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Politics, Antipolitics, and Czechs in Central Europe: The Idea of “Visegrád Cooperation” and Its Reflection in Czech Politics in the 1990s

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At the beginning of the 1990s, the word “Visegrád” became an indispensable part of the political vocabulary in Central Europe and elsewhere. It almost disappeared in the second half of the same decade, only to emerge again at its close. Visegrád is the unofficial name given to a project of close cooperation among three, and after the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993 four, Central European countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia.

This paper aims to reconstruct the intellectual roots and limits of the Visegrád concept in Czech politics. The main effort here is to adumbrate under what circumstances Czechoslovakia became an active part of the establishment of the Visegrád Troika in 1991 and what the domestic causes were of its rejection after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia.

The Kunderian Central European Debate.

Only in the 1980s did the idea of Central Europe as a specific region gain its new relevance. The origin of the international debate about Central Europe was an article by Milan Kundera published in the *New York Review of Books* in April 1984, "The Tragedy of Central Europe". The article was soon translated into Czech, but under the more revealing title, "The Kidnapping of Europe." The debate about the specificity of Central Europe will not be analyzed here in depth; rather, the main purpose is to trace the intellectual roots of the Visegrád idea.

In his essay Kundera defined Central Europe against the background of a dichotomous construction of European space, which is to say the East-West dichotomy. West and East had completely different developments in the course of the last ten or more centuries, Kundera claimed, and the difference resulted mainly from the activity of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches and the tradition of Ancient Rome on the one hand, and the activity of the Orthodox Church and the tradition of the Byzantine Empire on the other.

According to Kundera, Central Europe belonged to the West all along, and it was only the political developments following the Second World War that shifted it towards the East. Whereas the eastern border of Central Europe evolved in the course of centuries, the western border of the region has existed for only 40 years. Such a change in the second half of the 20th Century was, according to Kundera, a kind of political disaster threatening the very civilization of Central European nations. That is why, Kundera continues, culture and historical memory played such an important role in every anti-Communist revolt in the region. Hence his key to the definition of Central Europe: "Central Europe is not a state. Central Europe is a culture or faith. Its border is imaginary and it is to be defined in every historical epoch again and again."¹

As for Russia, Kundera, in the manner of Solzhenitsyn, asked himself where the origins of present-day Communism lay. Contrary to Solzhenitsyn, Kundera thought that Communism does not contradict the logic of Russian history, but rather it is the real fulfillment of Russian imperial dreams and of an Asian tradition of centralization. He makes at the following tough judgment:

¹ Kundera, Milan, *Únos Západu*. 150 000 slov, 10.1.1985, p. 115. English version Kundera, Milan, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," *The New York Review of Books*, April 26, 1984.

Totalitarian Russian civilization is a negation of the modern West, a West created four centuries ago, at the outset of the modern age, an age founded on the authority of thinking, on individual doubts and the production of art that expresses its uniqueness.²

Kundera was widely criticized internationally as well by the Czechoslovakian dissent. Those who disagreed with him saw three main problems with his essay. The first was the juxtaposition of the West with Russia, i.e. the Soviet Union. Many commentators, for example János Kis and Françoise Bondy, did not agree with this formulation. They argued that while there had been a broad reception of Western culture in Central Europe, there was also a kind of particularism in the form of an authoritarian political tradition, an ambiguity resembling the well-known controversy between *Zapadniks* and *Slavyanophils* in Russia. The second reproach was directed at the historical causality asserted by Kundera. Czech historian Milan Hauner rightly insisted, contra Kundera, that the decline of Central European nations did not begin with the invasion from the East, but with Hitler's campaign from the opposite direction. And lastly, Kundera – himself a former Marxist – did not differentiate carefully enough between the general idea of Communism developed by Marx and its Soviet realization. As writer and dissident Milan Simecka points out, Communism as a doctrine was cultivated in the West and moreover the ideological training of Lenin was completely Western. In other words, Communism as such has almost nothing to do with Russia, and Kundera is mistaken when he draws a genetic line between Russian history and Communism.³

The criticism elicited by his “Tragedy of Central Europe” notwithstanding, Kundera drew what are more or less the main lines of the “Central European debate.” Central Europe became a highly attractive intellectual topic, but it also became part of the political agenda, especially in countries with traditional ties to the region such as Italy and Austria. In countries with Communist governments this issue had been discussed only in the Samizdat. As for the Czech lands (Slovakia was a different case here), the debate about Central Europe and its cultural tradition became part of other discussions and was to a large extent dissolved into them. One of these discussions was the debate about the expulsion of Sudeten Germans after the Second World War. The other concerned the conception of Czech history and was

² Ibid., p. 117.

³ Hauner, Milan, *Dopis redakci The New York Review of Books* (Letters to the Editor), Svedectví 74/1985, p. 357, Simecka, Milan, *Jiná civilizace? (Another civilization?)*, Svedectví 74/1985, p. 354.

triggered by a Charta 77 document questioning official Czechoslovak historiography.

The principal results of all these discussions were that in dissent circles, Central Europe was made into a historiographic demand that included reevaluating the Habsburg monarchy and the role of the Catholic Church in Czech history, and that Central Europe became widely perceived as a uniform, culturally interconnected region. Moreover, from the standpoint according to which the last 40 years were, in Kundera's words, a kidnapping of Europe, the breakthrough of 1989 was nothing short of a historical victory of capitalism over socialism and the beginning of the return of the countries of Central Europe to their natural path of development, from which they were shoved by Communism.

Visegrád Launched.

This proverbial "Return to Europe" generally characterized the political discourse in the new, emerging democracies in Central Europe after the fall of Communism. This was the case with the new Czechoslovak leadership, and its chief figures, President Václav Havel and Foreign Minister Jirí Dienstbier, were symbols and warrants of this change.

In connection with the Kundera debate, Prague's leadership, along with those of Warsaw and Budapest, strove to play up the specific cultural identity of Central Europe as distinct from Eastern Europe, especially the Soviet Union. According to Havel, both "Central European identity" and "common historical experience" with Poland and Hungary could make a valuable contribution to the entire European and world cultures. Havel and Dienstbier therefore stressed the multilateral Central European dimension of Czechoslovak foreign policy, and already in January 1990 they visited Poland and Hungary where they met (now in the highest official positions) their old friends from the dissent days with whom they had had to meet illegally just a few months previously.

Around this time the idea of a Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation with its origins far back in the 19th Century once again became relevant in Poland. The idea was thoroughly developed during both World Wars, and was revived by Zbigniew Brzezinski in May 1989 in his Lublin Catholic University lecture. Some Poles were fascinated by it, especially after the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia at the end of that year. Havel and Dienstbier, however, had to politely refuse, and they invited

Polish and Hungarian representatives to Bratislava to discuss common problems and the question of cooperation between these three states in the future.⁴

There was much to be done concerning the mutual relations among these states, but in fact much more on a bilateral than a multilateral level. Despite their “common historical heritage” and a vision of a joint “Return to Europe”, there were serious problems which threatened to destroy the new-found friendship at its very beginning. One need only think of the Hungarian minority of some 700,000 in Slovakia, or Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros, the megalomaniacal Communist power station project on the Danube.⁵ These were the issues Hungarians were eager to discuss in Bratislava in April of 1990, whereas the Czechoslovak delegation, consisting mainly of Czech delegates, did not want to touch them. They thought it would be perceived as Czech interference in Slovak affairs, and in those days the first major clash between Czechs and Slovaks – the so-called hyphen-war⁶ – was taking place.

In addition, all three countries had different perspectives on foreign policy. Hungarians were much more interested in the Adriatic group of Italy, Austria, and Yugoslavia, which was founded in the autumn of 1989 and mirrored the strong southern orientation of Budapest’s diplomacy in those days. Poland, however, being a “great power” in the region, pursued a much more differentiated diplomacy towards both West and East, with special attention to the Baltic states and later Ukraine.

That is why the summit of presidents and diplomatic chiefs of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland in Bratislava ended in bewilderment, and why things

⁴ On this issue see Brach, Radko, *Die Aussenpolitik der Tschechoslowakei zur Zeit der „Regierung der nationalen Verständigung.“* Baden-Baden, 1992.

⁵ Since the breakdown of Communism, Budapest has again played the role of protector of the Hungarian minority and has several times criticized the minorities policy in Slovakia. In Bratislava this was perceived as unjust, and it revived old anti-Hungarian resentments. Another burning issue at this time was the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros power station on the Danube (on the border between Slovakia and Hungary), the construction of which began in the late 1970s. In 1989 the Slovaks had already finished much of the construction, but the plan aroused much criticism in Hungary, especially because of its ecological consequences. Budapest therefore repudiated the contract unilaterally, which later caused Bratislava to bring the matter to international trial in the Hague.

⁶ When President Havel proposed in the Federal Assembly that the name Czechoslovak Socialist Republic be changed to Czechoslovak Republic, Slovak deputies requested that it be changed to Czecho-Slovak Republic. But this name stirred up the irritation of some Czechs, since it reminded them of the infamous second Czecho-Slovak Republic between September 1938 (Munich agreement) and March 1939 (beginning of Nazi occupation).

changed only as a result of the international situation. In autumn 1990 there were already serious problems emerging in Yugoslavia, and above all there was a general fear of unpredictable developments in the Soviet Union, where the Baltic states were on the verge of civil war. These facts forced the Central European states to coordinate their policies and exert joint pressure on Moscow to hasten the departure of Soviet troops from their territories.

As a result of this strengthening of mutual cooperation, the Visegrád declaration was signed on February 15, 1991 near Budapest. It promulgated coordination of integration into European structures, environmental policy, and economic transformation, as well as an agreement on the basic values of civil society, human rights, and so on. In truth, however, economic collaboration as measured by commercial exchange decreased in the years 1991 and 1992 to a historical low. All countries were concerned above all with their own domestic economic and political transformations, and there was no cooperation in environmental policy at all. The only results of the Visegrád partnership were the dissolution of both the Warsaw Pact and the European association agreements. On the other hand, in spite of the internal difficulties of Visegrád, this concept was widely appreciated in the Western countries, which stressed the necessity of mutual integration and for which the stability and security of the region became very important after the breakdown of Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.⁷

Nevertheless, during the first half of 1992 the next step in political separation appeared on the Czech and Slovak political scene. In the Czech lands in February 1991, the Civic Forum disintegrated even though all politicians who were members of the movement remained in office. Prior to the new election in the summer of 1992, however, new parties felt a need to express their different views, and the election campaign began. As we now know, it was the ODS (Civic Democratic Party) headed by Václav Klaus that offered the most consistent vision of an economic transformation and, along with it, another concept of Czech foreign policy opposed to Havel's and Dienstbier's approach.

⁷ On the first two years of Czechoslovakian diplomacy after the fall of Communism see Dienstbier, Jirí, *Od snění k realite. Vzpomínky z let 1989-1999 (From Dreaming to Reality. Memoirs from the years 1989-1999)*. Prague, 1999.

Antipolitics versus Politics

This brings us to the next part of the paper, namely, the conflict between two concepts of politics, which some called “The row of the two Václavs.” To be sure, it has also had a great impact on foreign policy, where it corresponds to two basic positions or schools in the theory of international relations: Idealism and Realism.

In the background of Havel’s conception of politics is his long experience as an opponent of the Communist regime. He gives his best account of his politics in a brilliant and very influential essay, “The Power of the Powerless” (1976). The essay is a synthesis of socio-political analysis, literary imagination, and phenomenological description. It has three main themes: the quest for the reasons for the loss of the “natural world” in Jan Patočka’s sense, the crisis of contemporary “human identity”, and the search for the “authenticity” of human existence. Havel brought the Heideggerian motif of the concealment of being and applied it to life in the Communist regime, which he called a “post-totalitarian system.” The only possibility for retrieving authenticity is to step out of the “life of lies” and make an inner rebellion – the experiment of “living within the truth.” In this way, opposition to the regime shifts toward the existential and pre-political, and this way of thinking about politics, which was represented by Charta 77, proved very successful during the 1980s.

But the deep crisis of human existence is not only a question for countries under Communist rule, although in those countries it was revealed in its most drastic form. As Havel writes, the crisis is a crisis of all technological civilization. The West is also forced to search for the meaning of life – as witnessed in various alternative directions of thought, from the environmental and hippie movements to Zen Buddhist meditation and communes. Hence for Havel the collapse of the Communist regime and the establishment of parliamentary democracy, with all the administrative apparatus of state and political parties, was not an ultimate solution. Political parties especially made Havel uneasy, for in practice they relieve the citizen from his responsibilities instead of imposing them on him. The liberal democratic order is not so much a solution unto itself as the first condition of what he calls “existential revolution.”

This approach issued in the concept of “antipolitical politics” or in short “antipolitics,” which Havel proposed in 1984 in another famous essay, “Politics and Conscience.” In Havel’s view, politics should remain opposed to “the technology of power and manipulation,” and should be a sort of endeavor for meaning in human

life and for the protection of human life. Politics should be morality in practice, the service of truth, genuine care for the fellow being.⁸

As president, Havel no longer talks about existential revolution. He has adopted a much more pragmatic rhetoric. However, as he writes in his 1991 *Summer Meditations*, politics should still be this kind of “antipolitical” service to others, service to the *polis*. “The origins of politics is the moral. It is the responsibility to the whole and for the whole.” He admits the necessity for political parties, but he remains suspicious of them and refuses to attach himself to any political stream. He claims to be outside and independent of ideological fights.⁹ This is closely related to another debate which has become very popular in the Czech Republic: the debate over intellectuals and politicians. Here, to put it simply, Havel insists on being a politician and an independent intellectual at the same time, while many of his critics (and, symptomatically, the case with his friends Timothy Garton Ash and John Keane) claim that *in sensu stricto* one can be either a politician trying to influence people or an independent intellectual striving for the truth, but not both.¹⁰

A completely different concept of politics is to be found in texts by Václav Klaus, the most powerful and influential Czech politician in the years 1992-97. In contrast to Havel, Klaus was never a dissident. His view of the world was formed mainly by his education in economics. Already in the 1960s he opposed the reform-Communist economic thought symbolized by the economist Ota Sik. After leaning towards mainstream Western economics, Klaus devoted himself to the liberal conservatism of Friedrich von Hayek and the neo-monetarism of Milton Friedman. From the very beginning of his political career, he openly abandoned Czech political traditions as a whole and professed the Anglo-American origins of his convictions and his party’s political philosophy. Klaus was highly suspicious of every effort to carry out any kind of existential revolution in Havel’s sense. Beginning with the break-up of Civic Forum, when the major part of the movement inclined to him,

⁸ Havel, Václav, “Moc bezmocných,” in: Havel, Václav, *O lidskou identitu*, Prague, 1990, pp. 55-135; Havel, Václav, “Politika a svedomí” in: Havel, Václav, *Do ruzných stran*. Scheinfeld-Schwarzenberg, 1989, pp. 33-51. English translations Havel, Václav, “The Power of the Powerless” and “Politics and Conscience” in Havel, Václav, *Living in Truth*, ed. Jan Vladislav. London and Boston, 1986, pp. 36-122 and 136-157.

⁹ Havel, Václav, *Letní premítání*, Prague, 1991, str. 98. English translation Havel, Václav, *Summer Meditations*. London and Boston, 1992.

¹⁰ Ash, Timothy Garton, “Prag, Intellektuelle und Politiker,” *Transit* 10, pp. 136-155.

Klaus was fighting against “antipolitics.” Changing the political and economic system he understood to be his main and almost only task as Prime Minister.

In accordance with the liberal traditions he followed, Klaus believed that moral values and personal opinions were the private matter of each citizen and not the task of politicians. A rather paradoxical situation resulted from the fact that a liberal conservative should carry out what was by far the greatest change in Czech society, with the exception of the transition to a Communist regime in the 1950s. Klaus knew this and indeed referred to it as a paradox, but he justified it by pointing out that it was only temporary. Following this transformation there should be a political order with the standard system of political parties securing both individual freedom and providing the possibility to follow one’s own interests and desires. It was a very simple picture of society, but one which proved to be very strong at the beginning of the transformation and which gave many people a feeling of a consistent response to the fuzzy time after the fall of Communism.¹¹

Idealism versus Realism.

The philosophical backgrounds of Havel and Klaus were reflected in the foreign policy of Czechoslovakia and later the Czech Republic. As Jirí Dienstbier stated on December 14, 1989, three days after his appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs, the foreign policy of the Republic should combine European democratic traditions with respect for human and civil rights. Václav Havel confirmed a little later that “foreign as well as domestic policy should not in the future be based on any ideology, but must grow from ideas, especially ideas of human rights.”¹² In the words of one of the early analysts of the first two years of Czechoslovak diplomacy, Radko Brach, the approach of Havel and Dienstbier combined the endeavor for the universal conception of man in today’s world with an effort to constitute politics as an ethics, the refusal of pragmatism and political calculation, and the primacy of human rights over every political interest.¹³

This is why Prague also supported the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) at the beginning of the 1990s and why Havel called for the dis-

¹¹ The most important of Klaus’s articles on political philosophy from this time are collected in Klaus, Václav, *Mezi minulostí a budoucností (Between Past and Future)*, Brno, Praha, 1996.

¹² Havel, Václav, *Letní premítání*. Praha, 1991, p. 73.

¹³ Brach, Radko, op. cit.

solution of NATO. But it was not only his idea. Above all, the two years 1990 and 1991 were years of euphoria following the fall of Communism in Central and Southeastern Europe, with all the over-ambitious CBSE projects and the Charter for a New Europe issued at its Parisian conference, after which reality returned in the form of wars in Yugoslavia and the Caucasus.

To sum up, we can consider Havel's and Dienstbier's policy to be in the tradition of the so called Idealist school of international relations theory, which emphasizes universal moral values, responsibility for peace and security in the world, and multilateral cooperation. The concept of the Visegrád cooperation should also be seen from this vantage point. It was developed and pursued in spite of some problems, for instance, a clear decrease in commerce among the Visegrád countries. Cooperation and the attempt to find a common language were seen as ends in themselves.

The foreign policy of the liberal conservative government was the antithesis of that of the former dissidents. Václav Klaus and Foreign Minister Josef Zieleniec introduced the language of "national interest" in the sense of Hans Morgenthau.¹⁴ Foreign policy from that point onward ought to be based on a clear conception of national interests, economic efficiency, and pragmatism. We can consider such an approach to be a branch of the Realist school in international relations theory. The key is the definition of national interest, which cannot, according to Klaus and the Realists, be based on any universal moral value. Here is the main difference from Havel. While Havel and the idealists see the world as an interdependent system of states, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations – as a kind of order – Klaus and the Realists still give the primacy to sovereign states and see the international environment as anarchic.¹⁵ This view shows up in Klaus' evaluation of European integration. Well-known as a "Euro-sceptic," Klaus is especially critical of the form of the EU after Maastricht:

The concept of integration does not imply the prefabrication of all Europeans into a special breed of homo sapiens to be called "homo ." I believe that integration – defined as the process of gradual elimination of all restrictions of the interplay of human beings in all dimensions of

¹⁴ Klaus and Zieleniec were not alone in this endeavor. An eloquent testimonial is the volume Valenta, Jirí (ed.), *Máme národní zájmy (Do we have national interests?)*, published by Ústav pro mezinárodní vztahy (Institute for International Relations), Praha, 1992.

¹⁵ Cf. Hollis, Martin and Smith, Steven, *Teorie mezinárodních vztahů. (Theory of international relations)*, Brno, 2000.

life – enjoys a widespread support in Europe, but that unification, which I have to understand as integration plus an additional vision of the structure and organization of human society, is not easily shared by all Europeans and definitely represents a different and more ambitious goal. ... I am a Eurooptimist as regards the future as well as the overall positive impact of European integration and a Eurorealist as regards our ability (not to speak about necessity) to unify Europe under a single ideological banner.¹⁶

This approach found its counterpart in the liberals' conception of cooperation in Central Europe. Klaus opposed every notion of Central European integration, which he understood as only a hoped-for result of European integration in general. Several times he rejected the institutionalization of the Visegrád group even though nobody had really suggested it. (There was only one exception, Polish President Lech Walesa, who repeatedly proposed the creation of an Eastern European alternative to NATO and the EU, but no one else took it seriously). One sentence from an interview with Klaus for *Le Figaro* in January 1993 became a symbol of Prague's new approach to Visegrád. "Visegrád is not relevant at all. It was a process that was artificially provoked by Western countries."¹⁷

This is a tough judgment indeed, and moreover it is not true. However, especially at the beginning of 1990s, many Western European and American politicians truly considered the Visegrád group a kind of alternative to the EU and NATO. Partly as a result of the Kundera debate, many outside observers simply saw the Central European region as a homogenous unit. In Czech media circles there was a story about a legendary American journalist, Flora Lewis, who asked her young Czech colleague during the autumn of 1990, "Why didn't you unify with Hungarians and Poles in the spring of this year?" Not only did nobody unify, but Czechoslovakia divided within two years! Since the main "national interest" for Czechs (similarly for Hungarians and Poles) in 1992 was definitely entry into NATO and the EU, Klaus was very clear in his expression and refused every attempt to raise doubts about it.

¹⁶ Klaus, Václav, "Transatlantic Relations from the Czech Perspective." The 1995 Transatlantic Leadership Award Address at The European Institute, Washington, D.C., May 4, 1995. (<http://www.czech.cz/washington/press/k95-tran.htm>)

¹⁷ The quotation comes from Leska, Vladimír, Dancák, Bretislav, Mares, Miroslav, Morvay, Pet, *Ceská republika a region střední Evropy (Czech Republic and the Region of Central Europe)* in: Kotyk, Václav (ed.), *Ceská zahraniční politika. Úvahy o prioritách (Czech Foreign Policy. Considerations about Priorities)*, Praha, 1997, p. 114.

On the other hand, the Czech right-wing coalition repeatedly stressed the need to develop relations with neighbors on a bilateral level. And it was Klaus's very government which encouraged the Central European Free Trade Area (CEFTA) most of all. Founded in December 1992, CEFTA became the most important contribution to Central European cooperation in the years 1993-98.

Nevertheless, because of such a Central European policy, which refused multilateral cooperation in the sense of the Visegrád agreement, Klaus was accused of producing a so-called "policy of Czech exclusivity." He and some of his followers indeed from time to time, and especially between 1992 and 1995, stressed that the Czech Republic would be the first country in the region prepared to integrate itself into the EU. (On the other hand, such utterances were also heard in Hungary during the 1990s.)

The main reason Klaus was blamed for the exclusivity approach was his refusal to coordinate Czech policy concerning NATO and the EU with the policies of Poland and Hungary. He and his Foreign Minister, Zieleniec, had no understanding of lobbying, and they emphasized the need to carry out the domestic transformation as a basic condition for integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.

There were many sides to the collapse of Visegrád cooperation in 1992-93. One of the most important events not analyzed here was the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. But the break-up of the state was not the main reason for the Czechs' lack of interest in Visegrád. Nor, however, was it "the policy of exclusivity." This is a vague journalists' term widely used by politicians in the Czech Republic as well as outside. The main reason, to underline the core of the argument, is rooted more deeply in the very consistent political philosophy of Czech liberalism of those years, which proved to be rather dogmatic at times, as did the proponents of Visegrád. The Klaus policy did not entirely refuse cooperation with neighbors. However, it did restrict the field of all cooperation. It was not to be followed as a project, but was to be the result of pragmatic and rational consensus between different countries following their own national interests.

Visegrád Redivivus – A Continuing Story.

The rethinking of the Visegrád cooperation in the Czech Republic was already underway in the last months of 1997, and it was Milos Zeman's social democratic government that renewed the concept. However, the name Visegrád is more or less a trademark. Multilateral cooperation is much more pragmatic than it was at the beginning of the 1990s. In spite of some allusions to the Visegrád declaration dur-

ing summits nowadays, nobody – neither Prague, nor Budapest, nor Bratislava, nor Warsaw – dreams of some kind of unique Central European region interconnected by a common culture, historical heritage, or even a kind of historical mission. Cooperation today is based on carefully specified common interests and common problems and has assumed its shape from the idea of pragmatic cooperation in CEFTA.¹⁸ If we may put it a bit provocatively, the relatively successful performance of the contemporary Visegrád cooperation is far more the result of the rejection of the original Visegrád agreement than of its development.

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¹⁸ See for instance the official document *Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky (Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic)*, supplement of the journal *Mezinárodní politika (International Politics)* April, 1999.

Just as in Europe, the central part of Asia can also be described as Greater Central Asia,¹⁰ which would include Mongolia of Eastern Asia and Afghanistan of Southern Asia. The Greater Central Asia conception has been formulated. A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction. He included in Eastern Europe some of the East European states that formed part of the Ottoman Empire (the southeastern European states—the Kingdom of Bulgaria, the Hungarian Kingdom, the Rumanian Principedom, the Principedom of Montenegro, the Kingdom of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia) and of the Russian Empire (the Kingdom of Poland, the Grand Principedom of Finland, the Central (Ukrainian)). So, the term “Central Europe” was coined by the Germans in order to prepare a great space, but it was never fully politically and geopolitically united. But at the same time, it was considered as something to be united, which should be united. -What do you think about the Visegrád Group and its perspectives? - I think that the Visegrád Group is a very interesting and revolutionary idea for uniting some of the Eastern European powers, namely those which perceive to an increasing degree their differences from the rest of the Europe in regard to values, social standards, and the traditional orientation of their societies. So, in the present situation, the United States can’t be an ally of Eastern Europe.