

TIDE 2000 CLUB

HUNGARIAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY

CONFERENCE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY, 5-6 NOVEMBER 1990

THE TEN LESSONS OF BUDAPEST

CROSSING THE BRIDGE OF INFORMATICS

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The Hon Justice Michael Kirby CMG

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AUTUMN IN BUDAPEST

In his seventy-third sonnet, William Shakespeare describes Autumn as:

*"That time of year, thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang
Upon those boughs, which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.*

Those words came back to me as I clambered over the ramparts of the old Royal Palace of Budapest, near our conference site. Looking down from the ruined choirs, now lovingly restored, I saw the yellow leaves of Autumn displayed in all their splendour in Budapest below. Momentarily I shook against the cold wind - which reminded me that a dangerous Winter approaches this and other nearby

lands. I could hear the sweet bird of human freedom singing again - a melody full of hope and optimism. Down below was the divided capital, Buda and Pest. The confident public buildings of the city spoke of a mighty past; but also promised the institutional strength to cope with a future full of change. Through it all - separating Buda from Pest - was the magnificent river which links so many lands of Europe. And across the Danube were flung many bridges, - linking families, businesses, cities, cultures.

The bridge was a somewhat overworked analogy in this conference. The simile, so well beloved of poets, was woven through the many national reports on information technology and telecommunications programmes of Hungary and its neighbours. And what a remarkable collection of representatives was gathered here by the Tide 2000 Club. We were reminded, with a certain sensitivity, that they do not like, all of them, to accept the label of "Eastern Europe".

"Central" Europe was the claim of some - as if to emphasise the links of their countries with the rest of this ancient continent - whose wars, peoples, civilization and technologies have so profoundly influenced the rest of humanity. But Eastern or Central - we had them all. Even Albania, so long cut off, was here in the distinguished person of Maksim Gjergji. Yordan Vassilev of Bulgaria. Dr Joseph Vrba representing the Telecommunications Minister of Czechoslovakia, symbolically himself detained by Parliament. Our hosts of Hungary whose team was led on the floor of the conference by Pal Horvath. Dr Jan Monkiewicz and Professor

Goboliowski from Poland. Ms Dumitru and Mrs Agnes Ghibutiu and their colleagues from Romania. Even from the former German Democratic Republic - for the past month united in the Federal German Republic - we had a hard-hitting retrospective from Dr Wolfgang Kleinwächter - of the University of Leipzig. Finally, Yugoslavia was represented by Professor Milic and her colleagues.

Yugoslavia has, since the 1948 split with Stalin, seen itself as a bridge between Eastern and Western Europe. Hungary, with its historical associations with Austria and other states of Central Europe, was also seen as a bridge by Pal Horvath. Telecommunications and information technology themselves were portrayed as a bridge between nations. Wolfgang Michalski of the OECD mentioned the need for a bridge between people of different ideas and opinions. There were as many bridges in our conference as straddle the wide, meandering Danube. Yet it is a happy simile, full of promise, particularly for us who grew to adulthood under the symbol of the Berlin Wall, barbed wire, guns, stern borders and barred bridges.

The technology we came to Budapest to examine is a freedom technology - for it spreads ideas. And ideas are always the most powerful agents for communication and peaceful change. Dr Meheroo Jussawalla reminded us that the events of June 1989 in China were preceded by a storm of facsimile messages within and beyond China. That storm has abated momentarily; but it will surely return.

In these closing remarks, at the end of the working

sessions of this conference, I want to take you over the bridge. Beyond the pylons on the other side. And to ask what do we discover there? What are the lessons of this conference in Budapest? What should we take away from an occasion of such "information overload" - as Hans Peter Gassmann described it. Each one of us will take away his or her impressions. Mine are but those of one participant. Yet if they are expressed, they may help each one of you to focus upon your own.

Tonight we will repair to the State Opera House for a performance of Beethoven's Fidelio. There could not be a more appropriate opera with which to close our deliberations, with its symbolism of prisoners throwing off their chains at the end of oppression. It is a marvellous finale for our conference. Look about you in the Opera House, once Royal and Imperial. For here, exactly a century ago, the great Gustav Mahler conducted the Hungarian Opera, all the time composing his immortal music. At about that time, Mahler wrote his Third Symphony. His Programme Notes for the Symphony describes in part the first movement as "Summer Marches In". Well, now, Winter marches in to Central and Eastern Europe - a very dangerous time of economic dislocation and deprivation in a time of unprecedented economic transition. Mahler also described sections of the first movement of his Symphony as "What the wild flowers tell me"; "What the animals in the wood tell me"; What man tells me"; "What love tells me". Well, what did Budapest tell us during this conference? That is the task I set myself to

answer in these remarks. I suggest that there are ten lessons - consider them. See if you agree with them.

SEE IT IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL ISSUES

The first is that we must endeavour to perceive the remarkable changes of information technology and telecommunications in a wider frame of reference. They are aspects of the comparatively rapid and largely conscious globalisation of our planet, the realisation of which came principally after Hiroshima. We are one planet. The technology of informatics itself is global, as Professor Jonathan Aronson lately reminded us. It laughs at mankind's petty borders: however indelibly they may seem to be written in blood, language and culture.

If we think of the great issues of our time they certainly include informatics. Yet it is but one with others - all of which are global in character. Some were referred to by Wolfgang Michalski at a conference luncheon. The environment and global warming; biotechnology and manipulation of life forms; nuclear technology with its known dangers and possible promise; AIDS and its counterpart over-population of the human species; the right of peoples - the revival of ancient nationalist animosities and the danger of popularism - the resurgence of intolerant religions, whether Christianity, Hinduism or Islam on the move.

It is all too easy to wear blinkers with one's own discipline - and to see only its problems and opportunities. Yet it is vital, as civilized people, that we should be alert to the other issues with which informatics must relate. As

Dr Peter Robinson reminded us, informatics is generally environmentally friendly. Moreover, it is a source of instantaneous information about the other great issues of the time. As an engine for data, from which truth may penetrate the dark recesses of authoritarian control, the basic point made by many speakers at this meeting was that this technology has the potential to be a liberator of the human mind and spirit. That is why Dr Nagai, the President of our host organisation, reminded us of the work of the MacBride Commission towards the UNESCO report Many Voices, One World. Properly harnessed, information technology gives the weapons to ordinary men and women to test orthodoxy, to question ideology and to "build the next stage of human life" - as Dr Nagai put it.

REMEMBER THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

Secondly, we have seen how the technology of information, above all, must be perceived in its political context. It is trite to say again that information is power. Yet that it surely is. Two years ago, indeed even a year, it would have been unthinkable that we should have been sitting in this Academy building exchanging data, ideas and problems with total candour as we have. That has not come about because of the technology alone. Political decisions made it possible. Rightly, Helmut Schütte emphasised the rôle of Mikhail Gorbachev in this revolution. There is no other word to describe his impact on the Soviet Union and the countries formerly beyond Churchill's Iron Curtain. It is plainly true that he facilitated at least the preconditions

which made the changes in the other lands possible.

It is pointless to debate who else must get the credit for the change. The laurels can be distributed to Tito for standing up to Stalin in 1949, when it was most dangerous to do so. To Solidarity and the Roman Catholic Church in Poland for keeping to the fore an alternative legitimate philosophy of life and suggesting the ways to preserve it. To the Hungarian reformers who opened their borders last year - and gave visas to the DDR citizens who wanted to leave for a new Germany. To the brave Pastor Laszlo Jökes, whose sermons in a Lutheran Church in Timaswara helped to spark the Romanian Revolution. To the crowds of Prague and to the stalwart Dubcek. To the valiant nationalists and liberals who faced the tanks in Budapest at exactly this time of year in the Autumn of 1956. To the quiet reformers, intellectuals, university professors, human rights lawyers, scientists and citizens in all these lands.

It is true, as Schütte also said, that economic reform follows political reform. But he acknowledged, properly, a special symbiosis. Information technology has always been, in his words, "ideologically loaded". In the past the régimes of Eastern Europe - even more than in the West - sought to control the access to information. It was seen as a dangerous source of haemorrhage of Western influence, of liberal and "decadent" values. That is why the information sector - more than transport, trade and other economic sectors, was controlled and kept unliberated. That is why the Xerox company was required to supply locks for the

photocopiers it exported to the Soviet Union. Any technology which decentralises information reproduction necessarily lessens central control. This is one of the important explanations for the neglect in the Comecon countries of the remarkable advances of the technology which could flourish exponentially in a freer social environment. Yet it was the very stimulus to economic growth, provided by the new information technology and telecommunications infrastructure, which helped the Western economies to provide more goods and services for more of their people. And it was this technology in the form of broadcasting, television and radio, facsimile, telephone links and increasing travel which brought the comparative decline of the Eastern economies into such a vivid light.

This eventually helped to achieve the revolution which Karl Marx predicted - but in an ironic way, as Professor Ito explained. Economics ultimately indeed triumphed. But it led to the overthrow not of the bourgeoisie, as predicted by Marx, but of those who controlled the rigid economies: resistant to technological change - all in the name of the working class whom they purportedly served.

So the second lesson of this conference is that informatics provided a stimulus to political change - and stands on the brink of reaping a harvest of economic and social progress from the political changes which have occurred.

CONSIDER THE TECHNOLOGICAL NEGLECT

The third lesson is that progress - whether in Central and Eastern Europe - in Asia, Latin America or Africa - must take place in a context of significant technological neglect and comparative economic backwardness. The extent of the problem was portrayed throughout the conference - indeed from the very first speech presented for the Hungarian Minister, Mr Siklós. There is an urgent endeavour in these lands to catch up to the truly remarkable, even breathtaking technological advances of the past twenty years - many of them pioneered and stimulated by Japanese corporations and described by Professor Onika and Mr Hayashi.

According to Minister Siklós there is now a crash program to close the gap in the provision of telephone connections in Hungary by the end of the 1990s. The same tale was repeated in other national presentations. There is a serious undersupply of telephonic connections per capita when compared with developed countries. The basic pattern is clearly established. The density of telephones per hundred of the population ranges from 75 in North America and Australasia, to 50 in Western Europe, to less than 10 in Central and Eastern Europe and to but 2 or so in many developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Even in the DDR - after Yugoslavia, the best served in this regard - there were, according to Dr Kleinwächter, only 10 telephones per 100 of the population - compared to 50 in Federal German Republic. The task of closing that gap is daunting. Dr Kleinwächter himself has been waiting for 8 years for a personal telephone - an extraordinary thought for

us in developed economics. The aim of the FGR authorities in Eastern Germany is now to catch up by the year 2000.

Various expedients for rapid progress are being tried. Dr Jussawalla spoke of the marginal economies of utilizing cellular telephones. Meanwhile, all of these economies are building an entirely new infrastructure alongside the 30-to-50 year old telephone exchanges which are still in use. Remarkably enough, these exchanges still work. But they are grossly overloaded; spare parts are increasingly difficult to find. And they just cannot keep pace with the demand - both personal and, most importantly, of business.

I said that Winter marches in. This will be a very hard Winter for the peoples of this part of the world. Unemployment will be high. Costs will go up far beyond the rise of wages. Fuel will be much more expensive. It will be a serious Winter of discontent, requiring fortitude by people and leaders. Many ordinary citizens expected naïvely that conversion to the market economy would deliver a cornucopia of consumer goods overnight. But first there must be investment of capital - long neglected - to stimulate new employment. And as Dr Kleinwächter vividly pointed out, serious entrepreneurs will simply not invest if they cannot be provided with basic services - such as efficient telecommunications. It is in this sense that it was made plain at this conference that telecommunications infrastructures are the absolute precondition to the longed for economic lift-off of the economies of Central and Eastern Europe and of developing economies generally.

Helmut Schütte listed the hard choices for the newly installed democratic politicians. They include expending scarce resources on the food supply, health services, fuel supply, currency and exchange decisions. High on the agenda must clearly be a concerted effort at telecommunications and information technology renewal. For this is a precondition for much that will follow. Certainly, this is a vital lesson from this conference. It applies as much to the hard pressed decision-makers in Thailand, Brazil and far away Australia - as it does to the neglected economies of Central and Eastern Europe.

If we had any doubts about the truly exponential advances of informatics, they would have been laid at rest by the exposition of Dr Tage Frisk. Unit costs of the new technology have come down rapidly. The speed and quantum of data processing goes rapidly up. This presents the decision maker with both problems and opportunities. The problems - as Schütte emphasized - are those of confronting the battery of carpetbaggers trying to sell obsolete, unsuitable or outmoded technology - dumping it in the East. But Kleinwächter urged that we should also see the present state of technological underdevelopment in Eastern Europe and elsewhere as a rare opportunity for economic "leapfrogging". Well advised managers in Eastern Europe - and elsewhere - by wise decisions can avoid the mistakes and inefficiencies of earlier technologies. They can jump straight into the technology most suitable to their special needs - whether satellite, ISDN, etc.

REMEMBER THE NEEDS FOR ABSORPTION

Fourthly, there was the lesson that plans on bureaucratic drawing boards need to actually work in the labour force. Hans Peter Gassmann of the OECD, in a typically brilliant effort at scene setting, reminded us of the extraordinary world-wide acceptance of facsimile. Why had this occurred so rapidly? Because it was a new technology which was most user-friendly. It involved little more than use of the plain old telephone services (POTS). Economies looking for early results will therefore adapt their macro-informatic developments to the capacities of the work forces they have - and will adjust their endeavours sensitively to the difficulties of securing maximum use of the new technology. Fortunately, in Eastern Europe and Central Europe, there is a high level of general education as well as many fine universities and technical institutes.

A similar point was made by Dr Kleinwächter. The burden of the past, he declared, in an aphorism, is the challenge of the future. People in planned economies - accustomed to a hierarchy of decision making in the Plan - may take time to adjust to the full potential for decision making which the new information technology provides. Even more important than an underdeveloped telecommunications system, as an impediment to economic development, is an underdeveloped imagination in the ways necessary to stimulate development. Non-material barriers, Kleinwächter declared, were just as important as material ones. I think there is great wisdom in these remarks. They are borne out by earlier

technological changes. It took a decade after the advent of ether for highly skilled surgeons to realise that it was no longer the essential proficiency of their profession to remove a leg by amputation in 20 seconds. The technology had moved on. The mindlock of past skills remained stubbornly behind.

We must ensure that, with the new information technology, comes a retraining of human minds. Germans from the East can do this readily in the Western part of their newly reunited country. But for other countries of Eastern and Central Europe - and for developing countries, there are still more serious problems without such a ready solution. We must ensure that there are more opportunities to establish links and to forge personal associations such as have occurred here at this meeting. And we should not overlook Pal Horvath's point, at the close, that one of the chief values of conferences of this kind was to allow key personnel in Eastern and Central Europe to meet each other and to exchange common experiences. Although many Western people thought of the Easter bloc as a vast monolith, Horvath made the point that it was not and that, until now, there has been comparatively little opportunity for many of them to exchange data on their problems and ideas on their experiments.

RESPECT CULTURAL DIVERSITY

I have not overlooked an important fifth lesson which emerged from a number of the papers at this conference. We must respect the great variety of the lands represented around this table; their different cultural and political

traditions, their different stages of development of information technology; and the difficulty of laying down general rules of universal application to all of them. Yet all are grappling with common problems such as those which Helmut Schütte outlined.

To say this is simply to acknowledge that newly emerging democracies will be answerable to their own people. They will develop their own agendas. It is impossible for us in Budapest (or anyone else) to lay down universal rules. We can recognise the urgent necessity to close the gap of decades of neglect of technological change. But it is the essence of representative democracy that each society must be allowed the privilege of choice. Each must even be afforded the costly privilege of occasional error. This point was made by Ambassador Diana Dougan and I entirely agree with it. Western democracies, which make so many mistakes of their own, must be willing to allow that luxury to other, newer, members of the club of freedom.

FOUR RULES OF THUMB

Sixthly, and for all this acknowledgement of diversity as an attribute of freedom, we were led by Dr Peter Robinson to four general imperatives - rules of thumb as he called them. About these I suggest we could achieve a high level of consensus at this meeting. They do not provide a clear prescription for the political choice of promoting informatics investment against, say, better fuel distribution - or for the selection of investment in ISDN instead of satellite facilities, for example. But they do

provide a broad injunction about the approach which we should be taking in corporate strategies and government regulation of informatics in the decade ahead.

You will recall Robinson's four imperatives:

1. We should demand a forward looking approach. Learning from the economic and technological advances of Japan, the Republic of Korea and of the EEC described in the meeting and of the EEC, we should realise the great potential for the welfare of ordinary people which lies in the entry into the information society;
2. We should demand an outward looking approach - we should encourage strategic alliances which are essential to the rapid absorption of the new technology. This requires a perspective beyond even our own regions - beyond Europe - to the global revolution in information technology which is now going on in all parts of the world;
3. We should demand an optimistic approach - for optimism is the tribute which is due to a technology which can be such a powerful liberator of ideas. True, there is a need to temper this spirit with a real concern for human rights: for privacy interests - and for data security as mentioned by Mr Gassmann. As Raimundo Beca stressed, there is also an urgent need to modernize the legal environment. But the overwhelming lesson of information

technology in the past two decades is that it brings great benefits to humanity. As Gassmann pointed out, the early dire predictions that it would cause vast economic dislocation and widespread unemployment, have simply not been realized; and

4. We should demand cooperation so that the benefits of the technology can be shared more evenly. We should do so in the same spirit as has motivated the Japanese Foreign Ministry to sponsor Tide 2000 and the dialogues of this and earlier conferences. It is in the interests of the 'haves' to share with the 'have nots' until they too become 'haves'. There is a need as Diana Dougan said for a new intellectual Marshall Plan for Eastern and Central Europe - and indeed for a wider world, thirsting for access to the new technology.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Seventhly, it emerged that the gross oversimplification of market philosophies will not work in the sensitive and complex world of telecommunications. There is still a role for the public sector at least in the countries of this region and developing countries generally. The talk of privatisation has rarely gone so far as to envisage a completely free market in telecommunications. In most economies the debate is about duopoly or the extent of the oligopoly which will replace the traditional monopoly of the

old PTT. It is not about an unrestricted free-for-all. This practical lesson was brought home by many speakers from Central and Eastern Europe; but also in the developing countries - describing the extent of privatisation in their countries and the rôle of the Government telecommunications agency as a positive catalyst for change.

Hans Peter Gassmann listed what he saw as, arguably, the legitimate continuing rôles of the government sector in the advance of information technology and telecommunications. He included:

- * Vision setting - as in Japan: to establish national objectives including in the relations between one country and many others for which telecommunications plays a very practical role;
- * Contributing to risk taking where the resources of the whole state are necessary to guarantee success of the reform;
- * Creating the environment for progress - including by reform of the law, by the provision of tax incentives and by providing for the retraining of the workforce to maximise the penetration of the technological advances introduced; and
- * Promoting research and development, so vital for economic advancement.

These points were also taken up by Helmut Schütte. He stressed the legitimacy of each government's working out its

own role in the context of its own priorities. What is needed is a realisation that the rôle of government is to set broad priorities and then to avoid that excess of interference in the multitude of decisions which are necessary to carry the goals to fruition. This is the way to reconcile the perspectives of Mr Horvath and the battlecry of Ambassador Dougan for economic diversity and for a myriad of private initiatives.

THE LESSONS FROM ELSEWHERE

Eighthly, there are the lessons which can be learnt from other societies which have faced problems in some ways more difficult than those now facing Central and Eastern Europe. For this instruction we have been able to draw upon the wisdom of Dr Jassawalla - and also the experience of Dr Chang Bin Yoon of Korea, Dr Kosol of Thailand, Dr Joao Albernaz of Brazil and Raimundo Beca - now returned, in a United Nations function, to his native Chile.

Dr Calder in the closing round table drew the specific analogy between Eastern Asian nations and those of Eastern Europe. Certainly, the successes in East Asia should be studied, not for exact models but for lessons to be derived from the economies which have succeeded greatly and in such a rapid time.

Meheroo Jussawalla and Dr Dieter Westendorpf of the International Telecommunication Union outlined the progress since the Maitland Report in 1984. Jussawalla sketched how Singapore had achieved a world class telecommunications system by the vehicle of a state-owned enterprise, willing to

take bold decisions. She contrasted what had been achieved in that dynamic state with the top heavy bureaucracies of India and China - the latter now greatly helped by Japan. She suggested that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe would start with populations already at higher levels of skill and general education - making rapid progress in informatics more promising. And she stressed the high returns on capital investment in telecommunications technology in developing countries (averaging 18 to 20%) which promised well for like achievements in this part of the world, if only the right decisions were made.

In some ways Eastern and Central Europe could best be likened to the stage of development reached in Malaysia, according to Dr Jussawalla. And, as in Malaysia, an investment in telecommunications would prove highly profitable - and have an accelerator effect on general economic development.

BEWARE EUROCENTRISM

The ninth lesson is that in considering the specially urgent needs of Eastern and Central Europe it is vital to avoid Eurocentrism. There is a certain spirit which is perhaps more readily seen by outsiders than by Europeans themselves. It smacks of the isolationism which, from time to time, afflicts the United States of America - and other lands. It is a retreat into the so called "Common European House". The talk of 1992. The reunification of Germany. The rediscovery of the links between East and Central Europe and the West of the Continent.

All this talk of European identity is understandable. On this very day Hungary has joined the Council of Europe. But it is, as its heart, potentially retrogressive. The technology of informatics is not European. The problems shared between Eastern Europe and developing countries should bind them together - not take them into selfish common houses. We should spare a thought for India. For the Carribean. For Africa where POTS remains the urgent goal. It is the duty of all of us - in this technology if nowhere else - to think as the technology teaches us - globally not locally or in regions alone.

The theme of Europeanness spread through many of the presentations. I do not criticize it. All that talk of bridges. But let them be bridges to the whole of humanity. There is a marvellous world of humanity out there in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific - even in far away Australia and New Zealand we have things to offer. What a tragedy it would be if the liberalisation of Europe from totalitarian régimes of the past decades turned into the stunted reality of Fortress Europe - a new Festung Europa. We have seen enough of this selfishness in the EEC's Common Agricultural Policy which is such a burden on the economic aspirations of developing countries. What we need now is for European leaders of rare vision to see Europe as a microcosm of a whole world and common values, most of them linked by telecommunications and information technology.

THE ULTIMATE VALUES

One such leader seems to have emerged in Vaclav Havel

of Czechoslovakia. Perhaps it is because he is neither politician nor telecommunications engineer, neither lawyer nor economist - but a writer and a philosopher. We need more of them at this time: leaders with a vision that runs beyond the next election or personal advancement.

This tenth point was brought home by Dr Jussawalla, who talked of a world of spiritual values and human development which Perestroika, stimulated by informatics, could achieve. This was an allusion to Havel's reminder that economic progress, of itself, is not an ultimate end - it is a means to an end of human values. Even dictators can make the trains run on time. They can build magnificent autobahns and provide lots of telephones, all efficiently liable to official interception. The importance of human rights must not be neglected in our quest for economic progress. Nor should we forget the imperative of intelligent consumer choice in the information overload of which Adrian Norman warned us.

We should never overlook the fact that the ultimate motivation of the early communists who built the régimes which now lie discredited in Central and Eastern Europe - was often a vision of a better humanity. It was certainly not an Evil Empire - but a community without privilege of birth or class which shared its economic advantages more evenly and looked after the poor and disadvantaged. Let us not, in the enthusiasms of this Budapest Autumn, get carried away with the triumph of Western market values. Is this all we can offer? The superficialities of television democracy, with

political leaders sold like soapsuds? With jingling slogans? An obsession with opinion polls - and an avoidance of hard problems? Is the Market our new religion - even though we know it sometimes causes great harm to the weak and vulnerable - unless they are cared for? We need a new social philosophy. And it is not enough to grasp the latest technical toy - or provide every villager in the field with a cellular telephone - especially if, as Professor Goboliowski warned, popularism, authoritarianism and nationalism await in the wings to threaten the fragile democracies being rebuilt.

Fortunately, our conference was mindful of these larger themes. At the very outset, our Chairman, Dr Nagai, talked of the way the technology would stimulate a society of a new kind. Economic prospects would be an indispensable, but not a final or sufficient, answer to the building of a new society. Other speakers picked up this theme, including Ambassador Endo of Japan. And it is vital that it should have been addressed. It constantly disappoints me, as a lawyer, to come to telecommunications meetings and to see participants, so blinded by technological advances that they forget the ordinary human beings on the end of the technological chain.

Perhaps nowhere more vividly was this need to think of basics brought home than last night at our conference dinner. There the Gipsy band with its haunting melodies - handed down for centuries upon this plain of Central Europe - reminded us of the precious diversity of culture which we must strive, at all costs, to preserve. Let us resolve that

the penetration of informatics in this part of the world will be respectful of cultural diversity, of linguistic difference and of individual dignity. It would be a disaster if the result of the Revolution of 1989 were to render this marvellous, historical part of our world a barren wasteland of obsolete technology or of re-runs of Hollywood soap operas. We should take to heart the warning of Mr Vassilev of Bulgaria who cautioned us against "spiritual standardization". Diversity is the protectress of freedom. We should keep this basic truth before us in accepting the new global technology of informatics.

Just as vivid as the lilting Gipsy melodies was the call last night by Dr Nagai in his ancient tongue (with netsuen) - which reminded us of the splendid culture of other parts of the world far from Europe - and specifically that of our other host at this conference - Japan.

Dr Nagai quietly told us - that the Japanese had tried their hand at war with tragic results - and now (with much greater success) at business and making money. What a remarkable and inventive people they are. Their Phoenix-like economic rise has many lessons for Eastern countries. But the greatest challenge lies ahead and for Japan itself. The Japanese must find and export the joy of living and of human happiness. That is the ultimate goal. In the inspired words of the Founders of the American Revolution - life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

We have worked too intensively and learned too much here in Budapest to claim unalloyed happiness in our

labours. But when we return to reflect upon them, the record and our memories will bring happiness for many years to come. To Dr Nagai and our Japanese hosts and supporters of Tide 2000, on behalf of all participants I say thank you - kon ni tiwa and sayonara. And to our Hungarian hosts - full of courage, imagination and bright optimism I say Köszönüm - Nagyon Köszönüm!

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