

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2015.015.047](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2015.015.047)

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## **THEORIES OF POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS OF CENTRAL EUROPE AFTER WORLD WAR I**

### **Abstract:**

The goal of this paper is to describe and analyze the theories of political organization of Central Europe during the interwar period, especially from the Czechoslovak perspectives. Some connections between the European integration process, and a national and a civil identity are outlined, in particular the problems of the Central European national states in the process of the European integration. The discourse on the Central Europe is one of the most difficult, because it has many aspects: political, cultural, philosophical, historical, religious, ethnic, psychological and economic.

Small states, such as the interwar Czechoslovak Republic was, depend on their surroundings. They do not have enough power to enforce a balance of power favorable to themselves. If they originated as an expression of a temporary state of the balance of power, they are condemned to dissolution. Some representatives of the Czech and Slovak nations attempted to understand and confront these realities with a practical policy. I guess that if we want to understand these theorists and politicians, it will be important to know and understand the view of Central Europe, which they represent.

The most of the integration projects of 1920s and 1930s reflect the fear of economic and political strengthening of Germany, optimistic hope of democratization of the USSR, and seeking for allies in the Central European region.

### **Keywords:**

Central Europe, political organization, theories, Czechoslovak perspectives, nation

## Introduction

In fact, there are a number of views on the Central Europe. Several authors and theorists have tried to describe this region from several points of view – cultural, ethnic, economical, geographical, geopolitical and political. Central Europe is mainly a transitional region. The most important component from the view of political geography is the fact that the whole region is situated in the sphere of Western Christianity. Two countries (the Czech Republic and Slovenia) were besides traditionally Western also parts of the Holy Roman Empire and the Cis-Leithania (*Cisleithanien*), which means the Austrian part of Habsburg monarchy. All the other countries belong to the Western Christianity, but they have never been the parts of the above mentioned historical and political units. These two characteristics are very important for the definition of this region. The Holy Roman Empire as well as the Cis-Leithania had always been the parts of institutionalized West. Till now it is given in Europe that the membership or non-membership of the West is mainly the question of relation to the institutions.

In the development of debate on Central Europe, it is needed to notice mainly two factors. The first of them is the historical context. It means the most important and dramatic historical changes of this region during the last 200 years. The turning points, which influenced also the historical development of geopolitical consideration on Central Europe, can be considered decisively after 1815: the revolutions in 1848-49, the period of unification of Germany, the creation of dualism in Habsburg monarchy, the results of both World Wars and the disintegration of Soviet bloc after 1989.

The second factor is the nationality of each author, who expresses their theories about Central Europe. We can easily distinguish the German, Austrian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian or Slovenian views on Central Europe (Carter, 1996). The ideas of united Central Europe had different forms in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. They were oscillated from the idea of Central Europe as the tool to loosen ethnic tensions realized by democratic way (K. Renner) through the concept of Middle European Union as a competitor of Great Britain and a barrier against Russia (T. Schieman) or ideas about the enlargement of German Alliance and Central Europe by Scandinavian countries and England (C. Frantz).

The period between the two World Wars is characterized by creation of several integration plans, which should have overcome the heterogeneity of Central European region. These plans and related political movements already started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and can be divided into four easily defined streams:

1. Ideology of federative Habsburg Empire
2. Development of German concept of "*Mitteleuropa*"
3. Unification of Slavic population, Pan-Slavism, later including also the idea of cooperation, alternatively join to the Soviet Union
4. Concepts of confederations of various nation states (succession states) (Cabada, 2002).

## Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism

The processes of national revival and national emancipation in Central Europe gave rise to two noteworthy doctrines: Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism. These two expressions can very easily cause misunderstanding. Journalism applies these two terms much more frequently than political science. The result is a series of views, which do more to stir up political emotions than to enrich knowledge. At the same time, both these conceptions developed in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and were used by varied movements (Krejčí, 2005). Just for the explanation: the meaning of prefix “pan-“ is “all”. Therefore, Pan-German means All-German and Pan-Slav means All-Slav. However, what do these two conceptions mean?

- **Pan-Germanism:** movement whose goal was the political unification of all people speaking German or a Germanic language. This conception developed in several forms. It is especially a matter of the **German patriotic movement** after the Napoleonic Wars, which endeavored for the unification of the Germans by uniting all the German states into one whole. There were two main variants: *Greater-German*, which demanded the union of Germany with Austria (it means Cis-Leithania that is including Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia). *Lesser-German* aiming at uniting only the non-Austrian German states. At the same time, according to some conceptions of Pan-Germanism, it meant an **effort to unite into one state all Germans, that is including those living in non-German states**, for example in the Czech lands, Slovakia or Hungary.
- **Pan-Slavism:** 19<sup>th</sup> century movement with political, but mainly cultural goals that recognized a common ethnic background among the various Slavic peoples of Central and Eastern Europe and sought to unite those peoples for the achievement of common cultural and political goals. The Pan-Slav movement originally was formed in the first half of the 19th century by West and South Slavic intellectuals, scholars, and poets, whose peoples were at that time also developing their sense of national identity. The Pan-Slavists engaged in studying folk songs, folklore, and peasant vernaculars of the Slavic peoples, in demonstrating the similarities among them, and in trying to stimulate a sense of Slavic unity.

The political potentials of the Pan-Germanic and Pan-Slavic ideas are different, because the vision of the unification of all Slavic nations in one state had less mobilizing strength than some version of the Pan-German idea, especially the *Greater German* and *Lesser German* variants. However, this did not prevent a series of German and Hungarian nationalists seeing Pan-Slavism as a dangerous imperialist policy. However, the development of Pan-Slavic thinking not only stopped at the barriers of the nation state, it is possible to say that this idea perished on them. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pan-Slavism gradually and almost completely vanished and changed into

ethnography, comparative linguistics and literary studies. Pan-Slavism never became the ruling idea in one of the large Slavic countries, such as Russia or Poland was, while the radical version of Pan-Germanism penetrated into the German policy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Krejčí, 2005).

Pan-Germanism defined the German Central Europe, which consists of Prussia, Germany with Austria-Hungary, Balkan, Turkey, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, parts of France and Italy, but also some Slavic territories in the western part of Russia. The main program of Pan-Germanism was to weaken the influence of Slavic nations and also the influence of Great Britain and the USA. All these steps should have led to the Germany's hegemony over the world. The first Czechoslovak president, T. G. Masaryk, also mentioned the plans of Pan-Germanic Europe and pointed them out as try for reorganization of Europe and humankind. In his book, *The New Europe*, he wrote that this reorganization would be realized by the selected German nation as a dynastic, absolutistic and militaristic change (Masaryk, 1994). On the other hand, there was also a plan and the aims of the Allies to eliminate the danger of Pan-Germanism in Central Europe, to stop Germanization and Hungarization of Slavs, and exploitation of smaller nations, to liberate nations from tyranny, to change the old and non-democratic regimes of monarchies to modern and democratic; and to prevent the next possible conflict from happening.

The most famous model of Central Europe united around Germany is found in the book *Mitteleuropa*, written by **Friedrich Naumann** (a German liberal politician) in 1915. Naumann's *Mitteleuropa* brought perhaps the methodologically purest vision of Central Europe as a geopolitical unit under German leadership. However, it is certainly not an example of the most militant Pan-Germanic ideas. It combines German nationalism and imperialism with liberalism and socialism, and it does not succumb to racism. Naumann's *Mitteleuropa* was a geopolitical unit between Russia and the Western powers. According to this author, Europe is divided by two cuttings from north to south: one leads from the lower Rhine to the Alps, and the other from Latvia either to the left and right part of Romania. Naumann also said that Central Europe was a geographical expression, until then without political or constitutional character, but to him, *Mitteleuropa* was a union, which would become the political expression of the Central European region. The pre-condition for its origin had to be the centralization of certain institutional, political activities of Germany and Austria-Hungary in new institutions.

The basis of Naumann's conception of a union was the vision of the economic unity of Central European region. The union would be a political expression of a Central European economic nation; it would represent the "practical socialism" of a world group connected to German-Austro-Hungarian economic area. Integration was understood in three stages: economic cooperation had to be associated with military cooperation, since a united economic zone must be self-sufficient from the point of view of defensive aims. Economic and military union would influence the direction and unification of foreign policy (Krejčí, 2005).

The main constitutional problem of *Mitteleuropa* would be the separation of the national state from the economic and military state. However, in spite of this, the hope of *Mitteleuropa* in confrontation with the power centers had to be based on German culture, German organization and the German spirit. The Central European culture had to grow precisely around the German spirit, and create a new human type.

As it was mentioned, the opposite idea of Pan-Germanism was the idea of Pan-Slavism. In general, it was a vision of Slavic reciprocity, in which the most important aim was not the unification of all Slavic nations in one state, but to look for the possibilities of solidarity between the Slavic nations/groups. The most distinctive demonstrations of Pan-Slavism are considered the Russo-Slavonic Empire of L. Štúr, but mainly the Pan-Slavonic Federation of N. Y. Danilevsky:

According to **Ľudovít Štúr** (a Slovak linguist, poet and politician), Russia is the only free Slavic state, and it is an extraordinary strong state, representatives of the Slavs and protector of their honor. Russia has power, immense power and with it also the mission and right to destroy all the Slavic separatist tendencies and claim hegemony in the whole family of Slavic nations. Russia attracts the Slavs. It is a land of great economic growth, but also of the vice of serfdom. The structure of the political system of the Russo-Slavonic Empire would have three levels: the commons is a widened family, the country is a widened commons and the state is a union of countries (Štúr, 1993). It would also be necessary to create the cultural conditions for the creation of a united Russian Empire. According to Štúr, the formation of a united Slavic Empire required two radical measures: a universal adoption of the Orthodox faith and an adoption of Russian as the universal literary language.

According to **Nikolay Y. Danilevsky** (a Russian philosopher, historian and economist), the Pan-Slavonic Federation must be a close federation with the hegemony of Russian state. Three non-Slavic nations: the Greeks, Romanians and Hungarians must “voluntary or involuntary” join to it. This is because the historical destiny has inseparably connected them with the Slavs. The Pan-Slavonic Federation had to consist of eight states, shaped with regard for the ethnographic groups and nations, into which the Slavic world is divided:

- The Russian Empire
- The Czech-Moravian-Slovak Kingdom
- The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes
- The Kingdom of Bulgaria
- The Kingdom of Romania
- The Kingdom of Hellenes
- The Kingdom of Hungary
- The Czarigrad (Constantinople) Region

The Pan-Slavonic Federation would have 125 – 140 million inhabitants and its natural center would be Czarigrad (Danilevskij, 1966).

We can also add to these ideas and conceptions the secret project of **Karel Kramář** (a Czech politician and statesman) to create a Slavic Empire led by Russia

from 1914. It is interesting that it was worked out according to the example of the Deutsche Bundesakte. It was sent to the Russian minister of foreign affairs, too. Kramář proposed the *Constitution of Slavic Empire* assumed that the Slavic Empire would extend from the Pacific Ocean to Šumava and contain more than 200 million inhabitants. The proposed Constitution said that the Empire would consist of (Krejčí, 2005):

- The Russian Empire
- The Polish Empire
- The Bulgarian Empire
- The Serbian Kingdom
- The Kingdom of Montenegro
- The Czech Empire

The whole Empire would be headed by the Emperor of All Slavs and All Russia – the Russian Czar, who would also be King of Poland and King of Bohemia. Imperial legislation would be approved by the Duma (with 300 deputies) and Imperial Council. According to Kramář, imperial legislation would cover the following areas:

- commercial treaties and customs duties,
- weights and measures, the monetary system,
- commercial shipping and consulates,
- general regulations about post, telegraph and telephone services,
- general regulations about railways,
- the army and navy,
- the imperial budget,
- authorization of imperial loans,
- distribution of common expenses to the states in the federation.

According to some authors of that time, reconciliation between the Russians and Poles could have been one of the fruits of the First World War (Krejčí, 2005). The British historian, political activist and great friend of the Central European Slavs, **Robert W. Seton-Watson**, also believed in it. In his essay *Pan-Slavism* from 1916 he wrote that it was certainly true that Slavic problem could not be solved either on a Pan-Slavic basis or otherwise (Seton-Watson, 1920). However, the development was much more complicated and different in its course, although the Slavic idea was still in the background of the Czech and Slovak state idea after the First and also after the Second World War.

The central figure in the varied group of authors of the most varied plans for federalization of Austria was undoubtedly **František Palacký** (a Czech historian and politician). He worked out a comprehensive conception for the international relations and foreign policy of the Czech or Czechoslavonic nation. It was an original vision of the realistic model of European relations and politics, based on knowledge of the functioning of the balance of power and endeavoring to secure the interests of a small nation. This conception led to the idea of creating a powerful Central European center,

which would be able to confront the expansionism of the big state units from the West and East.

Palacký's conception was an idea of the national interests of the Czechs, which did not trust in the possibility of securing this interest by their own national state. This was the starting point for his Austro-Slavism and defense of national interests with the help of a larger, supra-national Austrian state unit in Central Europe, but with the guarantee of a relatively exactly defined autonomy. His conception of Austria as the defender of the interests of the nations started from the idea of an equal federation of nations, which freely decided to unite and multiply their strength, but renounced none of their basic rights.

Palacký was convinced that in the Austrian case, it was possible to combine the national principle with historical rights with the help of a federal organization. The division of power between historical regions and the monarch of federal authorities would secure the free development of the nations (Krejčí, 2005). He proposed several organization of federation, but probably the most realistic was the creation of eight groups of lands:

- The German-Austrian Lands
- The Czech Lands
- The Polish Lands
- The Illyrian Lands
- The Italian Lands
- The Yugoslav Lands
- The Hungarian Lands
- The Romanian Lands

### **Czechoslovak Perspectives**

In his consideration of Czech statehood, **Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk** (a Czechoslovak politician, sociologist, philosopher and first president of the Czechoslovak Republic) started from the legacy of Palacký, but he also took into account the current state of international relations. Like Palacký, Masaryk also understood the logic of the functioning of the balance of power very well, and he gave the Czech nation a foreign policy before it had a state. The basic difference between the concepts of the national interest of Palacký and Masaryk is given by their different relationships to the national state. Palacký sought ways to secure the needs of the small Czech nation in a powerful multi-national state (Krejčí, 2005). On the other hand, Masaryk wanted the necessary power to secure a small national state with international guarantees.

Masaryk also concerned with the importance of war, problems of small nations, Eastern question etc. Contrary to M. Hodža, Masaryk was speaking about the Eastern question and about the nations of Eastern Europe like succession nations of Austria-Hungary. In his book *The New Europe*, he compared the plans of the Allies (which he considered to be the top democratic and cultural states) and Pan-Germanistic plans (which are typical for obsolete, monarchist, the Middle-Ages states and the oldest forms of theocratic absolutism) for the reorganization of Europe (Masaryk, 1994).

Masaryk characterized the plan of monarchies as warlike, militaristic, anti-national and aristocratic; on the other hand, he considered the Allies plan as defense, pacifistic, democratic, based on the declaring of rights for all nations (small and also bigger nations). He also warned the powers that the united Europe was not an immediately achievable aim, but a responsible attempt to create a moral, intellectual and political program, which would apply to the whole Europe in the long term (Syllaba, 1992).

The main Masaryk's idea, except of the establishment of independent Czechoslovak state, was also the mentioned reconstruction of Central and Eastern Europe. He realized that the creation of independent states would not be simple, mainly in the areas, where Slavic nations lived abreast, because the determination of borders supposed so big complications. His suggestion was to create borders based on historical or natural borders. The independence of nations was not autotelic, because it was a natural level of development (Kovtun, 1991). The next step should have been the creation of federation between independent countries, but according to Masaryk, the free unification of nations was possible only with the elimination or decreasing in the German influence in Europe.

Masaryk's ideas on reorganization of Eastern Europe were very close to the ideas, which were outlined by the Allies during the First World War. He adverted to the fact that Austria-Hungary consisted of nine nations (German, Czech with Slovak, Polish, Russian, Serbian-Croatian, Slovene, Italian, Romanian and Hungarian) and in this multinational unit the governing nation is a minority. It was contrary to the similar mixed countries, in which the so-called governing nation was a majority. "The real federation of nations comes, when all of these nations will be free and independent, and they will want to unify. If new federations of small nations come to existence, they will be based on the principles of freedom, due to the needs of nations to unify and not from imperialist reason" (Masaryk, 1994). The program of the Allies was in this respect very clear and adverted to the fact that small nations had to be respected politically and also socially as big nations.

The organization of Europe should have realized with the solution of minority problems. It was pointed out that there were five powers in Europe (it means five big nations), then two medium-sized nations and 30 small nations. In the past, the Europe and its people had been controlled by the Church. According to Masaryk it was the time to do some changes after the First World War and gave the chance to each nation to determine their way of transformation. He knew that after the reconstruction of Europe, there would still be some multinational states, but the aim was to decrease their number after the war. The rule in the "new" Europe should have been the protection of civic rights of minorities and to give them the rights to become involved in the creation and development of democracy in Europe.

Regarding the Czechoslovak Republic, its geopolitical situation had never been an advantage for the country. The republic was situated in a nationally mixed area, in the zone of ethnic unrest, and political, economic and ideological confrontations. The Czechoslovak republic was located in the strategic German-Austro-Hungarian "clench"; it means that the state was surrounded by defeated countries, which called for the revision of system given by peace treaties. None of its neighbors, except of



Romania, had any hope to make a strong and real alliance. However, the Czechoslovak Republic could not be a neutral country as well, because it did not have a hundred year tradition of neutrality, such as Switzerland had, and there was also a lack of willingness of neighbor states to accept and respect similar neutrality. Therefore the state had to try to form an alliance with Western powers.

The problems of integration process also resonated in the interwar period. To this process to find a solution for the European crises, entered the Czechoslovak political representation as well. T. G. Masaryk, E. Benes and M. Hodža belonged to those intellectuals, who determined the course of practical policy in different time dimension. Masaryk's and Benes' philosophy of humanity and democracy was perceived as an ideological horizon of interwar Czechoslovak Republic. One of the dominant questions of interwar international relations was the future of united Europe projects. Masaryk, Benes and Hodža had been confronted by various plans on the European integration since the beginning of 1920's. However, one of the most significant activity of the interwar period became the Pan-European movement of **Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi** (an Austrian politician, geopolitician and philosopher), who worked out his project of integrated Europe in his book *Pan-Europa* in 1923 (Goňcová, 2006).

The characteristic feature of the Pan-European project was that it presented a guarantee of permanent peaceful organization and functioning of Europe. The Pan-European concept was voluntary. Kalergi thought of the idea that it was necessary to complete the individual needs and interests of the European states by their integration needs. Kalergi's concept also pointed to the economic necessity of the European unification. It was about the effort to create a common economic area in Pan-Europe, which could be competitive in comparison with the economic potential of the other powers, especially with the USA. The basics of Pan-European concept were power and political questions, and mainly an effort to guarantee the independence of Europe in the system of world powers. Pan-Europe was also understood as a defense against the Russian hegemony, and perceived as a tool for solution of border conflicts and minority questions. Regarding the border conflicts, Kalergi saw only one option how to solve the problem – by elimination of borders, which would help the nations and their economy (Kalergi, 1993). Kalergi's concept is considered as one of the most significant activity in the interwar period, which focused on the questions of European integration and unification. This idea was influenced by two basic conditions. The positive meaning was that the concept showed the European potential to become an important global power. The negative point of view said that if there was a significant change in the political organization of Europe, it would lead to the increasing of nationalistic conflicts and huge fragmentation (Rosamond, 2000). In spite of that the Pan-European plan still exists till now, it has never had a wide support.

The effort of a stronger cooperation of new Central and Eastern European countries appeared in the concept of **T. G. Masaryk** and was realized in 1918 by establishment of the *Middle-European Union*. The most important aim was the reorganization of smaller nations between Germany and Russia after the First World War. During the Paris Peace Conference, Masaryk, together with the Greek Prime

Minister – Venizel and the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Ionescu, tried to organize the United States of Eastern Europe as a federation of 13 countries between Germany and Russia, which should have been the core of future United States of Europe (Bednář, 1998). At the beginning, it should have been based on the cooperation of five countries – the Czechoslovak Republic, Romania, Poland, Yugoslavia and Greece. This federation should have ensured the independence of member states and with a close cooperation of democratic powers started up the economic renewal of the region. The mentioned project was not realized because of the increasing nationalism at that time.

Only a torso of Masaryk's geopolitical initiative was the creation of the *Little Entente*, which had a tendency to enlarge towards the north and south of Europe. At the end of 1919 and at the beginning of 1920, the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, E. Benes, proposed the governments of Yugoslavia and Romania to make a defense convention against Hungarian revisionism. Based on this proposal was signed a defense alliance between the Czechoslovak Republic and Yugoslavia (internationally recognized as State of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians) on 14 August 1920 and later also with Romania on 23 April 1921. The defense alliance of the Czechoslovak Republic, Yugoslavia and Romania called as the Little Entente was completed by the treaty between Romania and Yugoslavia on 17 June 1921. The aim of this alliance was also to keep status quo in Central and South-Eastern Europe. Poland also should have joined to the Little Entente, but it was not realized because of the dispute with Czechoslovakia over the border territories of Těšínsko and Javorina.

**Edvard Beneš** tried to achieve mainly a military and economic cooperation of Central European countries during the interwar period, regardless of their internal political system. In fact, he was aware of the huge differences in conception of democracy, what was evident at the Little Entente Allies, in Yugoslavia and Romania as well. It was one of the reasons why he commented the questions of political cooperation very cautiously. The regional cooperation of the Little Entente should have been the way to the European understanding. However, this model got a different dimension in a relation to Germany in the projects of Kalergi. According to Beneš, if he accepted the establishment of the United States of Europe on the basis of economy it would mean the strengthening of Germany's position towards the region of Central Europe. Therefore, he reacted more positively to the projects of Aristid Briand (a French Prime Minister) from the years 1929-1930, who put great emphasis on the political cooperation of future integrated and federative Europe (Ferenčuhová, 1998). During the interwar period, the Czechoslovak foreign policy started to form gradually its more positive attitude to the Soviet Union. Beneš, like Masaryk, supposed the gradual transformation and democratization of Russia and they also expected that Russia would guarantee the democracy in Central Europe in the future. As we know, it did not happen.

The creation of Czechoslovak nation, Pan-Europe, federation of Central Europe etc. - all of these options could influence the development of Central European region. Not all of them were realized. Similarly to the Little Entente: Masaryk, Beneš and Hodža put their hopes into this alliance, as an independent factor of the European

politics, but it did not live up their expectations. The Little Entente did not become a symbol of federation and did not bring the solution of economic problems in Central European region (Goňcová, 2006). On the other side, Hodža's economic and political analysis of specific situation of Central Europe during the interwar period enriched the European political thinking significantly, and gave more real and concrete contours to the integration plans to unify the Europe.

An interesting return to Palacký's geopolitics of Central European area was the publication of **Milan Hodža** (a Slovak and Czechoslovak politician and statesman). His ideas about the need for a powerful Central European center matured during the Second World War. At the beginning of his book *Federation in Central Europe* he wrote that the military events in Central Europe showed the truth of the idea of future, firmly organized cooperation between eight states situated in close geographical proximity to Russia, Germany and Italy (Krejčí, 2005). According to his model, the *Danubian Federation* would include: the Czechoslovakia, Poland, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece. Thus, Hodža considered the union of four Slavic and four non-Slavic states. The resulting unit would have 582,000 square miles, almost as much as Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy together, and about 100 million inhabitants. According to Hodža, only such a federation could ensure the freedom and security of the small nations. His conception focused on the mutual advantageous organization of economic interests in Central Europe. According to Hodža, the Central Europe should have been mainly an agrarian region as a natural complement to the industrialized regions of Western Europe. The only chance of coexistence of Central European countries with Germany would be to consolidate the whole Central Europe.

Hodža regarded Central Europe as an extension of Western civilization also from the point of view of internal political organization. In general, he thought that the European security had to be based on democracy, but not only the Western democracy. In his view, it required further support in the form of a united Central Europe. Thus, for Hodža, an integrated Central Europe represented a step to a united Europe. It was no accident that in the interwar period, he already maintained contacts with Coudenhove-Kalergi, a leading promoter of European unity. While writing his book *Federation in Central Europe* he came to the conclusion that Pan-European cooperation would become an aim of the war, and it would be a general European interest that Central Europe would not be a weak, but a strong partner of Germany (Hodža, 1997). In spite of Hodža's ideas could not be realized in practice in that time, many of them were used as an inspiration and impulse for the integration of Western Europe after the Second World War.

## Conclusion

After the Second World War the idea of integration of Central European region had its defenders mainly among the representatives in exile. However, any efforts and attempts for the integration of Central and Eastern Europe had no chance, because of the existence of so-called "Iron Curtain". Every country of the Soviet "Eastern" bloc

found themselves in Comecon (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) and in Warsaw Pact.

In the Eastern bloc started a gradual differentiation of individual states. The Czechoslovak, Polish or Hungarian variant of creation of communism represented historical phenomena and brought some specifics for these countries. At the end of 1980's the general dissatisfaction with the communist regime culminated in this region, which was resulted in the fall of the regime in 1989 and gain political independence from the Soviet Union.

The initial phase of contacts between Central European countries, influenced by the ideological agreement between new political elites, ended with the re-establishment of Visegrad Group (cooperation of four Central European countries – the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland – which has a very close relationship with Slovenia, Austria and the other countries from this region). The efforts of these countries to join to the European Union and to become the fully-fledged members of the integrated Europe were realized successfully on 1 May 2004.

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