From the opening speech and commentaries by the founding member and chairman of the Economic Club, Dr. Peter Kasalovsky, at the 101st regular assembly and 244th event of the association

Oct. 23, 2014

**Ladies and Gentlemen, esteemed guests, fellow members and friends!**

Our association, founded twenty-two years ago, has never before been as knowledgeable and socially and humanly strong as it is right now. The program of our 101st regular meeting can therefore be somewhat provocative. Provocative. That’s how several people, mainly from the outside of our club, see the topics we are going to discuss. Some of them have been sincerely astonished, and even asked if I am changing my orientation. The program of our meeting once again includes issues of internal as well as foreign policies that should concern our internal politicians and, most of all, existing citizens.

I should add that we also have “non-existing citizens” – people who have no interest in public affairs, their community and society as a whole. The only thing they are interested in is money, and maybe their position on some ladder. They are out of themselves, even in some kind of trance, when their lapdogs celebrate them and praise them to the skies. When they feel neglected or the truth of their feebleness comes to light, they become dangerous. After all, there is some reason behind the popularity of the joke about three sad sharks…

Since the establishment of our club community we have strived to prevent blockage of the economic and social transformation.

I would like to emphasize that we knew about the wrong decisions made by parliamentary and governmental authorities, and we have spared no efforts to mitigate the damage. We had to remember, and we still remember, that the decisions were made and approved by those who won a majority in parliamentary elections. We should not forget that we decided to embrace representative democracy. The development confirmed our concerns, which still prevail, and, I might say, in the meantime evolved into never-ending story (of wasted opportunities).

(The documents are archived and included in our memoranda, declarations, appeals and open letters on the Internet. Details can be found on our website [www.hospodarskyklub.sk](http://www.hospodarskyklub.sk) in the speeches of most of the laureates of Golden Biatec and other club members and guests from home and abroad attending our regular meetings, and from the first decade of the club in the HN - Daily for the period 1993 – 1998, and the Hospodarsky dennik (Economic Daily) for the period 1999-2004).

“Vox populi, vox Dei…” – and that is how it always will be in this world, my dear friends. Even though, sometimes it does not apply. When political leaders come to the conclusion that they are chosen species. Chosen forever because they are the most clever and most bright of all(!). Then they start to flaunt it. They stop to use common sense and start to act outside the framework of the law. We already have some experience with such leaders, even though there are still not many of them. We remember well their subsequent falls either onto the hardest ground or into oblivion. The most compelling evidence is not the existence of various causes but the fact that we have representatives holding office thanks to the will of the people and getting salaries, bonuses and sundry compensations for working 24 hours a day, and sometimes even longer.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

We have been working on today’s program since our 101st session, and in a situation where communication with politicians leading this country, the parliament and the government, was almost impossible. We are not good enough for them. It could be documented but it would be meaningless. It is nothing exceptional; it is going on since the establishment of our club in 1992. Self-intoxication with one’s own opinions and truths can be quite costly sooner or later. Just look at the elections to the European Parliament, the Slovak parliament, the VUC (Higher Territorial Units) and all of the municipal elections. Voter participation is getting lower and lower, thanks to the will of the “powerful”. The low voter turnout is not only embarrassing and undignified, but most of all it has no moral or democratic strength.

Back in May of this year the fourth and current President of Slovak republic Andrej Kiska promised to meet with us and discuss what kind of Slovakia we would like to have. That was before the presidential elections though. After his inauguration we sent him congratulations and another invitation. One month later we were informed that the President has no time to meet with us because… After yet another invitation I received a letter in which the Office of the President informed me that Mr. President has high regard for our activities, etc. I hope he will be satisfied with his today’s program and will not regret his absence here in the Palfy palace.

Andrej Kiska became president because he got a little more than thirty percent of all votes. There was no spontaneity behind it, but what is, along with some until now rarely so perceived conditional trust of many voters, written in the title of an essay by Vladimir Synek: **“…Tread softly because you tread on my dreams”.** Author of this “appeal” is William Butler Yeats, Irish poet and drama writer, who died in 1939.

President of the Republic Andrej Kiska will miss a lot. Vladimir Synek in his essays comes so incredibly close to the truth about the state of Slovakia and her President elected by the citizens. I asked him to write this essay because he is one of the very few people able to express the essentials with so much logic and sensitivity. It is not about the first 100 or 130 days of Andrej Kiska’s presidency, but whether he started, and at what level, to fulfill his publicly declared promises and commitments. Whether he can be a statesman, or he will be another one of those politicians who in their time in office did not undertake any steps in order to “refresh” our souls and lives.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Please welcome Mr. Vladimir Synek**

{…}

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Several times throughout the club history we held discussions themed “Citizen Security and Economy”. It is my great pleasure to give the floor to the President of the Police Force General Tibor Gaspar, one of the nominees for the Golden Biatec for 2014.

{…}

**Dear Assembly,**

Together with Prof. Vojtech Tkac we have drafted and finalized a declaration of our group members on “The employment in Slovakia and the ethics of the leaders of Slovak economy and Slovak society”. The text could of course be extended to several more pages, but we agreed on the submitted version. If you are interested in signing the declaration, please let me know.

{…}

**Dear members, guests, friends,**

On May 15, 2014, eleven members of our association signed an open letter addressed to the world community, the Presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States, as well as to the citizens of Ukraine, to promote peaceful and civilized solution of the Ukrainian crises. The letter, titled “Against Irreversible Sterilization of Higher Life Forms on the Planet”, was made public at the one hundredth jubilee session.

Among other things, the letter says:

*The superpowers’ behavior often shows they only and solely perceive themselves and their own nations, thus deforming even more the flattened and linearly plotted public opinion in the remaining regions of the world. Sometimes they have a common interest, but sometimes each one of them wants to be the most important player in the World’s development, or even in the history. An intense harmony in their cooperation and diplomacy can undeniably prevent a fatal war leading to an end of the civilisation. They can be more successful in the field of peacekeeping only if they improve their communication with the rest of the world and its nations.*

*The current concentration of soldiers on both sides of the Russia’s borders with Ukraine and with other States is increasing the probability, not only of a local, but also a regional or global confrontation. The internal situation and its development could potentially escalate into the last World War. There are scientific studies and computer simulations available confirming that a new war would cause an irreversible sterilisation of our planet from any higher forms of life. From the human point of view, the continuation of the Ukraine unrest is unbearable. It is now high time for the superpowers to stop it.*

*Ukrainians are Ukrainians. They are not pro-Russian terrorists, separatists or Nazis from Kiev. Ukraine currently only has an interim government with a limited legitimacy, but this doesn’t mean it is a fascist government. It is, however, intolerable that this government is unable to handle the consequences of political slips, corruption*

*and long-lasting political tensions without violence. Violence is moreover being applied when they have missed the boat and in form of an “inefficient” military offensive instead of an agreed negotiation on international level. It needs to be added that the rebellion in Ukraine started because the general decline and particularly the degree of corruption started to be unbearable for the large numbers of citizens. We are witnessing another revolution, which went out of the control, thus creating the room for crisis and uncontrollable developments in the entire country.*

*The principal enemy and problem of Ukraine and its inhabitants is their declining economy. Instead of military operations, the government of Ukraine should focus on managing the overall functioning of the economy, working pillars of democracy and on improving the life conditions, excluding nevertheless the corruptors from the public life. For the time being, the richest of Ukrainians haven’t proposed a helping hand to their own country in order to solve the financial crisis, and especially the country’s debts. The interim government has asked the United States, the European Union, the IMF and other institutions for a help, while the amounts of possible loans and different financial investments are a clear signal about Ukraine actually heading for financial collapse, and eventually facing it.*

*The leaders of superpowers observe their own interests, but if they want to become world leaders by their acts, the only thing left to do for them is to get back from their intended positions and discuss under the public surveillance about how to promote the peace, democracy and decent life in Ukraine. It would be absurd and very dangerous, should the Russian Federation and the United States start considering each other adversary – or enemy. These wishes are always there among general officers, but also among initiators of a new “cold war” and of military confrontations. And right-wing or left-wing politicians are publicly sponging off that.*

*We’d better not think about what would happen, should the first and finally the last war on the European continent start on the territory of Ukraine. This would mean a failure for the United States, for the Russian Federation and for the European Union and an end of the pan-European integration dream, but mainly a knock- out for Ukraine and its honest democratic people. It is really high time to start acting without delay and to send a clear message that we do not wish the current development to continue, and when peace and war is in stake, we want timely and impartial information about all solutions for the suffering in Ukraine.*

*We are counting on circumspection and brilliance of the two presidents, Mr B. H. Obama and Mr V. V. Putin to confirm their world leadership, just as their predecessors J. F. Kennedy and N. S. Khrushchev did, when they managed to save the peace in the very last minute and divert the nuclear disaster more than 50 years ago.*

**Dear Assembly,**

We have reached a stage where political big shots at home as well as abroad, don’t react as they used to in the recent past. Even the diplomats don’t make big efforts any more, and we should slowly take notice of such messages on the Internet as: “Why do you meddle in the matters that pertain to the prime ministers?” Also there is an effort to induce an impression that we would like to be policy makers. We are policy makers for the last 22 years, and I can state that we have been repeatedly ahead of time, and along the way alienated quite a number of our national politicians. After all, nobody can have more brainpower and sense than politicians holding various offices.

There have been, for example, declarations on various issues: The Pan European Integration (1997), The membership in the EU and NATO (2003), The future of the EU and the relationship with the USA (2007), The parliamentary elections (2010), The Hamlet-esque questions in the Slovak environment (2010), The accountability of the political and societal leaders (2013). We also have received inspiring responses from the French President Jacques Chirac, Pope John Paul II, Cardinal J. Ch. Korec, President of Slovenia M. Kucan, Czech Prime Minister and later President V. Klaus, President of WEF K. Schwab, OECD Secretary-General D. Johnston, President of the World Bank J. Wolfensohn, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate M. Yunus, Prime Minister of Montenegro M. Djukanovic and other personalities.

Former US Ambassador in Slovakia R. Johnson has become an honorary member of our association. He almost always found the time to meet with our club community and to participate in an open dialogue. He was an excellent ambassador of good will and common sense. Neither of the ambassadors working in Slovakia since 1993 was as friendly and charming as he. However, there have been few diplomats close to his level: the French Ambassador Perrin, Russian Ambassador Aksenjonok and the Ambassador of Austria Matzner. During their ambassadorship it could never happened that their respective country would overlook or even negate warnings and suggestions from decent and not unreasonable people from Central Europe.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We have not received any official response to our open letter, neither from the Prime Minister nor the President. We are used to it by now. However, it is quite unpleasant that such “new culture” has domesticated itself yet in other parts of the world (there are some exceptions though). Letting only the current politicians decide on the development, would be irresponsible and, in a sense, civil resignation. No, this is not about messianism or political naivety, but about the fact that the world did not make any strides toward better conditions with regards to security and peace. Is there less misery, hunger, diseases and illiteracy, thus less poverty in general? Are there any less civil wars and military interventions? No, there are not. Such is the result of the activities of world leaders.

When it comes to the social development, we might as well save our breath. Even though our president thinks that we are doing relatively well. He is entitled to his own opinion, just like we are. We are economically dependent on the outside world, and that is a fact. And we develop and behave accordingly. Flattery is fashionable and political classes almost morbidly profess the slogan “…till the end of time.” We once had such friendship and alliance with the Soviet Union, after the year 1989 with the USA and now with the EU and NATO. But the sad truth is that we are not our own friends and allies. Such is the reality, pinkish and “optimized” perception and myopia.

It is impossible not to mention the government package for the improvement of the standard of living. We could rejoice and applaud if we only had resources for it. For example, the rail transportation will be free for pupils, students and retirees. It is possible that miracle will happen again, as once in the past when all textbooks and school supplies were free of charge. That is a feat worthy of a Nobel Prize. Perhaps the self-proclaimed leaders of the economy in our country, who in similar cases are determinedly silent, will finally understand it.

Let us also ask ourselves if a Prime Minister can express his personal views, weather on the sanctions against Russia or on Russian policies. He cannot. Otherwise it is some weird double-track line, and I do not want to use a different word. After all, he has a parliament with a comfortable majority, which could express its view on those matters, so the citizens would know what to think, what opinion to hold. Why did not he do so? He was indirectly encouraged by those, generally known entrepreneurs in our country, who did not understand one fundamental fact: that we maintain friendly and allied ties, binding and valid in good and bad times, even when one side takes wrong and senseless actions.

When back in May we expressed our concerns for our pettiness and possible consequences of the Ukrainian crises, as well as the reactions of EU, US, NATO and Russia, nothing positive has happened. On the contrary. In the immediate vicinity we have destabilized Ukraine and a rerun of the Cold War. Since May I have been trying to get response from the man who is, according to the representatives of the EU, USA and NATO, the greatest transgressor responsible for the state of today’s world. Furthermore, I partly believed the logic of Russian diplomacy.

I also accepted the nomination of Sergej Lavrov for the Golden Biatec Award, but the substance of Russian foreign policy remains the same. Nothing has changed. Russia pursues only her self-interest, like all the other countries that want to be seen as leaders. When it does not happen, they assume that position without any scruples. Was there not enough time for a speech, videoconference or a message from Sergej Lavrov to us – the European Union and its citizens?

There is a chance – an opportunity to address this issue at our next 102nd regular session and 245th meeting, which will be held on December 16, 2014. Invitation to participate in a mutually beneficial dialogue still stands.

Some time ago we asked if Vladimir Putin is a world leader. Although he enjoys some support also in our country, he is merely a Russian president, or should we say he is **the** President of Russia. (And I have to mention that the V. Putin’s peace appeal, spreading on the Internet, is a falsification.)

**Ladies and gentleman,**

I am pleased to inform you that at the end of May we decided to establish a Committee for Peace and Cooperation. After 41 years, thanks to our skilled experts, we have updated a report WHO about nuclear potential in the world. The report is published on our website [www.hospodarskyklub.sk](http://www.hospodarskyklub.sk). It is a very depressive reading, and a result of actions of the world’s political elite, inflexibility of the UN and citizenry numb by consumerism and social fear.

I contacted three foreign laureates of Golden Biatec, M. Yunus, Prof. J. Keller and Prof. Rongxiang Xu, as well as domestic personalities Prof. V. Tkac, Prof. J. Breza, Prof. J. Masarik, Z. Cernak and JUDr. A. Blaha and suggested that we should care more about better conditions for peaceful development and life in the world, that the truth should be at least a minimal truth and that democracy means more peace.

Personally, at this moment I recall a meeting I had with Soviet Marshal and Minister of Defense Dimitrij Fjodorovic Ustinov in the Bratislava Castle thirty-one years ago. The elevator was out of order. I was asked to help our 71- year old Soviet guest to climb the stairs up to the Federation Hall. But he was very agile and made it to the castle first floor without stopping. I spent half an hour with him and answered all kinds of questions regarding international relations, especially the relationship with the Soviet Union and its peoples.

He ended the “confession” contemplating aloud and “between four eyes”: “Your generation, by contrast to us elders, will have it much more difficult. Today the nuclear weapons can destroy you dozens of times, though once would be quite enough. When you get closer to my age, there will be much bigger fear of war, of nuclear confrontation, which could bring the end of this civilization. There will be more armaments and the peacetime will not come by itself. Don’t rely too much on the politicians since they don’t basically have any idea what kind of war would the next one be like. And than you might live long enough to at least reach my age.”