

# **“New Central Europe” in Co-operating and United Europe. Czechoslovak Ideas in 1920s and 1930s and Attempts at Co-ordination with Austrian and Hungarian Ideas**

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*Abstract: Immediately after the end of the 50-year-long dissolution process of Austro-Hungary, the first progressive integration projects for Central Europe emerged. Further projects reacted to new circumstances in 1920s and 1930s. Some projects accentuated the need of security in the geopolitically sensitive area between Germany and Russia. Most projects focused on the search for new mechanisms that would replace the original more or less common economic area; often in the solution of „central Europe within Europe”. Some thinkers based their plans on the already present cultural community of Central Europe that should be able to transform itself first to economical, later to political union. Hodža’s “Danubian Plan” was prepared very thoroughly. As soon as in 1918 it was stressed that Central European union is possible only among countries with democratic government.*

*Keywords: European integration, Central European integration, Czechoslovakia in inter-war-period, Milan Hodža, Danubian Community*

Political and economical disintegration of Central European area did not start in 1918 but as soon as in 1867, by Austrian-Hungarian Settlement. In 1870s, both parts went their separate political ways. In the west, modernized and developed political system evolved, based on emerging civic society. In the east, the political system rather declined than evolved (from the Viennese point of view, it was perceived as Oriental) and was based on estates, with civic society suppressed heavily.

Indeed, the economic area of Austro-Hungary was not united. On one side, there was liberal economical policy of Austrian government, on the other side, anti-liberal economical policy of Hungarian government. Two different and incompatible economical systems formed and soon voices were heard demanding functioning custom border between both systems. Such a border was almost established around 1900, the process was stopped only by direct imperial order – a non-constitutional measure. By 1907 the demand for custom border between Austria and Hungary was back in the game.

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Concerning the layout of programmes for Central European integration that formed during the inter-war-period it is necessary to mention the development of industrial centres in Austria-Hungary and on economic consequences of Dissolution of Austria-Hungary. The core of economic integration emerged in 19<sup>th</sup> century, following the line Trieste-Ljubljana/Laibach-Graz-Vienna-Brno/

*Brünn-Ostrava/Ostrau-Krakow/Krakau(-Lwow/Lemberg)*. This was the oldest and the most important railway line in Austria, well known by its names Südbahn and Kaiser-Ferdinand-Nordbahn. Four main industrial areas formed on this line: Trieste as main Austrian port, Wien, Brno and Austrian Silesia. On this line, two out of three economically most efficient regions of Austria-Hungary formed.

Vienna + Brno – region based on state-of-the-art machine industry and modernized textile industry, supporting other regions by its innovations originating from its technical universities (focused also on electric and chemical technologies) and technical schools.

Austrian Silesia (with adjacent areas of northeast Moravia) – region based on coal mining, iron and steel production, machine and textile industry.

Liberec/*Reichenberg*-Jablonec/*Gablonz* – region in northernmost Bohemia, the richest region in Bohemia, based on textile and glass industry, tightly connected to Germany (Dresden, Berlin).

In all these regions, the companies were focused on export and were of great importance for the whole Austria-Hungary. Along the main railway line, other smaller industrial areas evolved, supported by and supporting the railway. One of the most important economical areas in Europe was formed.

Economic integration of Austria-Hungary, Germany and Belgium was started in 1880s. Since 1900, the demand for full custom union grew, with suggestion for including also other countries (e.g. Switzerland, Netherlands). Analyses by Viennese professor Eugen Philippovich<sup>1</sup> played major role in this process.

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Czechoslovak plans from inter-war-period for united Central as well as whole Europe includes three main trends, with particular analytical methods, arguments and goals.

1. *Pacifist plans with geopolitical elements*: These plans follow the ideas of the pacifist generation that included two Nobel Prize winners – Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914; Nobel Prize 1905) and Alfred Fried (Nobel Prize 1911). A pupil of von Suttner, Thomas Masaryk (1850-1937) published his *New Europe* before the end of the war.<sup>2</sup> In this area he included *small nations between Germany and Russia* that needed the union to survive. In 1918, he spoke about Central European union with US Americans of Central European origin and exiled Central Europeans. He saw clearly that any member state of such a union has to be democratic and guaranteeing civic rights; otherwise, the union will not be functioning. In general, these

1 For example: Eugen von Philippovich, *Ein Wirtschafts- und Zollverband zwischen Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn*, Leipzig: Hirzel, 1915.

2 Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The New Europe*, London: [sine], 1918; Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *L'Europe nouvelle*, Paris: Imprimerie Slave, 1918; Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Das neue Europa*, Berlin: Schwetschke, 1922; etc.

plans focused on the ways to ensure peace for new small countries formed after the dissolution of Austria-Hungary.

1a. Before the war, and during the war, there were also *pragmatist reformers*, whose ideas survived the fall of the Austria-Hungary. What they wanted in the beginning was the reforms and federalization that could have stabilized and integrated Central Europe. They argued that the dualist system caused political and economical disintegration. There were more groups: the Belveder group headed by the successor archduke Franz Ferdinand which included many Czech and Slovaks, e.g. Milan Hodža with his political analysis.

The law system reformers, e.g. Kelsen and Weyr, focused on constitution laws. In Cisleithania, many elements of civic society and constitution system were implemented – the Supreme Administration Court that was reformed in 1912 could act as constitutional court. During the war, they worked on the reform of federalist system that stressed the protection of individual rights and minority rights.<sup>3</sup> They analysed contemporary international law and suggested new principles that would have to be introduced after the war to renew its function.

2. *Economical plans*: These became the most significant and the most important. During the war, there were several attempts to plan the economic restoration after the war by re-starting liberal economy, overcoming direct consequences of the war, and using tools of Central European integration.

After the dissolution of Austria Hungary, Czechoslovakia had to answer two sets of questions:

Can the old industrial centres function? Do the economic relations exist still? Have they been lost?

How should Czechoslovakian foreign trade be organized? Where are hindrances and what losses can appear?

New countries in the area as well in whole Europe increased their custom rates stopping Czechoslovak export. Vast areas of common market disappeared behind the growing impenetrable custom forest.

The Vienna + Brno region became divided between two countries, enabling the continuation of scientific and technological co-operation and development but damming the flow of goods and investment. The region of Austrian Silesia lost its eastern part that became part of Poland. “Vítkovice”, huge machinery and metallurgy enterprise lost its main financial partner – the Vienna Rothschild bank and in Czechoslovakia lacked bank able to cover the company’s demands. The Liberec/Jablonec region lost its direct connection to Vienna as well as German market that collapsed. On the other side, most banks resided in Vienna and the absence of investment possibilities was dangerous.

Rudolf Hotowetz and Václav Schuster were involved in the attempts to use Saint Germain and Trianon Peace Treaties for economic purposes. Gradually, the

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3 Among others the large discussion coordinated by H. Kelsen in *Österreichische Zeitschrift für öffentliches Recht*, Year 1917.

idea of preferential trade zones in Central Europe was brought forward. In 1936, preferential custom rates between Czechoslovakia and Austria were introduced. However, Hitler forced Austria to abandon the plan the same year. The possibilities of coordinated Central European agricultural policy were also analyzed. After 1930, the economical crisis caused extensive drop of price in agricultural products and these theme gained on significance. Out of all plans, it was Hodža's plan that was received by most people concerned.<sup>4</sup>

3. *Cultural plans*: The Central Europe was seen as area with common cultural heritage. These concepts did not look in the past, they were not based on sentimental reminiscence of fallen empire, nor romantic call for „lost values“. They were based on knowledge of cultural dynamics of large cities, connected with each other forming a belt from Trieste to Lwów, and able to change the cultural development in smaller towns (even though with some delay). Out of this cultural community, the new feeling of communion should grow that would be essential for functional economic and political union. The notion of identity should deepen the Central Europeanism feeling of the people, as well as their Europeanism, and stand against the growing nationalism.

These concepts warned that cultural and intellectual boundaries in Central Europe do not coincide with political borders. The existence of cultural and spiritual borders supports the tension between contra-traditionalists who prepare certain “cultural and spiritual Central European union” and traditionalists who fight for nationalism, political or religious control of culture.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, there was another group of contra-traditionalists who built barriers by their unilateral, often passive, focus on English-speaking or French-speaking cultural area; or refused cultural relations between Czechoslovakia and Austria, or Czechoslovakia and Poland,<sup>6</sup> etc. Such refusals ignored the facts, e.g. that the cultural triangle Vienna-Bрно-Bratislava is active in close relation with West European cultural centres.

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Creative Czechoslovak authors of particular concepts of Central European and European integration included politicians as ministers of Czechoslovak government Rudolf Hotowetz or Edvard Beneš, scholars as university professor František Weyr, and pragmatic businessmen who were able to prepare concepts in European context and base them on both theory and analyses. Some of them were both scientific analysts and political pragmatists, e.g. Milan Hodža. The other included:

Rudolf Hotowetz spoke about European economic union as soon as in 1907 when he took part in the discussion on changes in Austrian-Hungarian Settlement.

4 See below.

5 Including hidden antisemitism.

6 Czechoslovak-Polish cultural relations were extraordinarily intensive and open between the wars, mainly when compared to cold (bordering on hostile) mutual political relations.

Immediately after the end of the war, he demanded close economical co-operation of successor countries. Later, he called for Central European custom union, existence of which was possible thanks to Article 222 of Saint Germain Peace Treaty and Article 205 of Trianon Peace Treaty. The politicians of all countries disagreed. In 1920s he suggested European economical union that could have been launched by the core Central European economical union. He saw European economical union as the sole chance to overcome the consequences of the war. He argued that Czechoslovak foreign trade can survive only with support of custom union or at least preferential custom rates. After 1925, he warned that both Czechoslovakia and many European countries got into economic isolation that “might have been very splendid but was highly harmful” resulting in absolute disorganisation of production and distribution in whole Europe.<sup>7</sup> The crisis of 1930s forced him to call for quick march from preferential custom rates to full custom Central European union. Similar cores would form in other European regions and would grow and finally merge in single “economic Pan-Europe” that were historically inevitable. Hotowetz pointed out repeatedly, that the gradualism was essential and that any sudden change would be both harmful and impossible to be enforced politically.<sup>8</sup> Václav Schuster was against any protectionist policy and demanded the fully free trade. He accentuated the key importance of economic co-operation between France and Germany. Joined French-German economics would be able to dominate Europe or even the world in many branches; in some of them it would be able to dominate global markets (e.g. chemical products). European Economic Community should be reached slowly, preferably by gradual removal of custom barriers within whole Europe and parallelly by forming regional custom associations and custom unions and joining them together later. He admitted that Europe can perform as economic union without political union. However, that would be less effective. On the other hand, he refused the US model as excessively centralized. He suggested starting with Central Europe united in Danubian Economic Community and shaping it into a political union in long term.<sup>9</sup>

7 Rudolf Hotowetz, *Hospodářské sblížení evropských států*, Praha: Česká národohospodářská společnost, 1926; Rudolf Hotowetz, [sine], in: *Rozprava o obsahu přednášky Dr. V. Schustera Hospodářská pospolitost Evropy z hlediska Československa*, Praha: Česká národohospodářská společnost, 1927, pp. 7-11.

8 Rudolf Hotowetz, *Změny v struktuře čl. hospodářství a výhledy do budoucna*, Praha: Řivnáč, 1933; Rudolf Hotowetz, *Naše hospodářská situace ke sklonku světové krise*, Praha: Česká národohospodářská společnost, 1934.

9 Václav Schuster, *Z poválečného vývoje naší obchodní politiky*, Praha: Česká národohospodářská společnost, 1923; Václav Schuster, *Problém evropské hospodářské pospolitosti s hlediska československého*, Praha: Česká národohospodářská společnost, 1927; Václav Schuster, *Otázka hospodářské součinnosti a stěžejní ekonomické problémy v Evropě*, Praha: Česká národohospodářská společnost, 1930; Václav Schuster, *Obchodně politický problém střední Evropy*, Praha: Česká národohospodářská společnost, 1931;

On the contrary, Jaromír Nečas warned against one-sided economical integration, namely against “Europe as stock company”. Europe cannot function without European effective tools of civic control, European social policy, peace programme, and minority protection system.<sup>10</sup>

Milan Hodža saw Central Europe as functional living cultural community with many pressures wanting economical community, as well. These pressures came from various sides and lacked order. He suggested gradual way from preferential custom rates within Central Europe to European Union. Hodža pointed out that the will to unite had to come from the new Central European countries themselves. Only thus, the truly consensual common interest could be found. Hodža argued that following the international consolidation of new Central European countries, it would be possible and “necessary to look for that mutual context of spiritual, economic and social nature” going on towards the will of convergence and union. Central Europe had to be stabilized economically to be able to become the part of larger projects for Europe. After 1925 Hodža as well as others used the terms co-operation and community in the same meaning and sense as it was perceived later in names like European Coal and Steel Community and European Economic Community.<sup>11</sup>

Hodža’s lecture at the Central European Institute in<sup>12</sup> Brno in March 1931 was noticed also abroad. Hodža emphasized the idea that it was Central Europe that was the long-term key to the solution of problems of whole Europe. Without consolidated Central Europe the stability of whole Europe and real European integration system were impossible. He warned against the people who promoted a defensive group against Germany as the goal and sense of Central European concentration and consolidation. At that time, these ideas had signification impact on French, Czechoslovak and Polish politicians. Should there be stability and peace in whole Europe, a cooperating group of powers France-Germany-Central Europe was necessary, Hodža emphasized.<sup>13</sup>

Hodža’s “Danubian plan” was presented in inter-parliamentary economical conference in London in October 1935.<sup>14</sup> It is a perfect example of sector integration.

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Václav Schuster, *Výhledy do příštího obchodně-politického vývoje*, Praha: Řivnáč, 1933; Václav Schuster, *Nynější stav hospodářského problému podunajského*, Praha: Česká národohospodářská společnost, 1936.

10 Jaromír Nečas, *Spojené státy evropské*, Praha: Čin, 1926.

11 On the Hodža’s European activities see: Vladimír Goněc: „Milan Hodža before „Milan Hodža““, in Vladimír Goněc (ed.), *In between Enthusiasm and Pragmatism: How To Construct Europe?*, Brno: Masaryk University Press, 2007, pp. 66-112.

12 See below.

13 Milan Hodža, „Československo a střední Evropa“. In: Milan Hodža, *Články, řeči, studie, vol. 4, Cesty stredoeurópskej agrárnej demokracie, 1921-1931*, Praha: Novina, 1931, pp. 369-393.

14 Milan Hodža, *Le problème agricole en Europe centrale [Vingt-et-unième conférence parlementaire internationale du commerce, Palais de Westminster, Londres]*, Prague: Imprimerie de l’Etat, 1935.

The plan was based on agricultural community of Central Europe. These countries were dependent on the export of agricultural products. When part of European economic co-operation, these countries would be able to import more industrial products and to improve their own industry. Hodža demanded that particular “organ of cooperative action” should be established to reach significant and lasting positive results. This institution should be supra-national and permanent (perhaps a “Central agricultural administration” residing in Vienna). This office would not only record the statistics of surplus and shortage of key agricultural products but also manage the actual export of surplus production within compensation trade.

Nevertheless, the programme would not be purely agricultural as it was sometimes interpreted unilaterally. Hodža suggested gradual integration of “Danubian Community”, starting with the agriculture and ending with economical community. He argued that only free economic competition would be able to increase the economical growth in Central European countries. He observed the exchange of industrial goods for raw materials that was growing already between the countries. Beside that, he emphasized the perspective of co-operation and division of workforce in industry. Eventually, the focus of economic cooperation of Danubian countries would shift towards the mutual exchange of industrial goods while these countries would go on with general industrial growth. Hodža refused then popular conception of stabilization of European economies by forming “Europe A” consisting of industrial countries and “Europe B” consisting of agricultural countries that should retain their economy dominated by agriculture. The stabilization could not have been reached by increased exchange of agricultural and industrial production between “Europe A” and “Europe B” any more.

Hodža described also the solution of particular financial and banking tools, foreign exchange policy, and technical measures for the facilitation and growth of mutual trade exchange of Central European countries. Last but not least, he suggested the legal and administrative mechanisms, including uniting of several regulations, to achieve legal security and balance of conditions for business in the whole integrated area.

Furthermore, Hodža planned the conditions for Central European federation in state law dimension. Such a federation would have to be formed by gradual steps within longer time. In 1942, this Hodža’s activity peaked by presentation of his detailed plan.<sup>15</sup>

Edvard Beneš standing in the background of the Briand plan and the Tardieu plan, in 1929 he saw only two futures of Europe: co-operation and economic and political union of European countries consisting of democratic units, or never ending conflicts and crises. Since 1922, he planned the transformation of Central Europe through various degrees of union to full federation. Several smaller

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15 Milan Hodža, *Federation in Central Europe. Reflections and Reminiscences*, London – New York: Jarrolds, 1942.



federations throughout whole Europe could be then united in a large, stable, balanced European one. This concept was finished by Beneš in exile in USA and London at the turn of 1930s and 1940s.<sup>16</sup>

Victor Bauer (1874-1939) was cultural thinker, important sugar producer and supporter of art and science. (Architect Adolf Loos and painter Egon Schiele were his friends.) Supporting Viennese Institut für Kulturforschung, he was its active member and for 15 years he had been working on his book “Central Europe as a living organism”.<sup>17</sup>

He saw Central Europe not as a piece of geography but as a cultural process on the border between the West and the East. This process was running mostly in large cities – Vienna, Gdańsk, Łódź, Breslau/*Wrocław*, Ostrava, Brno, Graz, and Trieste. These are centres of both economical and cultural growth and innovation. They are the foundations for the common town culture in the whole area among Stettin, Venice, Kaliningrad/*Königsberg*, and Constantinople. Not only society (*Gesellschaft*), but real cultural community (*Gemeinschaft*) was formed.<sup>18</sup> In large cities, the long-term inter-culturalism process is running, getting its inputs from mixed ethnical and cultural background. The western and eastern elements not only meet each other, both join and form new qualities, sending new impulses both to East and West. These cities boast large share of Oriental people. The Jews were fleeing Western Europe in the Middle Ages, and the Eastern Europe later, forming about 10 % of population in these cities (in Łódź even 27 %). Furthermore, there were other oriental nations, e.g. Armenians (most numerous in Vienna and Lwów). These intercultural people should form Central European Economic Community and then enter the European Economic Community. Full integration of Central Europe would end by supranational federation and that process would need some effort.

This could not be reached by some theoretical formal legal constructions. The formation of cultural community have to be analyzed, the pressures for economical union have to be analyzed as well and based on that, necessary tools for economical union of Central Europe should be defined. Only in the end, it would be possible and essential to choose suitable political system, compatible with both cultural and economical union.

František Weyr was a law specialist who focused on quality theoretical law construction and smoothly functioning supranational community. At the end of the war he demanded that new law constructions had to be looked for, bringing

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16 Edvard Beneš, *Democracy Today and Tomorrow*, London: Macmillan, 1939; Edvard Beneš, *La démocratie aujourd'hui et demain*, Neuchâtel: Baconnière 1944.

17 Victor von Bauer, *Zentraleuropa, ein lebendiger Organismus*, Brünn-Leipzig: F. Irrgang, 1936, 1937.

18 Similar these were developed by the Austrian sociologist Tönnies. See: Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundbegriffe der reinen Soziologie*, Leipzig: Buske, 1935 (8th enlarged edition).



efficient and guaranteed peace. He thought that absolute state sovereignty was the main obstacle against peaceful order in Europe.

Only if the countries abandon their sovereignty, recognize their common interests and settle together on supranational state. If we want United States of Europe, we must accept these principles as starting point. There is no sense in planning an “ideal federation”. In the community, the norms have to be written together and supranational court system is necessary. In 1918, independent of Masaryk, Weyr claimed that all member state of the community had to be democratic. At the same time, all “new international law” had to be supranational as well as based on guaranteed rights of any individual.<sup>19</sup>

Weyr’s ideas were discussed repeatedly in various committees of the League of Nations, mainly in 1924-1928; nevertheless, they did not become obligatory documents.

In 1939, teams working with Weyr’s and Kelsen’s ideas suggested also the notion of independent supranational court that would be the core of all European community.<sup>20</sup>

The work of new generation of great industrialists in Brno is represented namely by Tugendhat and Jellinek. Hans Tugendhat wrote about the beginnings of large economic crisis as soon as in 1930.<sup>21</sup> He deduced that the economic integration should be begun by those countries, whose situation was the worst at that moment. This would be Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Romania. First, however, small Central European countries should group to become an equal partner of Germany. Germany would join the group only later. When these six countries consolidate enough, the rest of the countries would be allowed to join (Poland, Baltic, Balkan).

Germany and partially Czechoslovakia and Austria, too, would absorb the surplus of agriculture. On the other hand, the agricultural countries of Central Europe would have much more sources to buy consumer goods, invest, and modernize the agricultural and food branch of their economies. This conception was therefore more than the traditional ideas about complementarity of Central European countries. Tugendhat suggested starting gradually with the preferential system of trade between these countries. The custom union would be reached only later.<sup>22</sup>

Fritz Jellinek analysed the results of the great economic crisis and its specificity for Central Europe. He criticised economic policy of countries that increased protective measures and argued that mere decrease in custom rates would not

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19 Weyr’s work was written in summer 1918: František Weyr, *Soudobý zápas o nové mezinárodní právo*, Brno: Piša, 1919.

20 At the *Institut universitaire de hautes études internationales* in Geneve, parallelly the co-workers of W. Churchill, etc.

21 Based on economic data from Dresdner Bank.

22 Hans Tugendhat, *Ein handelspolitischer Konsolidierungsplan*, Brunn: Mitteleuropa Institut zur Förderung der wirtschaftlichen und kulturellen Annäherungen, 1930.

be sufficient for solving the economic crisis. He called for complex transformation of economic relations between Central European countries, free movement of capital and workforce. Only then free movement of goods would be possible. He suggested the establishment of Central European bank that would provide Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia with such services as European investment bank does now. He also claimed that Central European parliament was necessary for organizing economic integration.<sup>23</sup>

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Beside individuals, organizations were important as well, promoting these programmes, spreading them in the public and uniting professionals and ordinary citizens for co-operation. We should mention at least Paneuropean Union and the Central European Institute at Brno.

Until 1939, Richard Nikolaus Coudenhove-Kalergi was not only Czechoslovak citizen but also a holder of Czechoslovak diplomatic passport. The organization *Pan-Europe Union* was accepted widely by Czechoslovak top politicians, industrialists and intellectuals. Directly supported by TG Masaryk and his daughter Alice, Czechoslovak branch of Pan-Europe Union was one of four the most numerous branches. It was headed by Edvard Beneš (Czechoslovak minister of foreign affairs until 1935, since 1935 president of Czechoslovakia) and led by executive vice-president Václav Schuster (economic diplomat who prepared most Czechoslovak international trade treaties). Pan-European Economic Committee group was influenced by Ladislav Karel Feierabend, later Czechoslovak minister and after 1948 (in exile) the most close Czechoslovak co-worker of R. N. Coudenhove-Kalergi. Other members of the Pan-European Economic Committee included František Hodáč, director of Czechoslovak industrial council, Adolf Sonnenschein, director of Vítkovice Company, and Václav Schuster.

The first Czech edition of Coudenhove-Kalergi's Pan-Europe was published in 1926 and supported by Beneš, who also wrote the foreword.<sup>24</sup> (He also supported the first Czech edition of "Europe of the future"/ *L'Europe de demain*, by E. Herriot in 1931.<sup>25</sup>)

*Mitteleuropa-Institut für Förderung der wirtschaftlichen und kulturellen Annäherungen* was established in Vienna in March 1929, followed by co-operating institutes in Brno, Budapest etc. All institutes worked as a network and through personal connection. The Brno branch was led by František Weyr, with Karel Tomeš (mayor of Brno) and Elemér Hantos<sup>26</sup> as vicechairmen. The Brno insti-

23 The chapter „Das Problem Mitteleuropa“, in: Fritz Jellinek, *Die Krise des Bürgers*, Zürich: Europa Vlg., 1935.

24 Richard Nikolaus Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europa*, Praha: Aventinum, 1926.

25 Edouard Herriot, *Evropa budoucnosti*, Praha: Orbis, 1931.

26 E. Hantos was the head of Vienna Institute.

tute was supported by local industrial and trade chamber, exporting companies, lawyers, economists, innovators, and Brno branch of Pan Europe Union. The institute focused on the possibilities of economical co-operation in Central Europe, namely on tools for export growth and improvement of transport systems. Its lectures, aimed at businessmen and bankers, promoted Central European economic co-operation. Furthermore, it focused on the development of cultural relations in Central Europe and Central European culture.

In Brno institute, Austrian and Hungarian pro-European activists were active significantly as well, for example, Heinrich Mataja – former minister of Austrian government, Siegfried Strakosch – sugar producer and economic analyst,<sup>27</sup> Elemér Hantos – Hungarian financial specialist,<sup>28</sup> and Pál Auer – head of Hungarian national organisation of Pan-Europe Union.

It was the discussions within this institute that gave rise to Hodža's Danube Plan. Besides Weyr and Hodža, the industrialist Fritz Jellinek played major role in the institute, dealing with forming and promotion of new ideas.

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It is essential to discuss the question “With or against Germany”. The ideas in many countries were based on open or hidden goal to build a barrier against Germany and its economy; this was incited by both general fear and nationalist plans.

Czechoslovak programmes by Hodža, Beneš, or Hotowetz can be characterised by another goal – stabilisation of Central European economy that would be an equal partner of Germany – its partner and neighbour. The policy of open and correct economic and political relations with Germany was functional between Germany and Czechoslovakia in 1920s and in early 1930s, until the end of Weimar republic.

Good relations were not possible under the Nazi-regime and became completely unreal when Germany occupied demilitarized Rhineland in March 1936. From then on, the only goal was to protect the peace in Europe. The question if France would protect the interests of its allies when it did not protect its own interests was

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27 See for example: Siegfried Strakosch, *Europa als Teuerungsgrund. Studie über die eigentlichen Ursachen der Teuerung*, Wien: Holder – Pichler – Tempsky, 1926; Siegfried Strakosch, *Das Agrarproblem im neuen Europa*. Berlin: Parey, 1930.

28 See for example: Elemér Hantos, *Die Handelspolitik in Mitteleuropa*. Jena: Fischer, 1925; Elemér Hantos, *Das Kulturproblem in Mitteleuropa*. Stuttgart: Enke, 1926; Elemér Hantos, *Europäischer Zollverein und Mitteleuropäische Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft*, Berlin/Organisation Vlgges., 1928; Elemér Hantos, *L'Europe Centrale. Une nouvelle organisation économique*. Paris: Alcan, 1932; Elemér Hantos, *Der Weg zum neuen Mitteleuropa. Die wirtschaftliche Neugestaltung*, Berlin: Mitteleuropa Vlg., 1933; Elemér Hantos, *Institut pour l'Europe centrale, Vienne. Memorandum sur la crise économique des pays Danubiens <Autriche, Hongrie, Tchécoslovaquie, Roumanie, Yougoslavie et Bulgarie>. Présenté à la Conférence monétaire et économique Londres 1933*. Wien: St. Norbertus, 1933; Elemér Hantos, *Die Neuordnung des Donauraumes*. Berlin – Wien: Heymann – Oesterr. Wirtschaftsverlag, 1935.

also important. On the other hand, Czechoslovak thinkers counted on democratic Germany devoid of Nazism as a member and partner in united Europe.<sup>29</sup>

Since 1939, the theme of Central Europe was often present in programme and conceptual activities by Czechoslovak and Polish exile. It is easy to understand that the particular question of Central Europe security within the new post-war organisation of Europe was the most important. As soon as in 1939 it was suggested, not only by Polish thinkers, that the main enemy of Central European security is the Soviet Union. This was based on careful analyses, not emotions.

This was the last theme that became the intensive focus of Milan Hodža, described in detail in new chapters he prepared for the re-edition of his *Federation in Central Europe*.<sup>30</sup> Czechoslovak thinkers of the next generation shared his ideas.<sup>31</sup> Much effort was put in the ideas on economical co-operation or economical union of Central Europe. This should be a part of restored European economy. Czechoslovak thinkers Josef Macek, before the WWII professor of Economic University in Prague, and Antonín Basch, professor of Charles University, took part in these plans.<sup>32</sup>

The new generation of thinkers included the fresh exiled thinkers after 1947/1948. Czechoslovak and Polish exiled politicians and analysts were joined by their Hungarian and Romanian colleagues, later as well as Yugoslavian, Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian thinkers. These activities peaked in the plan for the Central European Coal and Steel Community by team lead by Jan Wszelaki and plan for the Central European Federation by Hubert Ripka.<sup>33</sup> Further exile waves<sup>34</sup> moved

29 For example: Hubert Ripka, *Munich: Before and After*, London: Gollancz, 1939, pp. 467, 476, 477.

30 These manuscripts went to press only in 1950s.: Milan Hodža, „On the Regional Federalism“, in: *International Peasant Union Bulletin*, 1953, Dec., pp. 22-26; Milan Hodža, „Europe at the Crossroads“, in: *International Peasant Union Bulletin*, 1954, Jan.-Febr., 14-18; Milan Hodža, „No Changes in Russia“, in: *International Peasant Union Bulletin*, 1954, March, 17-20; Milan Hodža, „Germany's Push to the East“, in: *International Peasant Union Bulletin*, 1954, April, pp. 22-26. One of them was published in Slovak much later. Milan Hodža, „Medzi Nemeckom a Ruskom“, in: Milan Hodža, *Federácia v strednej Európe a iné štúdie*, Bratislava: Kalligram, 1997, pp. 330-341.

31 See for example: Vladimír Goněc, „Hubert Ripka en exil à Londres: Projets pour l'Europe unie d'après guerre“, in: Gérard Bossuat (ed.). *Inventer l'Europe. Histoire nouvelle des groupes d'influence et des acteurs de l'unité européenne*, Bruxelles: P.I.E. – Peter Lang, 2003, pp. 157-178.

32 See for example: Antonín Basch, *A Price for Peace. The New European and World Markets*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1945; Vladimír Goněc, „Antonín Basch a jeho přínos světovému ekonomickému myšlení“, in: *Milý Bore... [Hommage Ctibor Nečas]*, Brno: Historický ústav AV ČR, 2003, pp. 73-81.

33 Vladimír Goněc, *An Eastern Schuman Plan? Project of Central and East European Coal and Steel Community (1953)*, Brno: Masaryk University Press, 2009; Vladimír Goněc, „Le programme « La fédération de l'Europe centrale » de février 1953“, in: Vladimír Goněc, *Hubert Ripka: un européen*, Brno: Masaryk University Press, 2006, pp. 140-192.

34 Namely 1956 from Hungary and 1968 from Czechoslovakia.

the co-operation to new generations and the activities were moved from New York, Paris, and London to Stockholm, Hamburg, Munich, Zürich, Vienna, Rome; these towns were much nearer to the communist countries.<sup>35</sup> Another important project was the plan to neutralise Central Europe, co-ordinated by Paul Auer, Hungarian exiled diplomat and political thinker;<sup>36</sup> further analyses were based on changing situation in 1980s and influenced by Polish struggle against the communist government.

\* \* \*

At the end of 30's, the Central European and European integration had to be moved away, to wait for better times. These came more than 50 years later. What was the fate of Central Europe after 1990 is the matter for another study.

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35 On those Central European and European activities of exiles see too: Vladimír Gonč, *Hubert Ripka: un européen*, Brno: Masaryk University Press, 2006; Vladimír Gonč, „First Programmes of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia for European Politics (1951-1953)”, in: Vladimír Gonč (ed.), *In Between Enthusiasm and Pragmatism: How to Construct Europe?* Brno: Masaryk University Press, 2008, pp. 121-134; Vladimír Gonč, *An Eastern Schuman Plan? Project of Central and East European Coal and Steel Community (1953)*, Brno: Masaryk University Press, 2009; Vladimír Gonč, „Ripkovy analýzy pro Radu svobodného Československa na přelomu 1956-1957”, in: Edita Ivaničková (ed.), *Z dějin demokratických a totalitních režimů na Slovensku a v Československu v 20. století*, Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, 2008, pp. 284-298; Vladimír Gonč, „Československý exil ve vztahu k maďarskému exilu a maďarské revoluci 1956”, in: Vladimír Gonč, Radomír Vlček (eds.), *Z dějin visegrádského prostoru. Richardu Pražákovi k pětasedmdesátinám*, Brno: Masaryk University Press, 2006, pp. 249-266; Vladimír Gonč, „Pál Auer jako následník Huberta Ripky?“, in: *Slavica Litteraria*, 14, 2011, No 1, pp. 111-120; Vladimír Gonč, „Exily ze střední Evropy v koordinaci aktivit“, in: *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka 2010*, Brno: Academicus 2010, pp. 81-93; Vladimír Gonč, *Jak se vymanit z komunismu a co po komunismu. Iniciativy pod koordinací Huberta Ripky v padesátých letech*, Brno: Academicus, 2010.

36 *Studies for a New Central Europe*, 31 pp., Archives of Institute of Political Science of Slovak Academy of Sciences, Fonds: Martin Kvetko, cart. Manuscripts (in the state of edition).

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