the backlash theory. Our question, empirically, was, "And

what happened then?" And what we saw was that between 2006 and 2010, you know, with the worst populists back in power, you know, and I'm not talking about the-- the prime minister. I'm talking about Meciar and-- and-- and-- and Slaughterhide, (PH) you know, fu-- the rhetoric of these guys is—

LEONARD BERNARDO:

It didn't get so bad.

GERALD KNAUS:

--Fascism. Actually they achieved very, very little. The university of the Hungarians is still there. The Hungarian rights of-- language rights are still superior to almost any other EU member-- most of the laws which were, you know, on-- that made it into the press. When the economists wrote about some crazy laws about forbidding people to speak Hungarian at public events and the *New York Times* wrote about it, people in Bratislava didn't actually manage to get them passed, the president didn't sign them.

So four years later-- and this, I think, is the real test. It isn't that populists come back and want to reverse things. That is, in fact, to be expected. I expect this in Croatia, too. It is whether, then, there are the constituencies, the mechanisms, the institutions to defend it then. And there, I think, the record is still mixed but much better than we're giving it credit for.

IVAN:

Because you can't-- so-- sorry for-- but you had the Hungarian voters in Slovakia, which is a political-- there is a constituency, very clear. By the way, one of the smart thing that European Union can do is having this-- and I agree very much, basic anti-discrimination story, putting the language minorities and the sexual minorities together and--

GERALD KNAUS:

And-- and-- and--

IVAN:

--see how the Russians are going to react.

GERALD KNAUS:

And people with--

IVAN:

Because when--

GERALD KNAUS:

--physical handicaps.

IVAN:

--you are basically starting to protect them one at the same time, gays and lesbians and the Russian speakers in the east, I want to see-- because it's all scientific. It's anti-discrimination talk and, of course, then I want to see how they're going to campaign and the way they're campaigning now. Because Mr. Tzar of the prime minister went in front of speaking-- to the rally of the party of the region and said, "They want us to have a free visa regime but they want to adopt the same-sex marriage." We know that this is not true, but because there is not debate in the country on this, people are buying this.

So for my point of view it's should European Union go much more political, much more trying to basically go into domestic politics and this type of-- constituency-building or we should really believe it's about assessment, about the judges to be appointed and, kind of-- this level which, in my view is quite easier but slightly less stable.

LEONARD BERNARDO:

But it's obviously both. (PEN CLICKS)

IVAN:

But it not always go so easily together. Don't forget my Timoshenko story which I asked you and you didn't respond. If we--

GERALD KNAUS:

Ah!

IVAN:

--were principled there...

GERALD KNAUS:

I actually am not sure about this because we started, you know, accession talks with a lot of countries. I mean Turkey, when their human rights record was really still very, very bad. I mean, we-- we said, in fact, for Turkey that they just sufficiently fulfilled the human rights, the-- the (UNINTEL) political criteria, just sufficiently, is-- doesn't mean they-- it means they didn't.

And I-- I think, on Timoshenko-- having an association agreement, making this dependent on this-- you know, you can debate. I-- I have no clear opinion, I don't-- I don't-- but I don't think it's a question of-- of-- of principle. I don't think the EU would've forgiven it's-- would've abandoned its principles if we would've said, you know, it's for the European court. I think if the-- if an EU member state would've taken Ukraine, in the Council of Europe, you know, would've had the courage to do something there, you know, to, where all the mechanisms exist, then the EU could've done its association agreement in the meantime. I-- I believe that we should use as insurance-- instruments much more with the division of labor.

You know, the EU can engage Azerbaijan on energy in the Council of Europe, the same governments, because this is about human rights and democracy, can-- can use this podium and this-- this tr-- arena for much-- much more sharp criticism. But I think if, you know, si-- an association agreement is-- is-- is-- was signed with Turkey in 1963, just after one pu-- coup. And they had another three since. And the association agreement is still in place. And I think it was a good thing that it exists. (THUMP)

LEONARD BERNARDO:

Any other comments?

BEKA VUCHO:

Sandy--

LEONARD BERNARDO:

Beka Vucho.

BEKA VUCHO:

Well, Sandy asked about your presumption, what's going to happen with the elections. European elections.

LEONARD BERNARDO:

Parliamentary elections.

BEKA VUCHO:

Parliamentary elections. What do you think? How is it going to change the situation?

GERALD KNAUS:

I mean, you know what the conventional wisdom is. That the next European Parliament would be much less-- much more populist, much less pro-European. But that really remains to be seen. Okay, I-- I spent part of my time in France and it is a bit scary how energized the Fro Nationale (PH) is. You know, they are the ones who give us a leaflet every two days in front of our apartment.

And, of course, there's a very peculiar political exhibition in France now. It-- it is, however, also noteworthy that what they are trying to do I-- I do-- I don't buy any of it. But they are trying to very consciously move to the center to get rid of their old, you know, more obnoxious people.

I-- I hope the French see through that. But I-- if you take Germany or other countries, you know, in Germany m-- you know, the-- the anti-euro-party is not really-- you know, this is very different from the Fro Nationale, there's nothing to do with-- with-- except that they also don't like the Euro. It's-- it's nothing to do with the-- some of the-- the proto-fascist parties in-- in other countries. You know, it's a party of professors who are against the Euro and, you know, I disagree with their arguments but, I mean, they are not-- they are totally democratic.

Otherwise in Germany, which is the biggest country, I don't think you see-- we will see any strong anti-European forces in the European Parliament. I think the same is true in a lot of other countries. So it really depends what the-- what the arithmetic will be. But I think in the end the European Parliament will probably change less than we now predict. I mean, might be wrong because it's so many, 28 different constituencies, but I-- I suspect it will change less. And there's an institutional interest in the European Parliament to be for certain things. So I also don't think it will proceed to dismantle itself right after the elections.

LEONARD BERNARDO:

And the future of Martin Schulz? If the socialists do win, do you see him as becoming--

GERALD KNAUS:

About that I'm-- I-- I-- I really-- I think that-- the-- this-- the-- the way decision-- the-- these top posts in Europe are appointed. You-- you alway-- the one you bet on never gets it. So for all this reason (LAUGH) I-- I would suspect-- his chances are pretty low because so many people have written about him having this position and in the end it's the member states who need to--

LEONARD BERNARDO:

Right.

GERALD KNAUS:

--need to agree.

LEONARD BERNARDO:

Okay. Any-- any other comments, questions? Gerald, thank you so much. This was great.

GERALD KNAUS:

A lot of this is on our website and there will be more reports on this. On political prisoners we are running a campaign, a sort of slogan Europe about political prisoners 2014, where we hope to-- I mean, at least there's a goal, as an aspiration. To--

LEONARD BERNARDO:

Are there political prisoners in Europe?

GERALD KNAUS:

Well, there are. I mean, I think--

LEONARD BERNARDO:

Oh! (LAUGHTER)

GERALD KNAUS:

--I think there are a number of countries which--

LEONARD BERNARDO:

I didn't know that.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

GERALD KNAUS:

I think the-- Bilotnaya (PH) and-- the-- Azerbaijan they've arrested 100 people who, I think--

MALE VOICE #4:

Azerbaijan actually isn't in Europe.

GERALD KNAUS:

Azerbaijan is in the council of Europe, of course. It's an OAC. It's in every European organization except the EU so-- you know, I started at the beginning, we've expanded all these European institutions. Now we need to save them. Or we shouldn't have expanded them.

LEONARD BERNARDO:

Thank you very much, Gerald.

GERALD KNAUS:

Oh, thank you. Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

* * *END OF TRANSCRIPT* * *