

**ABOUT CERTAIN SOCIAL CRISES IN EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE:
EARLIER, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE
Introductory thoughts on the current situation**

Today we can definitely talk about a least three most important crises-problems-risks:

- health care crises (Covid-19 pandemics and the subsequent strains);
- energy crises and economic crises (electricity, gas, coal and other sources of energy and their impact, above all price impact on the whole economy);
- security crises (aggression, invasion, marauding, thefts, deportation, genocide, etc. against the Ukrainian state and its citizens. This has earlier been preceded by almost similar activities (although partly and to a smaller extent), so to say as an introduction, in Georgia, Nagorno-Karabach, Transnistria, Chechnya, Syria, etc; also the earlier World War II can be listed here).

We should point out already now, considering the situation in Europe in 2022 and in the whole world – energy crises and economic crises and security crises are extremely closely interconnected and their impacts are mutually integrated.

The undersigned has had an opportunity during his relatively long life to communicate with very many people, the work as a member of the academic staff has made it possible to talk-discuss with very many colleagues in the course of 50 years. Many acquaintances and friends have been found in connection with work also outside Estonia, e.g. in Georgia, Lithuania, Sweden, Germany, Finland, Ukraine, Hungary, Russia and other places. This article dwells above all on the talks-discussions held with my two good long-term German friends.

This brief article is about the *energy crisis and economic crisis* and the *security crisis* which started earlier than the health care crisis. It was unfortunately not possible to talk about the latter with my two good long-term friends as they had already deceased by the beginning of that crisis, namely the two German academics and researchers of economics, professors, doctors:

- Professor, Dr Peter Karl-Friedrich Hoss (25.04.1937 – 21.12.2018)¹ and
- Professor, Dr Manfred Oskar Eitel Hennies (10.09.1938 – 18.10.2019)².

However, after World War II, blockade of West Berlin and formation of the German Democratic Republic and separation of West and East Berlin they lived in different

¹ See in more detail in our journal: In memoriam, 1-2/ 2019, pp. 109–118.

² See in more detail in our journal: In memoriam, 3-4/ 2019, pp. 93–121.

Both had been born in Berlin and also graduated from high school here: Peter in 1955 and Manfred in 1958.

Both had studied economics. Peter in the Berlin School of Economics (Dipl. Financial Economist, 1962) and Manfred in the Free University of Berlin (Dipl. Public Economist, 1964).

After graduation both continued to work at their universities and started to write their theses: Peter defended his doctoral theses at the Humboldt University in Berlin in 1981 and Manfred defended his doctoral theses at the Free University of Berlin in 1969. After working at the university both did also practical work for a long time in economic organisations.

societies. Peter's life and work was in East Berlin and Manfred's life and work in West Berlin (which was supplied particularly during the blockade with almost everything only by aircrafts). Later Manfred went to live and work to the former West Germany, to the Frankfurt am Main area.

I became acquainted with Peter Hoss and met him for several times (in Tallinn, Berlin, once also at a conference in Almaty) and often during the period from autumn 1982 to spring 1984 when I worked as the Head of the Laboratory of Improvement of the Economic Mechanism at the Estonian Planning Institute.³

I got acquainted with Manfred Hennies in November 1989 in Kiel, Germany (I had my fellowship period there at the University of Kiel), at the Dean's Office of the Applied University of Kiel. After that we met almost every week in Kiel or at his home in Warder, later almost every year in Estonia or in different German cities both in connection with work and during holidays. I have written about events related to Manfred in earlier issues of our journal.

The subjects of energy crises and economic crises and they relation with the security crisis:⁴

³ Peter worked at the same time as the Head of Department at the Planning Institute in Berlin. Work-related meetings of delegations of stakeholders (three people + an interpreter of the Germans) of the institutes took place in the cities mentioned. The conference in Almaty was certainly a big event – delegations of the planning institutes of socialist countries, including soviet republics participated in a magnificent conference which lasted about a week (with the accommodation in what was probably the best Almaty hotel in a high-riser: presentations, discussions, tours, rich dinners with a cultural programme, also free time).

I met Peter also when I no longer worked at the Planning Institute (both in Tallinn and in Berlin, also in Frankfurt am Main and in Taunus mountains).

In October 2010, before my fellowship with a DAAD scholarship of two months started at the Greifswald University in Germany and in Kiel (Institute for the World Economy, ZBW Library of Economics and the Kiel University of Applied Sciences), I stayed for 3–4 days at the villa of Peter and his wife Renate in **Prioros** (Dahme) town (about 1000 inhabitants) before going on to Greifswald; their home town was located about 30 km south of the Berlin city centre in Spreewald, in the Dahme-Heidensee Nature Park near the lakes Heidensee and Streganz. The President of the Democratic Republic of Germany Wilhelm Pieck had had his summer residence by Lake Streganz in 1954–1959.

I met Peter for the last time when he stopped for a half a day in Tallinn with the cruise ship Aidablu with his wife Renate and sister Susanne (on 12 July 2012). We visited my home at Piritä and my parents who live there, and then the Old Town of Tallinn, and we parted before the cruise ship left the Port of Tallinn.

⁴ I would like to point out here that the current security crisis (the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, which was partly started already in 2014, the aggression, occupation and other related actions, including threats with nuclear arms and not only in Ukraine but also to EU and NATO member states) is connected both to World War II and the subsequent “Cold War” (12.03.1947–26.12.1991). In the broader meaning, Cold War is a conflict which avoids direct military confrontation and in which the parties are limited to economic, political and intelligence activities against each other. [https://et.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C3%BClm_s%C3%B5da] 17.04.2022

Back to the year 2010 in Prieros: we spent a lot of time walking in the surroundings and in Berlin but also talking and discussing things in Prieros. One important subject was – the Nord Stream gas pipeline from Russia through the Baltic Sea to Germany (near Greifswald). Since this subject was still on the agenda and topical, we discussed it as well.

The undersigned was pessimistic about the structure and stated that it was above all and in the long term a political project for Russia.

Peter objected and regarded it a mutual and primarily economic project and he completely excluded the political aspect.

We had long debates – the main argument of the undersigned was that our eastern neighbour Russia cannot be trusted as it has never kept its promises or taken the interests of the other party into consideration. And if it is useful for it, particularly if it can exert pressure on the other party in its own interests, it will just turn off the gas taps. And you will sit without gas. And then it will start dictating the conditions.

Peter stuck to his statements about economic interest, adding that the Soviet Union is a friendly and kind country (just to remind you: he lived in East Germany; to be fair, I have to say – Peter was a very good and friendly person and did not talk any silly socialist nonsense).

Now that there is war in Ukraine, aggression, invasion and deportation with all their barbarities and horrors, it is clear – buying gas and oil is harmful both for the EU and for Ukraine and this is how we “feed” the war machine. Russia has the tap and is even threatening with nuclear arms. Several international sanctions against Russia, incl. those related to energy, banking and many other aspects, are certainly justified and should have a sobering effect on Russia and its economy in many areas, if not at immediately then over the time.

It is a pity that Peter has left our midst and cannot know what is happening in Ukraine and we cannot continue our discussions. Unfortunately, the undersigned has been right.

Security crises now and earlier:

We discussed this subject with Manfred almost since the time we met, i.e. since November 1989 (East and West Germany were reunited already on 3 October, and the Berlin Wall had just fallen a week ago, on 9 November).

When I first met Manfred, I gave him a brief overview of Estonia in the course of a few hours, starting from the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, Russian provocations addressed to Estonia before the war, the so-called “voluntary joining of the Soviet Union by Estonia”, several occupations of Estonia, World War II and the subsequent (incl. West Berlin which was supplied with almost everything only with aircrafts, particularly during the blockade) deportations, long Soviet occupation, Russification, restrictions of the Estonian economy, etc. until the events of the Singing Revolution in 1989. And finally about the expectations of the Estonian people to restore the Republic of Estonia without the Soviet Union. Manfred listened with great interest as he had not heard of many things and events and did not even want to believe them at first.

But our discussions began and continued, including at the dinner table in Manfred's home. Both that year and during other fellowship periods in Kiel, Manfred insisted that I should stay at his home at Warder during weekends (from Friday evening until Monday morning), although I lived in the hotel of the University of Kiel (which was supplied with everything necessary); Manfred or his wife Monika always picked me up by car and took me back to the hotel later).

Dinners at Manfred's home were traditional – at least three courses with wine (for Monika who is an excellent cook) and for me with beer; for Manfred without alcohol). After dinner, so-to-say the second part of the dinner began. Manfred brought strong drinks to the table and the discussions began.

Our conversation was often about World War II – who was worse murderer – Hitler or Stalin? Manfred always thought at first that Hitler was worse. I disagreed and my opinion was that both were similar butchers and murderers. We discussed, presenting our arguments. After we had had a few drinks and given our arguments, Manfred started to change his mind – he became a little sad (even shed a few tears) and agreed that I was right. The same happened almost every time. I concluded from this that after the war the German state propaganda had probably been so strong that they (i.e. many Germans) felt guilty about that war (they had also lost). This had probably had an effect also on Manfred.

All that was related to security crises, i.e. war and aggression but also to economic issues, including raw material and energy. Manfred also largely believed that the Soviet Union and later Russia were good forms of statehood and friendly to people in all respects. Over the time, he accepted my examples and arguments from real life (as I had lived in that repressive state myself) and changed his earlier positions. We certainly discussed also the post-war times and reached the current situation, incl. the regaining of independence and problems and developments of Estonia. Manfred's wife Monika did not need such transformation, she had somewhat different positions from Manfred, almost similar to mine, already at the beginning.

Again – if we look at or listen to the events this year in Ukraine⁵ (besides the weird arguments and justifications of Russia, false propaganda, distortions and falsification of history), there are a lot of reasons to be anxious. This shows again that no friendliness or serious cooperation can be expected from the Russian Empire. As stated by many heads of states and politicians and free media, Russia has to be stopped in the name of peace and cooperation. Will they succeed?

Unfortunately also Manfred has left our midst and we cannot continue our discussion about the “friendliness and ensuring the security” of Russia.

In Tallinn, Pirita-Kose, March-June 2022

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⁵ Read also other articles related to Ukraine in this journal.