



Saint **ADALBERT**

and Central Europe



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Prokop Siostrzonek

Introductory word

In 1937, Josef Florian's Stará Říše published a collection named "Pochvala svatých patronů českých" (Praise of the Patron Saints of Bohemia). The collection comprises a writing by the Czech author Karel Schulz. One can imagine that at that time all people of good will saw the Nazi cloud building over Europe. Where to seek support, refuge, salvation? What will come next?

Karel Schulz found his way out:

*Saint Adalbert
is a tear of God's mercy
that fell down to the arid soil
of a hard and rebellious country....*

*I, Adalbert, want the heart of this country for Christ,
I, Adalbert, want neither her riches
nor glory and honours
nor pride and dignity
nor all the splendour,
I want her heart and I will not cease
until I win her over....*

We feel there are new clouds building over Europe in the third decade of the 21st century. And that is why it is so important that contemporary authors seek inspiration and spiritual support in our saint, who has always strived for the heart of our land. The heart needs to be cared for in order for the whole body to function properly.

The following pages resulted from sincere efforts by many authors to find a firm anchor for this heart.

I am very happy to bless this endeavour!

*P. Prokop Siostrzonek, OSB,
Archabbot of the Břevnov Monastery*

Prague, 28. 5. 2021

*P. Prokop Siostrzonek, OSB (*1957) is a Czech Roman Catholic priest, Benedictine monk and Archabbot of the Břevnov monastery. In 1976–1983, he studied theology at the Roman Catholic Cyril and Methodius Theological Faculty in Litoměřice (now the Catholic Theological Faculty, Charles University, Prague). In 1977, guided by Father Aleš Gwuzd, he secretly became a novice of the Benedictine Order. On 11 July 1982, while still studying at the Theological Faculty, he took his first monastic vows. His monastic name Prokop was chosen for him by the Benedictine Abbot Anastáz Opasek with whom he communicated through encrypted letters sent abroad. He was ordained a priest in Olomouc on 25 June 1983 by Josef Vrana, the administrator of the archbishopric of Olomouc. After graduation, he worked as a priest in parishes of the Olomouc archbishopric (Ostrava–Poruba, Třinec, Valašské Meziříčí, Svatý Mořic in Olomouc). At the beginning of 1987, he was deprived of the state license to perform clerical duties, and until the end of 1988 he worked in the Tesla factory in Rožnov. Then he served as a chaplain in Strážnice and a parish priest in Rataje near Kroměříž. In December 1989, Abbot Opasek appointed him Prior of the Benedictine Archabbey of St. Adalbert and St. Margaret in Prague–Břevnov. He actively participated in the preparation of the restitution of the Břevnov Monastery and its restoration. After Anastasius Opasek, the Archabbot of Břevnov Monastery, passed away in the summer of 1999, the then Prior Prokop Siostrzonek was elected Prior–Administrator and in November 2017, he was elected Archabbot of the Břevnov Monastery. The benediction was conferred upon him by Cardinal Dominik Duka on Sunday, 14 January 2018, during a solemn mass in the St. Margaret Basilica in Břevnov Monastery. In 2019, he was awarded the Honorary Citizenship of Prague 6.*

Pax Christiana of Saint Slavník

In political science reflections intended for lay readers, various models of state and international legal systems are often simplified and put in stark contrast – such as democracy versus totalitarianism, absolutism versus constitutionalism, or centralisation versus decentralisation. Although such simplifications may serve as witty bon mots, they do not contribute to understanding the real processes and ideas; on the contrary, they obscure them. The same approach may be also encountered in contemporary interpretations of the idea of cooperation among European nations and the history of that idea. Such interpretations usually merely reflect the attitude of a particular author towards today's European Union. They either overlook the enormous ideological and fundamental differences and evaluate every historical attempt at European integration positively – from Charlemagne's coronation to Naurmann's Mitteleuropa – or, conversely, they vigorously reject any closer European cooperation as a "tainted source" and a parallel with Hitler's Third Reich. Both are based on the same simplification: the supposed irreconcilability of the idea of nation states with the idea of cooperating Europe. As if it was only the dichotomy of either-or. However, that does not correspond with historical experience.

European states and peoples do not live and have never lived in isolation from one another; over the centuries, they have been connected by countless links and often had to face common external threats.¹ Total independence is an unrealistic illusion in Europe, in Central Europe in particular, and mutual cooperation is an easily verifiable necessity. On the other hand, the natural competitiveness of European nations is an age-long source of Europe's dynamism and vitality, and any pressure towards ethnic, political and economic unification or suppression of national specificities is suicidal for Europe. It undermines its essence and its most vital strength. In words of the New Testament: If the salt loses its saltiness, what is it good for?

After all, neither the necessary defence of common security nor the sharing of common cultural values has ever been perceived as a reason for limiting the sovereignty of individual states throughout history.² The principles of nation states and European cooperation are not necessarily contradictory. Transnational needn't mean non-national. The universalism of the Middle Ages was not an early prototype of the future unified superstate, the EU, but in many ways its antithesis. As an old proverb says: One man's meat is another man's poison. It is all about the degree of cooperation and the nature of shared values. Despite the divide of ages, the powerful, though never fully implemented idea of Christian universalism presenting Europe as a community

of sovereign nations remains a permanent source of inspiration. This idea was conceived by an extraordinary figure of Central European history, *Adalbert of Slavník* (956–997).

ADALBERT, WOJCIECH AND BÉLA

In the spring of 997, Adalbert was ritually murdered by the pagan Prussians, ancient relatives of today's Lithuanians, to whom he went as an itinerant missionary to preach Christianity. The fact that he died a martyr's death sparked reverence for him that has remained vivid among the peoples of Central Europe for centuries. The spread and nature of this reverence illustrate the significance and picturesque fortunes of this ancient saint.

When elected the second bishop of Prague in February 982, a young cleric with only a subdeacon's ordination at the time, few people realised that the Czech Church was now headed by a personality who was ahead of his time and of the conditions prevailing at his place of office. His noble parentage – he was born to the mighty family of Prince Slavník, who was considered the first in the country after the ruling family of the Přemyslids – and his excellent education qualified him for the election. Adalbert's first teacher and tutor was the priest *Radla* (?) to whom Adalbert felt life-long gratitude and with whom he developed lifelong friendship. He then completed his higher studies in Magdeburg, Saxony, under the patronage of the local archbishop *Adalbert* (910–981), who was on friendly terms with Slavník's family. As early as in 962, during his visit to the Slavník's castle in Libice nad Cidlinou, Adalbert of Magdeburg conferred on still a young boy the sacrament of confirmation thanks to which he received his confirmation name Adalbert under which he is known in Latin and German sources.³

During his studies in Magdeburg, Adalbert was of course influenced in particular by his main instructor, Master *Odericus* (?), who introduced him to the foundations of Christian doctrine. It was probably at that time that he was impressed by the speech of the erudite priest and mathematician *Gerbert of Aurillac* (950–1003) who held a learned debate with Odericus in which he aptly defended the validity of rational knowledge. Meeting Gerbert was one of the forming milestones in Adalbert's life. Later, in the 990s, they became personal friends and co-authors of the spiritual-political project of Christian universalism, known in the history as the *Renovatio Imperii Romanorum* programme. In 999, two years after Adalbert's martyrdom, Gerbert was elected Pope as *Sylvester II* and virtually immediately upon his accession to the Holy See, he canonised Adalbert.

Let's return back to the beginnings of Adalbert's life. Legendists mention other breaking points in his life, especially Adalbert's personal presence at the bedside of his dying predecessor, the first bishop of Prague *Dětmar* († 982), who before his death confessed his profound remorse for having performed his office negli-

gently and for having been indifferent and compromising in his defence of moral values. Adalbert was really heart-struck by this experience at the bishop's deathbed. Another heart-breaking moment was his personal experience with the brutality of customary law from pre-Christian times, still exercised in Bohemia at that time. For he was a helpless witness to the violent death of an adulterous woman who was murdered in a blood feud by relatives of her deceived husband. Adalbert, who could not help the unfaithful woman, felt a deep resentment towards the customary law from then on. Both experiences resulted in manifest radicalism of Adalbert's later episcopal ministry.

After his election in 982, according to the regulations of the period, he was required to take over the episcopal insignia from the hands of emperor *Otto II* (955–983) and be consecrated by the Archbishop of Mainz who was then in charge of the Prague diocese. Both the Emperor and Archbishop *Willigis* (975–1011) of Mainz were at that time staying in Verona, northern Italy, and Adalbert set off to see them without hesitation. While on his journey, he had another crucial encounter. In Pavia, he met *Gerard of Toul* (935–994), a bishop of holy fame, and *Mayol* (906–994), a renowned abbot from the monastery of Cluny in Burgundy. Both ranked among the authors and promoters of an extensive reform spreading from Cluny to other Benedictine monasteries in Western Europe, which is considered to be a crucial element in the later stabilisation of the West. The main purpose of the reform can be briefly summarised as an effort to restore the spiritual mission of monastic life⁴, the independence of ecclesiastical institutions from the power of the nobility⁵, and the elimination of barbaric relics. It is obvious that these features of the Cluniac Reforms aroused Adalbert's sympathy. He himself joined the Benedictine order and, influenced by the memory of the death of Bishop Dětmar, who had reproached himself for being too indifferent, began to promote the reform zealously and follow its principles in his life and office.

However, he did not realise how difficult, cumbersome and slow it would be for the reformatory ideas to prevail over traditional stereotypes, even in a fairly sophisticated Western European environment, let alone in the then still semi-pagan Bohemian environment. What chances of success could he stand, for example, in his criticism of slavery in a situation where a significant part of the Bohemian prince's income consisted of proceeds originating in the trade in enslaved prisoners of war?⁶ When we read the *Decrees of Prince Břetislav*, which is a Bohemian code dated a hundred years after Adalbert, it already reflects the principles that Adalbert promoted⁷, but during his lifetime and work in Prague, the situation was quite different. His efforts to promote Cluniac ideals infuriated the powerful noblemen jealously clinging to customary law, but also a significant part of his fellow priests, who did not want to accept the tightening of church discipline introduced by Adalbert. The subsequent long-standing conflicts led to the bishop's repeated attempts

to resign from his office (in 988 and again in 994) and personal pleas addressed to the Pope to relieve him of his duties.

This painful reality, however, had positive consequences as well; in particular, it made Adalbert travel all across Europe and develop numerous friendships in the Polish and Hungarian kingdoms, in papal Rome and at the court of young Emperor *Otto III*. He had friendly ties with Poland dating back to the reign of the first Polish Christian prince *Mieszko* (935–992) and also became personal friends with the greatest Polish ruler of the early Middle Ages, *Boleslaw the Brave* (967–1025). After Adalbert's violent death, he ransomed his dead body from the hands of the pagan Prussians and had it buried in Gniezno, the then largest Polish city. Adalbert visited Hungary around 994 and visited the court of the Hungarian chieftain *Geyza* (940–997), where he was staying for some time strengthening in faith the members of the ruling family who had only shortly before converted to Christianity. He is said to have baptised Geyza's son *Vayk*, later the first king of Hungary, *Saint Stephen* (975–1038). Known as *Béla* in Hungary, Adalbert was worshipped also there as a saint and "apostle of Hungary" after his death.

ETERNAL ROME

Otto III (980–1002) ascended the throne in 994, aged only fourteen, and ruled for mere nine years before he died prematurely of smallpox on 23 January 1002. During his short reign, however, he was able to gather around him remarkable scholars of the time, such as St. Adalbert, the aforementioned Gerbert of Aurillac, Abbot Leo (?) of Aventino and others, forming a vision of a universal Christian empire in debates with them.

In doing so, they drew on traditions dating far back to European Antiquity. Early thoughts pointing towards the universalist idea can already be found in Graeco-Roman Antiquity. What distinguished the deeds of *Alexander the Great* (356–323 BC) or *Julius Caesar* (100–44 BC) from other Egyptian, Assyrian or Persian conquerors of comparable significance was their attempt to pursue the noble ideas of Plato (427–347 BC) and Aristotle (384–322 BC) through their imperial activities. *Virgil's* famous sentence "*You, Roman, be sure to rule the world (be these your arts), to crown peace with justice*" is not just a hypocritical excuse for Roman expansion but a moral imperative⁸. After religious tolerance for Christianity had been established by *Constantine the Great* (272–337) within the Roman Empire, this mission did not lose its relevance and was interpreted as a sacred task to defend and spread the ancient Christian heritage in late Rome. The old *Pax Romana* (Roman peace), as the empire used to be titled, was transformed into *Pax Christiana*, the Christian peace. Despite all his monastic opposition to earthly forms of government, *Aurelius Augustinus* (354–430) offered Christian rulers an outline of a political order combining the moral imperatives of the Gospel with the inspiration by *Plato* in his *De civitate Dei* (On the State of God). Despite what we are used to hearing in schools, it is now

clear that the ancient Rome has never really ceased to exist. In the east of Europe, the history has of course seen the continued existence of the Eastern Roman Empire, nowadays abbreviated as Byzantium, whose emperor *Justinian* (482–565) preserved the legacy of Roman law for the mankind in his collection of laws. But even in the West, the barbarian invasion did not mean the complete end to the Empire. Although the Germans overthrew Emperor *Romulus Augustulus* (460–?) and declared the Western Roman Empire overthrown, they themselves tacitly adopted the most important elements of the Roman legacy. The Catholic baptism and coronation of the Frankish chieftain *Clovis* (465–511) in Reims in 496 only confirmed that. After the first of the Islamic attacks on Europe was halted in the 8th century, the Roman idea was formally restored, when at Christmas of 800, Pope *Leo III* (750–816) appointed the surprised *Charlemagne* (747–814) emperor of the re-established Roman Empire in the West. Even though Charlemagne's empire was torn apart among his heirs after his death, the idea of the *Restoration of the Empire* had already been formed.

It was embraced especially in the eastern, German-speaking territories, which were politically fragmented among countless rulers and sought a unifying idea. In the first half of the tenth century, the rulers of Saxony and Bavaria were competing for who would re-establish the idea of the Empire and unite the German regions, or, following the Carolingian model, the whole of Western Europe and win the imperial crown from the Pope. The Saxons emerged victorious from this struggle and in 962, *Otto I* (912–973) was crowned emperor. His power was considerable, but effectively limited to Germany and northern Italy, while the French-speaking lands were beyond his reach.

His grandson, *Otto III*, continued in his effort, but deliberately wanted to give it a new quality – he intended to move directly to Rome and make the restored Empire not a German but a truly universal project engaging all the peoples of the Latin West. It was as if the young *Otto III* had been predestined for this role. His father was the Emperor *Otto II*, but his mother was the Byzantine princess *Theophano* (960–991), a woman of brilliant intellect and supremacy, who even ruled the empire for some time when her husband died unexpectedly in 983, leaving behind *Otto III* as a child of only three years. Incidentally, her sister *Anna* was the wife of Prince *Vladimir* of Kievan Rus (960–1015), who initiated the Christianisation of Eastern Slavs, representing another, as later history shows, significant element in the European game.

In 989, Bishop Adalbert of Prague met with Empress *Theophano* in Rome and received a generous financial gift from her, which, according to his biographers, he immediately distributed to the poor. It is not known what exactly Adalbert discussed with the Empress at that time, but the debate might include some ideas and suggestions that were later taken up by her son. The affinity with the Byzantine

East, which boasted the continuity of the imperial tradition since ancient times, made the Ottonian Empire more legitimate and gave it a new lustre. Otto III and his advisers gave this aspect much thought: for example, a pompous court ceremony inspired by the ceremonial of the emperors of Constantinople was devised, and Otto dressed himself in newly made silk robes with embroidered imperial eagles, and put on shoes with images of lions and dragons. In short, the West was now also supposed to uphold the Byzantine political concept, in which the emperor has an irreplaceable place in God's plan of salvation and is thus a kind of "secular bishop" in whom appropriate authority in the Church is vested.

While in the East, the emperor had long been seen as the head of state and, in effect, of the Church, and papal primacy was increasingly seen as merely honorary, in the West, Otto III had to reckon with real papal power as it had developed over the centuries. After all, he could not even use the title of emperor without the papal coronation as it was the coronation by the Pope that gave him that extraordinary position among Western European rulers. The authority of the See of St. Peter was also the source of authority of the Western Empire and it was practically impossible to cut the figurative umbilical cord connecting both of them. The young emperor and his advisers were aware of this, and their project, *Renovatio Imperii*, strived for a balanced and harmonious cooperation between the two powers, secular and spiritual, for the good of Christendom.

Saint Adalbert, who had always boldly promoted his Slavic roots, was more than anyone else aware of the need to find balance between imperial and papal authorities, because it was the papacy that became the main source of support for the then young Transalpine nations, Slavs and Hungarians, in the state-building process. These nations embraced Christianity and the related heritage of Antiquity relatively late in time, during the 9th century and the first half of the 10th century. They were the immediate neighbours of German territories in the Frankish Empire and it seemed that the only way to relate to the above-described civilisation tradition was through voluntary submission to that empire along with everything that it entailed. This was of course unacceptable from both political and human perspectives. However, a continued existence in "barbarism" was also undesirable; it caused trade isolation and remained to be a permanent pretext for "preventive" military aggression by the Western neighbour, because "barbarians" were of cause unreliable and did not abide by treaties.

The rulers of the Slavic Great Moravian Empire found an ingenious way out of that situation already in the middle of the 9th century. In 863, they invited to the country the Christian missionaries *Cyril* († 969) and *Methodius* († 885) from far-away Constantinople (not the Frankish Empire) and subsequently "dedicated" their country to Saint Peter, i.e. entrusted it under the protection of the Pope. Pope *John VIII* (820–882) by his famous *Bulla Industrie Tuae* of 880 accepted Great Moravia under his

patronage and confirmed the archbishopric there. He and his successor *Stephen V* († 891) then granted the royal title to the Great Moravian prince *Svatopluk* († 894). Despite the fact that around 907 Great Moravia succumbed to invasions of pagan Magyar nomads, the model was successfully applied by Poles as well as Hungarians eighty years later, probably on the advice of Saint Adalbert.

There are well-known paintings of Emperor Otto III, depicting the ruler on his throne surrounded by four bowing allegorical female figures. It is a type of iconography known from the era of his father Otto II, when the figures represented the historical imperial provinces (Italy, Gaul, Germania and Illyria) during the reign of Otto III. It was undoubtedly under Adalbert's influence that certain changes in the concept of the depiction took place: The figure of Italy, now marked with the inscription "Roma", no longer represented only the northern Italian imperial possessions, but the very heart of the envisaged empire, Rome, where Otto III wanted to settle permanently, and it replaced Germania in this role. The figure of Gaul no longer symbolised only empire-claimed Burgundy as during the reign of Otto II, but rather a vast and wealthy Francophone region from which Count *Hugh Capet* of Paris (939–941) created the sovereign kingdom of France. By the way, one of the last journeys of Bishop Adalbert of Prague before his departure on his mission amidst pagans was to France, where he visited the most significant spiritual centres in 996 – the memorable abbey of Saint-Denis, Tours with the tomb of Saint Martin, Fleury, where the founder of the "Adalbert's" order, *Benedict of Nursia* (470–543), was buried, and the monastery of *Saint Maur* with the tomb of Benedict's successor Saint Maur (500–584).

But let us return to the symbolism of the aforementioned depiction. The main change was that the first three allegorical figures were now joined by a figure of Slavonia, representing part of an empire yet to be created, but expected to absorb the former Illyria and take its place. The depiction thus does not capture reality, but an ideal. The proposed Greater Slavonia was to be based on a union of Bohemia and Poland, in which the Slavnik's family could play the role of a mediator, because their estates were located on the Czech-Polish border and they had ties to both Slavic countries.⁹ It was the inclusion of these Central European nations, who had not yet been counted on, in the process of developing the Empire as its fully-fledged members, that was actually Adalbert's most original contribution to Otto's vision, a contribution that eventually made it truly universal.

Otto III accepted and endorsed Adalbert's vision when in the year 1000 he visited Adalbert's grave in Gniezno, Poland, and founded a Slavic archbishopric there. At that time, he did not have the slightest idea that he would outlive the Bohemian saint by mere five years and that their shared vision of a universal empire would be postponed indefinitely by the political pragmatism of his successors. Nevertheless, it remains to be an ideal that inherently belongs to the cultural heritage of European nations.

*Mgr. Petr Bahník (*1953) is a Czech historian, educator, visual artist and publicist. He graduated from the Secondary School of Graphic Arts and holds a history degree from the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague. He teaches history at the oldest Czech technical school, today's Secondary School of Mechanical Engineering in the Old Town of Prague. Previously, he taught at several private schools including the Archbishop Grammar School in Prague. He is a member of numerous conservative associations and societies. In addition to his scientific publications, Olympia recently published his two-volume book of heroic stories from Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia entitled Český rytíř (The Czech Knight) with his own illustrations. For Prima TV he prepared a documentary series on historical curiosities called Utajené příběhy českých dějin (Secret Stories of Czech History) where he also plays the role of a host.*

-
- ¹ We can see it in the 8th century from the Arabs, in the 13th century from the Mongols or repeatedly from the 15th century to the 18th century from the Ottoman Turks.
- ² Not even in that part of Europe where in the High Middle Ages, the idea of the unity of Christians found its institutional expression, i.e. the Holy Roman Empire. For example, the Kingdom of Bohemia was a specific part of the Roman Empire, and the Bohemian king was one of emperor's electors, but at the same time the Kingdom preserved its complete independence in foreign and domestic politics as evidenced by the fact that the Czech territory was not subject to imperial but only to Czech laws.
- ³ The legend of Bruno of Querfurt recounts that Adalbert of Magdeburg mistakenly conferred the sacrament of confirmation on Adalbert twice. For the first time, he performed the act during the aforementioned visit to Libice, which he forgot later on, and for the second time, it was during Adalbert's studies in Magdeburg.
- ⁴ In the previous period, monasteries had become economic and service organisations in the service to rulers rather than places of prayer.
- ⁵ Defending the freedom of religious institutions was an extremely important aspect, because in the 9th and 10th centuries, they often became mere instruments of rulers' power politics (see the use of the Frankish clergy as an instrument to control Great Moravia, which was prevented by the mission of Cyril and Methodius).
- ⁶ See e.g. Žemlička, Josef: Expanze, krize a obnova Čech v letech 935–1055 (K systémovým proměnám raných států ve střední Evropě). Český časopis historický (Czech Journal of History) 93, 1995.
- ⁷ It was no coincidence that the validity of the Decrees was proclaimed and their text publicly read over the grave of St. Adalbert in Gniezno on the occasion of the translation of his relics to Prague in 1039. It was a deliberate gesture by which the Czechs symbolically stood up for Adalbert's legacy.
- ⁸ See Publius Vergilius Maro, Aeneis
- ⁹ It was probably all the more painful for him to live through a war that broke out between Bohemia and Poland in the late 980s. This may have been the main reason for Adalbert's first resignation and departure for Rome.

Saint Adalbert – the common patron of Central European nations

Saint Adalbert is said to have been “the first Czech of European significance”. During the communist era, this statement could often be heard from Oto Mádr, the Czech Catholic theologian and long-time prisoner of the communist regime, at underground seminars held in private flats at that time. It is now repeated as a mantra by intellectuals from both ecclesiastical and secular circles. They would hold wrong anyone who would object this designation and claim that the second bishop of Prague was not the first Czech of European significance. But the problem lies elsewhere. We need to ask: What kind of Europe was it then – and what kind of Europe is it today?

Answers to these questions can be found in the work of the eminent historian Josef Pekař, who argued – in a discourse over the meaning of Czech history – that the Battle of White Mountain in 1620 marked the victory of Roman culture and civilisation, represented by the House of Habsburg and the Catholic Church, over Germanic culture, represented by Frederick V of the Palatinate (“the Winter King”) and Protestantism.¹ Without exaggeration, it can be said that the struggle between the Roman and Germanic paths, albeit featuring variable denominators and circumstances, has been going on since the dawn of our national history, through the Middle Ages and until present day. Let us look for its beginnings in the era of Great Moravia and the mission of St. Cyril and Methodius. There was a fierce clash between the Eastern spirituality influenced by Christianity, presented by the two apostles, and the strictly formalistic notion of Christianity promoted by the Bavarian clergy in our lands. While the former wanted to convert Slavic inhabitants of the Rastislav’s and Svatopluk’s empire to authentic Christian life, the latter were content with their merely formal affiliation to Catholicism. According to *Life of Methodius*, a book of an unknown author, the main cause of the conflict between the Moravian–Pannonian Metropolitan and Prince Svatopluk was the fact that Methodius reproached the ruler and people for their immoral behaviour, for disrespecting monogamy and indulging in pagan superstitions, while the Bavarian clergy tolerated it out of political reasons, for they were not so much concerned with the conversion of the people to Christ and living in line with Christian ethics, but rather with the mere obedience of those subjected to the German (Eastern Franconian) king.

This conflict arising from strict adherence to Christianity, reflected in the rejection of all remnants of paganism in both cult and morality, exists also in St. Wenceslas,

whose murder resulted from a different attitude of this prince and his brother Boleslav to Christian values. The story of St. Ludmila and her daughter-in-law Drahomíra bears many similarities. The same tension can also be found in the life of the first Czech bishop of Prague, St. Adalbert. As is well known, he was educated in Magdeburg where he met with the reform movement that originated in the Benedictine monastery in Cluny.

Not only did the Cluniac Reforms focus on restoring the traditional monastic life, but due to their radicalism in terms of a change of morality according to Christian principles they affected the whole society. There was a requirement that the secular ruler should not interfere with purely internal church affairs. The rulers did this primarily to increase their power over the church. They usually lived contrary to Christian principles – and therefore they did not like being reproached by an ascetic bishop or a monk. That is why they installed in ecclesiastical offices mostly persons who pursued similar ways of life.

That is something that the advocates of the Cluniac Reforms refused to tolerate, and those of them who became Church leaders did not tolerate it either. Including Bishop Adalbert, who had to deal with polygamy and consanguineous marriages, slave trade, blood feuds and desecration of Sundays and holy days. As historian Rudolf Holinka describes in *St. Adalbert's biography*, when Adalbert tried to intervene from his position of a spiritual authority, it was the clergymen, devoted to their secular benefactors, who became his arch enemies.² This situation later resulted in a conflict over the ability to choose and install bishops ("Investiture Controversy") which was a common practice especially among German rulers. The clashes culminated in the second half of the 11th century, when Henry IV, the Roman Emperor and King of Germany, expelled from Rome Pope St. Gregory VII who uncompromisingly refused to install church dignitaries at the will of the monarch. During the Middle Ages, this practice (with few exceptions) was an inherent part of the policy of German rulers seeking to conquer Central and Eastern Europe. A free church – intrinsically separate from secular power – was a serious obstacle to these efforts. According to Pekař, this is where the conflict between Roman and Germanic civilisation and culture originated.³ While the Roman model was based on the recognition of the authority of the papacy and the independence of the Church from secular power, the Germanic model encouraged subordination of the clergy to the monarch. In this respect, St. Adalbert clearly shared Roman culture and civilization principles.

The first biographer of St. Adalbert was Bishop Bruno of Querfurt, St. Adalbert's personal friend and great defender of the rights of the peoples east of the Elbe. Although himself a German, he very resolutely challenged the aggressive policy of German rulers in relation to the Slavs, for which the term "Drang nach Osten" could already be used at that time.⁴ It is true that the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation included high-minded figures such as Otto III or St. Henry II,

but these were exceptions to the rule. The overwhelming majority of German noblemen on the border between Slavic and Germanic ethnic groups pursued a policy of forcible control and usurpation of Slavic territories.

The veneration of St. Adalbert is inextricably linked not only to the Czech but also to the Polish patriotism. No wonder – St. Adalbert is one of the national patrons of Poland. Poland has a large number of churches dedicated to him; besides the cathedral in Gniezno there is, for instance, an important church in Kraków. We must not forget that Adalbert's brother Radim Gaudentius was the first Archbishop of Gniezno. At that time, an independent Church served as a political defence of the Poles against the expanding dominance of German rulers, of which King Bolesław the Brave was fully aware.

Both Czechs and Poles revered St. Adalbert for being a symbol of religious but also national sovereignty – especially when it was necessary to defend the homeland against Pan-Germanism, a threat to both nations. In his *Treatise in Defence of the Slavic, and Especially Czech Language* and other writings, Bohuslav Balbín invokes Adalbert as a patron saint (alongside St. Wenceslas), watching over the Czech nation against the onset of Germanisation, and he views Wenceslas as the protector of Czech statehood and Adalbert as the protector of Czech spirituality. The same can be observed among the Poles; it is known that during the Swedish invasions in the 17th century and later during clashes with Prussia in the 18th century, St. Adalbert was invoked as the protector of Polish nation, to whom Polish Catholics often turned for help to ward off danger⁵.

Also the Hungarians had warm feelings for St. Adalbert. As is well known, Bishop Adalbert baptised the son of Duke Geyza, Vayk, who took the name of Stephen and became Hungary's first Christian King. Adalbert's tutor Radla Anastasius was ordained as the first Archbishop of Esztergom. According to Bruno of Querfurt, Adalbert visited Hungary twice after his resignation from the office of the Prague bishop and significantly contributed to its Christianisation. At that time, Christianisation had not only religious but also political significance, for a nation that accepted baptism was automatically admitted among civilised nations and treated accordingly in diplomatic circles. Thus, under the rule of St. Stephen, the savage Hungarians (previously the scourge of Europe) became a "normal" nation and a "normal" kingdom that professed the same faith as their neighbours. This is exactly for what the Hungarians are grateful to Adalbert and they invoke him as their nation's patron along with St. Stephen. Adalbert – Béla in Hungarian – was invoked by the Hungarian nation at the time of Turkish invasions and when the country was occupied by the Mohammedans. After all, the Esztergom Basilica, the historical seat of the Hungarian Primate, is dedicated not only to the Blessed Virgin Mary, but also to St. Béla, i.e. our Adalbert.

St. Adalbert was strongly revered in Slovakia too, which was part of the Kingdom of Hungary throughout the Middle Ages and much of the modern history. This can be seen by many shrines in both Hungary and Slovakia that are dedicated to this martyr. St. Adalbert was regarded with religious reverence during the national revival of the Slovaks in the 19th century as suggested by the name of a publisher of books in Slovak: The Society of St. Adalbert.

The figure of St. Adalbert therefore belongs equally to all four nations: Czechs, Poles, Slovaks, and Hungarians. This is evidenced by numerous artistic depictions of Adalbert among these nations, as well as Saint Adalbert legends that originated in their environment, and by the specific liturgical cult of this saint, practised not only in Prague but also in Gniezno, Poland, and Esztergom, Hungary. On 17 April 2017, Cardinal Dominik Duka, the Archbishop of Prague, rightly said that St. Adalbert was the “Symbolic Primate of the Visegrad Four”. The veneration of St. Adalbert is universal, regardless of the church. In particular, we can refer to the cult of this saint in Rome in the Benedictine monastery of St. Alexius on the Aventine Hill, where Bishop Adalbert stayed after his first departure from the country. St. Adalbert is strongly revered in Aachen and Mainz, Germany. However, this does not change the fact that only the above four European nations have an intrinsic relationship to him as their national saint: Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, and Hungarians.

This, of course, inspires further thoughts in connection to what has been said regarding the differences between the Roman and Germanic culture and civilization. Adalbert was an uncompromising advocate of the former associated with Catholicism and its ethical principles, which he fiercely demanded from himself, from the clergy and church members he led, the ruler, and the nobility. In contrast, Germanic culture and civilization emphasised the subordination of faith and morals to the political interests pursued by secular rulers, as clearly shown by the development of the Church in Germany, culminating in the Lutheran revolution, which revealed the dependence of spiritual authority on secular power as something clearly evident and significant. Adalbert can thus rightly be seen as a symbol of opposition to this trend consisting – besides the erosion of Catholic doctrine in favour of rulers’ political interests – also in expansionism and the subjugation of different ethnic groups.

Therefore, Adalbert is definitely NOT the “first Czech of European significance” within the meaning of the idea of a European superstate, dominated by the German ethnicity, as promoted by Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, the founder of the Pan-European Union. On the contrary, he is the first great Czech striving for the unification of Central European nations and for their common defence against Germanic expansionism.

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¹ Pekař Josef: *Smysl českých dějin*, in anthology O smyslu českých dějin, Praha 1995, published by Torst, p. 500

² Holinka Rudolf: *Svatý Vojtěch*, Brno 1947

³ Pekař....op. cit.

⁴ Medek Václav: *Cesta české a moravské církve staletími*, Praha 1982, published by Czech Catholic Charity, p.

⁵ Polc Jaroslav: *Sv. Vojtěch, sborník k miléniu*, Praha 1997, published by Zvon, p. 275

The life and work of Saint Adalbert

As far as we are aware, Adalbert, the son of Slavník, scholar, Bishop of Prague, monk, missionary, martyr and saint (956? – 23 April 997) was born in Libice, the seat of his father Slavník. There have been long debates over which estates the Slavník's sons held. Today, it is generally believed that they had a small estate in the eastern part of Central Bohemia, approximately in between the Poděbrady and Čáslav districts. We do not know the reasons for the prominent social position of the Slavník's family, but what we do know is that they were culturally oriented towards the north-west and north of Europe. We are not able to clearly interpret a note that Adalbert was somehow related to the Saxon imperial family. That note can be found in a legend about two saints (St. Wenceslas and St. Ludmila), which probably originated at the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries and was recounted by Christian.

Both the Roman legend recounted by Canaparius (or perhaps Bishop Notker of Liège) and the legend of Bruno of Querfurt suggest that Adalbert was stricken with a serious illness in his childhood and his parents, anxious for his life, promised him to God. The boy fortunately recovered from his illness. Adalbert was first educated in his father's house by a tutor named Radla, who seems to have been an educated man knowledgeable about Latin culture. In the early 960s, Libice was visited by Adalbert, an itinerary missionary bishop, originally a monk from Trier, who confirmed the little boy and gave him the name Adalbert on that occasion.

Probably in the early 970s, Adalbert left for the cathedral school in Magdeburg, Saxony, whose headmaster was the renowned scholar Odericus. Odericus achieved fame at the imperial court for his disputation with Gerbert of Aurillac, the scholar who later became Pope Sylvester II (999–1002). In this religious disputation, Odericus adopted an orthodox position, and we can assume that he instilled that uncompromising attitude towards the fundamentals of Christian doctrine in the young Adalbert too.

In 981, Adalbert's father died and at the same time Thietmar, the first Bishop of Prague, passed away. This is probably why Adalbert left Magdeburg for Prague. In the winter of 982, at the gathering of prominent Bohemians at Levý Hradec near Prague, he was elected the second Bishop of Prague. In 983, he received the insignia of his office from Emperor Otto II in Verona, Italy. It is believed that the young Adal-

bert was impressed by the level of culture of the Latin West and resolved to do his best to raise his diocese to the spiritual level of the neighbouring Christian regions.

As a bishop, Adalbert was known for his unrelenting criticism of all that he considered to be evils affecting the life of his flock. Above all, he criticised the family conditions of the laity and the clergy. He defended the purity of Christian doctrine and harshly criticised the selling of slaves of the Christian faith to heterodox slave traders. However, at the princely court, the Bishop's Christian zeal seems to have produced an attitude that can at best be described as "cold". Having realised that his attempt failed, Adalbert decided to leave his diocese for Rome, probably with the intention of making a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. When he arrived at the Eternal City sometime in 989, dowager empress Theophano who received him at her court gave him a considerable sum of money for his journey. The Canaparius' Roman legend has it that Adalbert gave everything to the poor and needy before reaching the port of Naples. After a period of hesitation and wandering, he followed the advice of hermit St. Nilus of Rossano and took refuge in the monastery known as Santi Bonifacio e Alessio on the Aventine Hill in Rome, where he lived as a monk for two years (990–992).

In 992, an envoy from Bohemia arrived at Rome and urged Adalbert to return to his diocese. Adalbert did so, but decided to reinforce his return with consolidation of Christian life in Bohemia. First of all, he set out on his journey accompanied by a group of monks who – in line with the Bishop's wish – were to establish the first male monastery in Bohemia. Most likely, he brought to Bohemia a considerable amount of church furnishings, including books, paraments (liturgical fabrics) and probably also holy relics. In Bohemia, upon his request, Prince Boleslav II (972–999) authorised him to dissolve improperly solemnised "marriages", establish churches in princely castles and collect episcopal tithe. In collaboration with the Prince, the Bishop founded a monastery in Břevnov in 993 to serve as a monastic institute, but also as a "training facility" for future Christian missionaries. He also strived to mitigate excesses in public life. He forbade the inhabitants of Prague to brew beer for sale. It should be noted that this ban was observed by Bohemians until 1244, when Adalbert's order was officially revoked by the Pope at the request of King Wenceslas I.

Adalbert spent two years in his homeland (992–994), but then he left again, this time under very dramatic circumstances, when the right of asylum in temples was violently broken. On his way to Rome, Adalbert possibly spent some time as a Christian missionary in Hungary, but there is no credible evidence for his stay in any authentic sources. However, it is believed that he baptised the future King Stephen I of Hungary (*The longer version of the Life of Saint Stephen, King of Hungary*).

Bishop Adalbert spent the next two years (994–996) in his monastery in Rome, but in May 996, the word about his stay reached the ears of the Emperor Otto III, who had just arrived in the Eternal City. He was accompanied by Adalbert's superior, Archbishop Willigis of Mainz. He encouraged the Bishop-turned-monk to return to his diocese. Adalbert agreed on two conditions: he would send a messenger to Bohemia to see if Bohemians would accept him as bishop, and if not, he would be allowed to set out on a Christian mission to pagan tribes.

Probably in the late summer of 996, Adalbert left Rome and travelled to the Rhineland accompanied by Bishop Notker of Liège (the city of Luik in today's Belgium). Awaiting the return of a messenger from Bohemia, he spent his time on a pious pilgrimage to the tombs of the saints who symbolised his episcopal office and his monastic inclinations, Saint Martin at Tours and Saint Benedict at Fleury (Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire), as well as the tomb of one of St. Benedict's first disciples, St. Maurus of Glanfeuil (Saint-Maur-sur-Loire) on the Loire River in present-day France. He then returned to the imperial court in Aachen, where the messenger from Bohemia told him that his return was considered undesirable.

Adalbert spent the turn of 996 and 997 in Aachen, at the court of Emperor Otto III, whom he allegedly charmed with his eloquence and Christian zeal. In early 997, he left for the court of the Polish ruler Bolesław the Brave (992–1025) to set out on a mission to one of the Prussian-speaking tribes of the Baltics. However, they rejected the Christian doctrine, the group of missionaries was attacked by a mob of angry and armed opponents, and on 23 April 997, missionary and Bishop Adalbert died a martyr's death.

Adalbert's remains were ransomed by the Polish ruler Bolesław the Brave who translated them into the Cathedral Basilica in Gniezno. From there, during his attack on Poland in 1039 or 1040, the Bohemian Prince Břetislav I had the remains collected and buried in St. Vitus Basilica in Prague, where Adalbert's body has been resting until these days.

Today, St. Adalbert is often referred to as "the first Czech European". This means that he is perceived as the first Bohemian scholar and philosopher who realised how important it was for the early medieval Bohemian society – and not only that one – to become part of the world of Latin Christianity. He exerted all his efforts to that end, and this is why he did not hesitate to sacrifice his own life.

St. Adalbert also plays a paramount role in the history of the Czech Church. He managed to secure its rights by procuring a decree from Prince Boleslav II. He founded the first male monastery in this country, where from Christianity was to be preached to the peoples in this part of Europe. He endowed the Prague Basilica with books, liturgical paraments and probably also holy relics. He is considered the first

known Czech literary author. A sermon on the feast of St. Alexius, inspired by one of the homilies of Saint Bede the Venerable, is attributed to him. He is said to write a brief legend about Saint Gorgonius including a cover letter for Milon, the Bishop of the Minden diocese in Westphalia. However, the author of the legend has not been fully confirmed yet.

Adalbert's greatest significance, however, lies on the symbolic level. Along with St. Wenceslas, he became the heavenly guard of the early medieval Bohemian community. They both created a foundation for Bohemians to be used at that time to enter medieval Europe as an independent and distinct Christian community, while maintaining its independence. An unknown illuminator who placed the Bohemian saints headed by Adalbert in the heavenly Jerusalem, as seen on the title page of the Czech version of Augustine's *De civitate Dei* from the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries, was therefore absolutely right.

Figuratively speaking, with Saint Wenceslas and Saint Adalbert, the Czechs were given the seats of honour in the Arthur's circle of saints of the Christian Church, and thus a full-fledged position in the profane structure of medieval Europe.

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Historical development and contradictory concepts of efforts to unite Europe

The idea of political unification of the European continent has been almost as old as its political history. Its origins and the prototype of its various forms may be found in the ancient Roman Empire. It is remarkable how the ancient Romans refined the originally Greek idea of governing society by statutory law, which the ancient Greeks applied in the context of city states whose elites were able to base the governance of public affairs on their personal relations. Not only were they constantly refining and improving the generally binding body of laws, but, above all, gained experience that if the laws are enforced and secured by armed state defence forces, a state may grow from the size of one city to supranational or even transcontinental dimensions. This is how they conceived the universal concept of peaceful coexistence known as *Pax Romana*, the essence of which was precisely worded by poet Virgil in the sixth canto of his *Aeneid*: "...You, Roman, be sure to rule the world / be these your arts, to crown peace with justice!" Nevertheless, even this first archetype of European integration was characterised by a somewhat controversial feature that would run like a red thread through the later history: the Romans conquered non-European territories without having fully unified the European continent.

When the borders of the Roman Empire stabilised, they divided Europe along the Danube–Rhine line. The Empire extended only across the territories south and west of that line, but penetrated into Asia as far as the large river of Euphrates and also occupied a continuous strip of northern Africa from the Sinai Peninsula to the Atlantic coast. The real axis around which the Roman history revolved for centuries was the Mediterranean Sea as a purely national body of water, rather not the European continent.

The unusual longevity of the Roman Empire and the attractiveness of its concept may be mainly attributed to the fact that the Empire was not born out of an abstract plan or a complex project of the human spirit eager to better organise society and its institutions, but came into being through a series of particular decisions, measures and actions the spontaneous development of which gradually transformed the city republic into a global empire. In other words, it was an authentic entity built from within and from below. The success of the first phase of territorial expansion, driven by efforts to safeguard the republic's economic interests and external defence, caused profound social changes and resulted in protracted civil wars.

PAX ROMANA

The establishment of the Empire in the second half of the last century BC was then a hard-to-find way out of the chaos of civil wars and subsequently spurred a further massive expansion. The Romans, through much trial and error, stumbling over the Gordian knot of two triumvirates, finally solved the riddle of how to establish an iron fist government and place an autocrat on the throne without abolishing the republic and its traditional, almost sacred institutions in the eyes of the citizens. The Senate, as the representative of the Roman people, first conferred on Octavian Augustus the title of *Princeps* (first citizen). Soon after that, he assumed and in his person linked all the decisive offices and titles in the state. He inherited the title of *Emperor* from his adoptive father Julius Caesar (Emperor being the exerciser of the supreme military, executive and judicial powers during a state of war, a title which Caesar had the Senate to confer on him as life-long and hereditary). In addition, he assumed the offices of *Censor* (supervisor of public morals), *Tribune of the People* (untouchable spokesman of the plebeians with the right of veto in the Senate) and High Priest (*Pontifex Maximus*, whose duties included convening the Senate). He even assumed the *Divus* (divine) title, ascertaining him the right to enter the pantheon of gods after his death.

A change took place only three centuries later after a gradual process of removing the differences between the metropolis and the provinces as well as among the provinces themselves, and granting of citizenship to an ever broader group of inhabitants of the Empire. After his accession to throne in 284, Emperor Diocletian declined the already largely anachronistic status of the first citizen, replacing it with the new title *Dominus et Deus* (lord and god), which had an obvious oriental, namely Persian, inspiration. Over the next hundred years, the Roman Empire became a Christian power – from Diocletian's fierce suppression through Constantine's toleration (from 313) to Theodosius' proclamation of the Christian faith as the state religion in 380. The act was based on the awareness that for a weakened empire exposed to increasing separatist forces, growing alienation of individual provinces and peoples, and intensifying pressure exerted by external barbarian tribes, the Christian faith was the last resort to use as a unifying and connecting element of the state. At that time, it had been already broadly accepted and had made its way to all social classes throughout the entire vast empire. The shattered *Pax Romana* was reinforced by the *Pax Christi* – the peace of Christ. Theodosius' religious turn, which entailed also outward destruction of pagan cults, was followed by a division of the Empire into the Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire in 395. And while the western part of the Empire was destined to complete its long-lasting decline by a complete fall within a few decades, the eastern part successfully revived for a new existence extending over a millennium.

The Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire, again mainly by trial and error, gradually found a balance between continuity with the original empire and its own journey in-

dependent of the Latin West. Constantinople was referred to as the “*second Rome*”, the Roman law was cultivated there and bore excellent fruit (e.g. Justinian’s Civil Code), while the education of the younger generation drew on the life-giving roots of Greek culture, since the higher education after mastering the trivium was based on reading and analysing Homeric epics. The head of state was considered the guarantor of ecclesiastical unity (Caesaropapism) and the title *Caesar* was replaced by the Greek phrase *Βασιλεὺς τῶν Ῥωμαίων* – Emperor of the Romans. The use of such a state-law construction had serious consequences.

The canonical election of the Patriarch of Constantinople was subject to the Emperor’s approval and the Emperor could even, if necessary, depose the executive head of the Church. All sectarians, apostates and theomaniacs among Christians who fell outside the framework of apostolic succession and the Nicene Creed were automatically considered enemies of the state and could therefore be enslaved like pagans. Unlike in the Latin West, the role of the landed nobility was inexorably diminishing over time.

The court offices were given to eunuchs, i.e. castrates without dynastic ambitions, as was usual in the eastern despotic states from Persia to China; on the other hand, the necessary legal certainty associated with hereditary leases of state land was slowly fading away. The Byzantine aristocracy was characterised by servility and nihilism. The emperor did not have to compete with them for a share in power, as was the case with western kings; nonetheless, when in danger, the emperor had nobody to lean on.

Along with excessive bureaucracy and high tax burden, the situation set the stage for a long but inevitable departure of the Empire from the scene in the Late Middle Ages. After the Byzantine Empire came to an end in 1453, the imperial title was transferred to Moscow, which thus became the “*third Rome*”. In 1472, the Grand Prince Ivan III of Moscow accepted the title of *Czar* by marriage to Sophia Palaiologina, niece of the last Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI, and shortly afterwards, when he denounced his vassal subordination to the Tatar Golden Horde, he also achieved real sovereignty. After his grandson Ivan the Terrible, also called Ivan IV, had conquered the Kazan and Astrakhan khanates in 1547, he changed his title to *Czar of All Russia*, thus claiming not only all territories with the Orthodox population, but also the Asian territories formerly ruled by the Mongol–Tatar khans.

PAX CHRISTI

The idea of a universal Christian empire on the basis of the *Pax Romana* and *Pax Christi* was renewed and revived in the Middle Ages in the Latin West. However, its resulting form, known as the Holy Roman Empire, suffered for many centuries from inherent weaknesses and maladies of an inauthentic political entity enforced from the throne. First of all, the long unused imperial title was dusted off after a pause

of more than three hundred years. On Christmas Day, 25th December 800, Charlemagne, King of the Franks, received the imperial crown from the hands of Pope Leo III on the basis of a legal argument about the illegitimacy of the Byzantine Empress Irene of Athens. Finally, in 812, a mutual diplomatic recognition of the Western Emperor Charles and the Eastern Emperor Michael I was achieved with the proviso that the Western title would not include the appellations “*Roman*” or “*of the Romans*” to which the Byzantine rulers continued to have the exclusive right. The said most prestigious title in the Latin West was not initially associated with rule over a specific territory. After the division of the Frankish Empire, the title was held by Charlemagne’s grandson, King Lothar of Lotharingia and Lombardy, but later moved to Bavaria, and still later to Saxony.

The eschatological expectations associated with the magic year 1000 eventually led to the actual restoration of the Roman Empire and the breach of the treaty of 812, i.e. the corresponding change of the ruler’s title to *Roman Emperor*. Otto III from the Saxon dynasty could rely on the military strength, which he had used to occupy the German lands and northern Italy, on diplomacy, which he had used to secure the friendship of his powerful neighbours, and last but not least, on the noble origins of his mother Theophano, born to the family of the Byzantine emperors of the Macedonian dynasty. At the turn of the millennium, he conquered Rome itself, and established his permanent residence there for two years (999–1001). Not having experienced the expected end of the world in the Eternal City, he returned behind the Alps realising that the German lands could not be ruled from Rome for long. A century and a half later, the empire was conquered by Frederick I Barbarossa, who sanctified it with the appellation “*holy*”, usurped the canonisation initiative (he started the process of canonisation of Charlemagne, which was later recognised with limited validity, namely for the German diocese of Aachen and the Belgian diocese of Liège) and the crusading initiative (in 1189, he launched the third crusade, which became fatal for him). Such temporary tipping of the balance in the emperor–pope relationship in favour of the secular head of Western Christendom did not survive the dynasty of the Stauff and showed the Holy Roman Empire the natural limits of its influence and growth. The Empire had to give up the idea of uniting the Latin West, because some strong and internally robust dynastic states were formed on its periphery, which did not favour such an idea in the least, but rather sought ways to promote their own interests within the Empire. In the sixteenth century, internal religious unity was also ruined – powerful imperial princes became Protestants, which also ended the direct political link to Rome.

The imperial title began to be bestowed based on direct election without papal approbation, i.e. without the previously inevitable journey to Rome and coronation. The ability to exercise practical state power at the level of the Empire was gradually lessening, while the imperial principalities were taking over an increasingly greater share of state sovereignty. In the last two centuries of its existence, the Holy Roman

Empire and its body of laws primarily acted as a hindrance to progress, preventing the nascent states from completing their full entry onto the scene. In geopolitical terms, the Empire represented the soft centre of Europe, which, in combination with the expansion of the Atlantic powers overseas and the Russian expansion into Asia, served as the basis of the then balance of power on the continent.

NAPOLEON'S FORTRESS EUROPE

Napoleon I with his "Fortress Europe" put the last nail in the coffin of the Holy Roman Empire at the beginning of the 19th century. Although his titular leap from the position of the first consul of the republic to the position of the crowned emperor consciously mimicked the rise of the ancient empire in Rome, Europe united by him was undoubtedly the first integration project created in the office and imposed by force and from above. All obstacles standing in the way of the export of the French revolutionary legislation and economic protectionism were to gradually evanesce from the European mainland. Napoleon introduced the metric system of weights and measures from the Atlantic to Russia, was preparing a single European currency and a central European court of justice. His Europe fortified itself externally through a trade embargo on British goods called the "*Continental System*". The system was created through a fast emerging series of tightening restrictions and prohibitions (the Berlin Decree of 1806, the Warsaw Decree of 1807, the Milan Decrees of 1807 and 1808) and was completed in 1810 with the Trianon tariff rates, i.e. imposing of a continental tax of 50 per cent on colonial goods brokered by Great Britain.

The French Emperor's attempt to attach Russia to Fortress Europe as well, or more precisely to pass on Russia some of the costs without corresponding profit, eventually brought his army to Moscow in the autumn of 1812, which proved to be a suicidal decision. A year and a half later, the Russian Cossacks had their horses drink from the Seine, the defeated Napoleon abdicated and vanished in the abyss of history together with his bold integration project.

The geopolitical balance restored in 1815 and based on old principles was upset by the unification of Germany in 1871, as the hitherto soft centre of Europe was occupied by a predatory power with extraordinary economic dynamism and global ambitions, which, although having joined the struggle for overseas territories later in time, managed to build a remarkable colonial system in Africa and the Pacific. Such change resulted in two world wars which confirmed the veracity of Henry Kissinger's words: "*Poor old Germany. Too big for Europe, too small for the world.*" The plan to subordinate Central Europe fully to German economic interests was a part of Germany's imperial aspirations from the very beginning.

MITTELUEROPA, PAN-EUROPE AND THE THIRD REICH

Friedrich Naumann in his book *Mittleuropa* (1915) openly admitted that it was too late to Germanise the Czechs. The then state of war, however, provided an opportu-

nity to deprive the top-performing Czech economy of self-sufficiency and degrade it into a subcontracting economy dependent on Germany. Approximately ten years before the war, the Czech lands had achieved independent circulation of the Austrian crown on their territory. It was a situation when a decisive part of the money supply did not leave the Czech territory during circulation. The value created by Czech companies was capitalised by banks with Czech owners (primarily Živnobanka) and returned to circulation by loans to domestic companies, which meant the Czech lands themselves made decisions about the direction of their further development. After 1914, the military bureaucracy, in the spirit of Mitteleuropa, tried to put an end to that by granting state war contracts preferentially to firms with German owners. When Živnobanka responded to that and stopped underwriting war loans to the government, it was faced with artificially induced savers' run on the bank that was supposed to destroy it. However, four years of war were not enough to implement the Mitteleuropa project and the subsequent defeat of the Central Powers blew the whistle on it anyway. In spite of that the idea lived on and re-surfaced whenever favourable political constellation permitted.

In 1923, the experience of the First World War gave birth to the pan-European movement, led by Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi, a Czech-Austrian nobleman after his father and a Japanese with a Czechoslovak diplomatic passport after his mother, based in Poběžovice near Domažlice, and since 1939 a Swiss citizen. His objective was to create a unified Pan-Europe, modelled on the pattern of the United States of America, which would ensure lasting peace. In his effort, he had to get over a fundamental difference between Europe and the USA. Although the USA blends various nations, all of them are immigrants in a new country which they build together. In spite of that, their political concept of a *melting pot* of nations, derived from the said common denominator, encounters countless obstacles in practice.

The concept of pan-Europe had to inevitably face the question of how to melt in the melting pot states and nations with thousands of years of history and diverse political, religious and cultural traditions. The contemplated solution was to support any minority separatism in nation states and mass immigration from non-European areas. This was to replace the European mosaic of peoples with a single Eurasian-Negroid race reminiscent of ancient Egyptians. In support of that idea, the then still majority Christianity was to be replaced with an artificial cult of religious syncretism. The ideological image of the pan-European movement may be also illustrated by the personalities whom the movement publicly admired, namely Emperor Napoleon I and philosophers Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Nietzsche. Interest in the pan-European movement declined sharply during the economic crisis of the 1930s; nevertheless, it was awakened again after the Second World War.

The interwar period also saw the emergence of a remarkable alternative to the German idea of domination over Central Europe, namely the military and economic block

called Intermarium, promoted by Poland. It was to include Poland, the Baltic states, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia, and connect the Baltic, Black and Adriatic Seas. Its chief architect, General Józef Piłsudski, viewed it as fulfillment of the overriding strategic interest in preventing closer cooperation between Berlin and Moscow, which was naturally driven by the German need to escape from a straitjacket of the peace terms imposed by the Treaty of Versailles and the Soviet need to break out of diplomatic isolation. In the event of disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Intermarium strategy envisaged the annexation of Belarus and the Ukraine, keeping thus alive the Polish dream of restoring its former greatness with its eastern border lying on the banks of the Dnieper and the Dvina. In practice, however, the project met with the opposition of Lithuania, which did not maintain diplomatic relations with Poland during Piłsudski's lifetime because of dispute over Vilnius, deep distrust between Hungary and its neighbours from the Little Entente (Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia) and many other obstacles.

The ideologists of Hitler's Third Reich were also committed to the idea of united Europe. They drew on the geopolitical reflections of Karl Haushofer, who perceived pan-European economic and political integration, of which Germany was to become the core and driving force, the only way to provide Germans with adequate *"living space"*. The Nazis, however, complemented Haushofer's visions with a racial theory. The degree of subordination of individual national economies was to be determined by racial parameters, and Nietzsche's superman was to rise, as in Kalergi's Pan-Europe, from a racial experiment, but mirrored – not by the controlled mixing of multiple races, but by the purification of the autochthonous race. The single European currency was to be an important instrument for channelling divergent economic and political interests.

THE EU AND THE FOURTH EMPIRE

The current integration project of the European Union was born immediately after the Second World War. It embraced a considerable number of Pan-European ideas and contained also unacknowledged inspiration by the Napoleonic era. The understandable desire to prevent a repetition of the war on the basis of French–German reconciliation initially led to the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951. It stemmed from the experience with both world conflicts that the ability to wage war was dependent on the performance in coal mining and steel production. If the management of that economic sector is vested in a supranational body, nation states will be thus deprived of their ability to wage war. This initial, at that time mainly pragmatic castration of nation states later turned into a systematic method discreetly put on an ideological chassis.

Another integration step followed when the European Economic Community was founded in 1957. The six founding states (France, West Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries) were united by their experience of war defeat in 1940, 1943

or 1945 and the associated economic disruption and shattered self-esteem. The already tried and tested supranational principle as an accelerator of unification was supplemented by the Netherlands' proposal for a restrictive intergovernmental principle, i.e. subjecting some amendments to an unanimous approval by vote of representatives of national governments.

Further significant changes were brought about by the collapse of the communist bloc in 1989 and the associated reunification of Germany in 1990, which revived the issue of an overly strong centre in European balance of powers. At that time, Jacques Delors' European Commission was making feverish preparations for further enormous qualitative changes. Faced with the dilemma of whether to finalise the deep integration process and postpone enlargement to the east, or vice versa, the Delors' Commission chose the first option. With the Maastricht Treaty signed in 1992, the European Community was transformed into a quasi-state entity, henceforth known as the European Union, which was to adopt a single European currency within ten years, and in which the supranational principle of the exercise of power took permanent precedence over the intergovernmental one.

The first wave of EU enlargement beyond the former Iron Curtain was postponed until 2004, when everything of substance had already been decided by the old Member States without the intrusive participation of the new ones. Germany used the period before the accession of the new members to quietly resuscitate its *Mittel-europa* concept, which was manifested in our country mainly by a coordinated attack on the Czech privatisation programme in 1997–1998 and the subsequent rapid sale of banks to foreign owners. It is no coincidence that roughly ten years later, economists and publicists started to claim that the Czech Republic has become the “*17th federal state of Germany*” in economic terms. The common currency, the euro, gave Germany the comparative advantage of a permanently undervalued exchange rate and opened an opportunity to achieve the pan-European economic hegemony envisaged by Karl Haushofer, while decimating namely the southern Member States with a highly overvalued exchange rate.

EUROPE OF FREE NATIONS

The outline of the long history of efforts to unite Europe presented herein leads to a relatively simple conclusion. The success of the ancient Romans, who built their multinational empire from within and from below as an authentic entity able to endure in time, has not been replicated to this day, and it perhaps never will be. All later attempts to repeat such endeavour were more or less artificial and imposed on nations. In part, they served as means of expanding the sphere of influence of great powers disguised in noble platitudes, in part, they were, in the words of Margaret Thatcher, monuments to the vanity of intellectuals, whose inevitable destiny is failure.

But this does not mean that we should cease being inspired by European integration created from below. The search for ways to continue further free existence and preserve national independence while building mutually beneficial cooperation with neighbouring states was justifiable yesterday, is today and will be tomorrow.

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A dangerous world and the Central European integration as a necessity

The world continues to drift away from the illusionary ideas that Europe and the USA created about it in the early 1990s. However, in a faded form, these ideas are still alive in some places even today and influence contemporary thinking about Central Europe. While the original ideas were based on the West's elation over the victory in the Cold War, those of today reflect new conflicts. Nevertheless, neither yesterday's nor today's illusionary ideas envisage an autonomous Central Europe; according to the former, the countries of Central Europe are seen as exemplary pupils, according to the latter, they become a Trojan horse of foreign interests.

Still, the new Central Europe can become an autonomous geopolitical entity with a global reach depending on how countries in this region deal with the internal crisis of contemporary Europe.

OPTIMISTIC ILLUSIONS AND THEIR WANING SHADOWS

In the early 1990s, the West triumphs. First, the Soviet bloc collapses, to be later followed by the Soviet Union itself. The USA remains the only superpower and indulges in the idea of a global liberal empire of which it would become the admired and respected centre. Western Europeans, accustomed to American leadership since the end of the Second World War, may dream of being a bit more independent in some respects, but they do not challenge the global liberal empire headed by Washington in any way. However, they want to believe that Americans would consult major decisions with them more often than before. They call this idea multilateralism.

When Americans speak about multilateralism, they stick to the tried and tested idea that they first take a decision and then discuss with others about who and how would contribute to its implementation. They want to extend what has worked in NATO to the entire UN and all its member states. America's first Gulf War seems like a promising start. At that time, no one is prepared to stand up to American dominance. Europeans least of all; they may dream of a revival of strong and autonomous Europe, but when faced with conflicts in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, they are happy to have Americans involved.

Europeans basically embrace the American liberal ideology that divides the countries of the world into those that are democratic and those that are democratising. They do not accept a third option. Democracies, whether old or young, must have market

economies integrated into global capitalism controlled by Western banks and corporations, swear by human rights as defined by Western lawyers and activists, and generally move towards civilisational and political standards of the USA and Western Europe.

In this happy world professing Western universalism, contemplating special position of Central Europe or any other region made no sense. All people were driven by the same desires and headed towards the same values and rules. It doesn't matter whether you live on islands in the Pacific or in the heart of Eurasia in a world of global citizens, global consumers and global owners. Regardless of their different mother tongues, they all end up speaking some variety of English. Central Europe emerges in a form of the four Visegrad countries to confirm liberal optimism about rapid democratisation and Europeanisation of the former Eastern bloc countries.

These illusions vanished very soon. Radical Islamists have been pursuing a different vision of the world since the late 1990s. They are willing to lay down their lives for it, which brings them significant tactical victories. China and Russia have not chosen the path of greater democratisation and imitation of the West, but are instead turning into its superpower rivals. Democratic powers like India, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa do not automatically become allies of the West, and neither applies even to the former American protégés like Turkey, Pakistan or Saudi Arabia.

The North Atlantic Alliance has been weakened as well. Europe and the USA differ in their views of the situation in the Middle East and Africa, but above all, they each have a different view of Russia and China. President George W. Bush, Jr. is irritated by the France's and Germany's refusal to support the invasion of Iraq, President Obama shows disinterest in Europe, President Trump and the European leaders despise each other. Europeans, like the Poles, are either trying to rebuild the Cold War alliance by referring to common enemies, or, like the French, believe that the time has come for independence from the USA and speak of Europe's strategic autonomy. But mostly, like the Germans, they reject geopolitical engagement and simply try to economically grab what they can from each side, the USA, China, and Russia. At the same time, they still cling to the rhetoric of democracy and human rights, by which they only hypocritically mask their ambivalence and helplessness.

Even Central Europe looks different than before. For Americans, it becomes a lever to assert American interests against Western Europe or Russia. Some Central and Eastern European countries, under American pressure, support Bush's invasion of Iraq (Poland gets its occupation zone) and set up secret CIA prisons; and under Presidents Obama and Trump, they take part in the Three Seas Initiative involving all EU states east of Germany, between the Baltic, Black and Adriatic Seas. This project backed by Americans is intended to contain Russia and support regional infrastructure projects of American interest (in particular, imports of liquefied natu-

ral gas and development of next-generation IT networks). By cooperating with ten countries in the region, Americans are responding to China's Central European 17+1 initiative, which provides support in developing regional infrastructure, but includes also top-level meetings and other practical cooperation and serves the China's interests. With the exception of Austria, the members of the Three Seas Initiative are also members of the 17+1, which includes also the rest of the Balkans (Greece, Albania and the former Yugoslavia excluding Kosovo).

Brussels watches Central Europe with growing concern. Western European elites suspect that the former exemplary pupils might be turning into Trojan horses of Americans or Chinese. But they know for certain that the most open resistance to the ruling progressivist ideology comes from within that region. It became most markedly manifested during the migration crisis, when the Visegrad countries firmly rejected any mandatory redistribution of migrants.

THE TRAGEDY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union is clearly not up to any of these challenges. It may still be able to get along with Turkey, but it cannot deal geopolitically with China, the USA or Russia, nor can it deal with radical Islam in its neighbourhood. It does not seem to be troubled by that. It sees global climate change as its top priority. Today, even though the EU accounts for only about one tenth of global carbon emissions, it wants to radically change European industry and energy. By pursuing this policy, the EU is likely to undermine its own prosperity because decarbonisation experiments damage European economies and exacerbate social disparities. Europe is losing the only superiority it has retained after losing its military, diplomatic and cultural dominance over the last century.

The real tragedy of today's European Union is not its failure to stand up to geopolitical challenges. It was not founded with such objective in mind and its Member States are not prepared to provide it with the necessary tools to do so. France may dream that its nuclear weapons, military and intelligence capabilities, and veto power in the UN Security Council predestine it for a leading role in a strategically acting Europe, but others do not want to defer to either France or the European Commission on strategic issues.

More worryingly, the today's actions of the EU exacerbate the most serious threats that Europe faces. Today, the biggest threats are not the power ambitions of Russia, China or the USA. The source of the biggest threat today are two liberal forces that made Europe strong and attractive in the past, but have now become untethered and are destroying their birthplace: capitalism and human rights. Over time, Europeans have come to understand that capitalism is a good servant but a bad master. It may bring about the industrial revolution, technological progress and general material well-being, but if it is not controlled by political power, it corrodes society

through extreme inequality and dictate of money. An extremely wealthy oligarchy seizes control over society bringing the discontented majority to a revolt. Europe's last relatively successful attempt at political control of capitalism was the post-war social market economy. But since the 1980s, political control has given way to the market: businesses have been privatised, international trade and capital flows are becoming liberalised.

In Europe, this dismantling of political control over capitalism has taken the form of deepening European integration: from the Single European Act (1986) to the Maastricht Treaty (1992). It is therefore not a political choice that could be reconsidered, but an irreversible change appreciated by the supporters of European unification and protected by European treaties and institutions. Eastern Europe, China, India, Brazil, Argentina, and others are embracing what was originally Western globalisation. This brings huge returns to the Western capital, but also huge losses to the Western European and American workforce, which is not able to compete against global workforce that is several times cheaper. States lose control over big capital and fail to enforce fair distribution of profits and losses between the labour and the capital.

What does this lead to in Europe? The richest are getting richer faster than ever before, the poorest are protected against starvation by living on benefits, and the standard of living of most of the population has been stagnating or even deteriorating. The political forces labelled as left-wing populists by the ruling oligarchy call for greater protection of workers and greater control over capital. But even if they do ascend to power, as in Greece, Spain or Portugal, they fail in putting their political programme into practice, because they are confronted with the EU's judicially enforceable rules.

While the debate on the merits and crimes of capitalism has been here for a long time, human rights did not seem controversial. They were seen as one of the greatest achievements of the European concept of freedom and democracy. But then, the ideology of human rights emerged, which distorted even these achievements. It was born during the Cold War in the struggle against communism, and the anti-communist concept of human rights represents the first distortion. However, the main problem came after 1990, when the ideology of human rights turned against the European society and its tradition.

Human rights are no longer understood as a historical variable and culturally conditioned outcome of a political compromise between the claims of the individual and the collective interests of a particular community. They have become moral absolutes, proclaimed by activists and judicialocrats, to which politics must conform. This absolute truth stripped of any historic context paradoxically adds new content every few years, just like the gender boxes it promotes. What does not change is

the fight against everything that is considered the legacy of the white, heterosexual male. The aim is no longer to eliminate racism, to ensure equality between men and women, or to ensure a dignified life for people with different sexual orientations; Europe has achieved these laudable goals. Anti-racism has become anti-white racism, feminism has become discrimination against men, and the fight for recognition of homosexuals has become an attack on the very distinction between man and woman, father and mother.

Similarly, interest in other cultures that has characterised Europe for centuries has degenerated into a self-deprecating deconstruction of European nations and traditions or into multicultural experiments. Migration, creolisation, gender experiments, the rewriting of history and the censorship of cultural works are praised, national pride is rejected, traditional mores are ridiculed.

Like capitalism, human rights ideology divides Europeans, with progressive elites looking down on the conservative majority. Progressivism has become part of the official ideology of the EU. It fits the spirit of European integration with its anti-nationalism, social engineering and judicialocracy. That is why the European Commission today is so keen to emphasise European values, but these have nothing to do with the traditional values of European nations. Again, turning against these progressivist values is not easy. Political forces that attempt to prevent migration or gender experiments, emphasise efficiency over gender or racial balance, or demand consistent assimilation into national culture earn the label of fascists or, at best, right-wing populists. Moreover, they face national and European courts that reject and criminalise their attempts.

We are experiencing a degenerative expansion of liberalism under the protection or direct leadership of the EU. While the original liberalism protected society from the absolutist claims of the state and the church, today's liberalism subordinates the weakened democratic state to the oligarchy that thrives on globalised capitalism, to the cultural elites that drive the human rights madness. Today, the savagery of capitalism and human rights threatens Europe from within more than Russia, China, the USA, neighbouring Islamism or African chaos from outside. However, internal threats are amplified by external ones: unbridled capitalism is plunging Europe into dependence on the USA and China, human rights derangement is making assimilation impossible and opens the door to uncontrollable migration from Africa and the Middle East.

The original European idea of economic integration and cooperation is disappearing, which is why the current EU is facing growing resistance from European citizens. After France and the Netherlands rejected the European Constitutional Treaty and the UK left the EU, no one dares to hold a referendum on any European issue now. The next major crisis is likely to shake up the existing arrangement and force

a new one. Let's try to think what it might look like and what could be the role of Central Europe in it.

NEWLY BORN CENTRAL EUROPE

The basic premise is: less EU, more national sovereignty and a new type of regional integration. The weakening of the EU and the strengthening of individual states are linked vessels. States need to regain the ability to regulate capitalism and sovereignly decide the rules by which they would live. The EU should go back to the arrangement before the Maastricht Treaty. If that turns out not to be feasible, it will be necessary to dissolve it and build a single, or rather common, market with other practical achievements of integration on a new basis. However, given their lack of geopolitical weight, individual European states need yet another framework for political action that would strengthen their geopolitical power without paralysing them with ideology and institutions.

Such a framework could be the regions into which Europe has been divided culturally and strategically for centuries. Recent European crises have reminded us of the division between the North and the South (the eurozone crisis) and between the West and the East (the migration crisis). They refer to the existence of Continental Europe, Central Europe and two other large regions: the predominantly Mediterranean, Catholic Southwest (France, Latin Europe, western Germany) and the Atlantic, predominantly Protestant Northwest (from Ireland, through Britain, Flanders, the Netherlands, northern Germany, Scandinavia to the Baltics). The remaining region is the Balkans, the predominantly Orthodox shield (Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, Cyprus, the south of the former Yugoslavia).

The future of Europe could be based on internal integration of European regions and on their mutual coordination. With its tradition of thought and geopolitical position, Central Europe can play a decisive role in European renewal.

The Central European tradition of thought (let us mention Herder, Hegel, Palacký, Masaryk, Dmowski as examples) presents an alternative to the liberal thinking of the European West. In Central Europe, liberalism was either very weak or had taken on a national, anti-universalist form; in the Czech environment K. H. Borovský was probably the best example. Central European anti-universalism, emphasising culture over civilisation, can be an antidote to the degenerative expansion of liberalism. For example, the German Historical School produced economic thinking that corresponds to Central European reality better than the political economy of the English classics or the Marxist utopias that further develop this line of thought. In an interesting way, it blended conservative and socialist elements, which served as starting points, for example, for Spengler and his conservative "Prussian socialism". Even today's German economy, which has otherwise developed under a strong American influence supporting German ordoliberalism, retains many features that

contradict the liberal experience of Anglo–American capitalism. The shadow aspect of these ideas, i.e. the actual poison in the antidote, is Greater German chauvinism. It emerges in the German part of Central Europe and poses a mortal threat to other nations and ultimately to Germans themselves. But it has an intellectual and above all geopolitical counterweight.

Central Europe is a geopolitical entity without which any European constellation lacks meaning. It does not necessarily coincide with the borders of today's states, nor with attempts to define it only as small states between Russia and Germany. In terms of today's political geography, it can be defined as a space with a population of almost 140 million: western Slavs (Poland, Czechia, Slovakia; 54 million), southern Germans (Bavaria, Austria; 22 million), Romanians (19 million), northern Germans (former GDR; 16 million), southern Slavs (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia; 13 million), Hungarians (10 million), and Lithuanians (3 million).

In purely geographical terms, it is roughly delineated by three basins (Elbe, Oder, Danube), three seas (Baltic, Adriatic, Black) and two mountain ranges (Alps and Carpathians). Geopolitically, it is bounded on the south and west by the Mediterranean and the Rhineland, and on the north and east by the Baltic Sea and the Eurasian Lowlands. Historically, it is a key strategic region of Europe connected to Western centres in northern Italy, the Rhineland, northern France, England, or the Netherlands, but also open to Eurasian stimuli and pressures (Tatars, Russians, Turks, Soviets).

Its economic and military potential was historically comparable to France, England, Russia or Turkey, but usually surpassed them. Its potential, however, was permanently limited by the mediated access to maritime trade (only partial access to the Baltic trade, no access to the Mediterranean or, later, to the Atlantic trade) and by the absence of a centralised empire in Central Europe (except for two tragic attempts in the period of 1871–1945). However, a distinctive European, continental (i.e. not maritime) culture and mentality exists here, reflecting the diversity of languages (Slavic, Germanic, Romance, Hungarian) and religions (Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodoxy). A tragic turning point in the history of Central Europe was marked by the years 1860s–1870s, when the Austrian monarchy failed to federalise and Prussia managed to centralise the rest of the German space, which gave birth to a geopolitical monster driven by Greater German chauvinism that Europe was unable to cope with.

This mistake was repeated, albeit to a lesser extent, through the act of German reunification after the Cold War. Europe was supposed to be protected against resurgence of a geopolitical monster by the fact that unification took place on the basis of the US–administered post–war occupation zone of West Germany. Reunified Germany takes the form of a decentralised federation where national identity is replaced by regional identities and, above all, a liberal progressivist, globalising ideology

institutionalised at both German and European levels. The crisis of liberal progressivism will therefore inevitably raise the question of Germany's future in Europe where order will no longer be guaranteed by US-backed power, ideology and institutions. The solution should be further decentralisation of Germany towards a confederation.

Today's Germany is divided into three cultural and political units belonging to three European regions: **Central Europe** (former GDR, Bavaria), **Western Europe** (Baden-Württemberg, Saarland, Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, North Rhine-Westphalia), and **Northern Europe** (Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein, Bremen, Hamburg). The future German Confederation, due to its presence in all European regions, could play the role of a major European uniting element and intermediary.

It is clear from the positions of political parties in the "Central European" Germany (CSU, AfD, Die Linke) and from their attitudes towards migration that Central European mentality prevails over official progressivism. Here, the crisis of progressivism is more acute than in other parts of Germany, which raises the question of what will take its place. Any endorsement of the Central European mentality through the re-creation of a Central European region may impair the prospects of resurgence of Greater German chauvinism. The Germans would play a prominent but not predominant role, without the risk of humiliating marginalisation.

With its demographic weight of a population of 140 million and with its economic power, Central Europe would be an entity with a potential to achieve a high degree of economic self-sufficiency and strategic autonomy. Not only would it be in the same weight category as Mediterranean Europe (182 million) or Atlantic Europe (134 million), with which it could coordinate to form a bloc with a total population of half a billion, but it would be comparable to Russia (144 million) or Japan (126 million). Its role would depend on democratic overcoming of internal conflicts (Germans versus Poles, Hungarians versus Slovaks, Serbs versus Croats, etc.). Later, it could proceed to Central European cooperation comprising military defence (including nuclear weapons), a space programme, infrastructure, economic, industrial and social policies and other areas that the member states would decide to address together. But everything else would remain a matter of national sovereignty.

The institutional, geopolitical and ideological crisis of the EU is likely to deepen and its consequences will be grave. At the same time, it will offer a unique opportunity to ensure that the culturally diverse Central European region cease to be a border territory, an imperial periphery or a Trojan horse for non-European stakeholders. A strong geopolitical entity with a global reach can be built on democratic principles and shaped internally by its own tradition rather than standards imposed by foreign empires. The emergence of such a Central Europe, in whatever form, will primarily require that we abandon the illusions of the last thirty years, as well as deeply rooted historical prejudices, and muster the courage to act politically.

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Central Europe as a union of nation states and its common value anchors

Global political situation in Europe has begun to change dramatically in recent years, due to a shift towards a new multi-polar world order and due to inclination towards progressivistic ideologies challenging Europe's proven value system. Facing the eroding concept of the European Union, both the superpowers and major local stakeholders begin to redefine their attitude towards this region, especially towards the Central and Eastern European countries, which not only share a historical tradition, a different political development after the Second World War, but also a different current economic and social reality than the western part of the European continent.

In short: The Germans want to implement their concept of *Mittleuropa*, which is supposed to allow them to dominate this area once and for all, the Russians are thinking about restoring the satellite model of the Soviet Union, as they have long perceived Central Europe as their "buffer zone", and the Americans are considering Piłsudski's Intermarium (*Międzymorze*) concept which, as they believe, could be a barrier to the forthcoming cooperation between Germany and Russia. From the Chinese point of view, Central Europe resembles a "doorstep", located at the very end of their several thousand kilometres long *Silk Road* project.

It is clear from this brief enumeration of external stakeholders' interests that not only do they reflect upon the Central European region, but also to some extent plan its future.

This situation makes it all the more important for the Central European countries, which are obviously disappointed with the development of the European Union, to clearly articulate the views on their future. Instead of cooperation among nation states, the EU has turned into a one-sided, directive system of command that inhibits the Member States from a supranational level without ever paying attention to their interests and gradually erodes the proven pillars of European world view by multiculturalist ideology.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

It is worth remembering that Europe in its present form originated about ten centuries ago and that the emergence of independent nation states, unlike in other parts of Europe, went hand in hand with their non-violent Christianisation. The Western

Slavs and Hungarians, however, had to struggle with the self-proclaimed Roman heir, the recently Christianised Frankish Empire, which Charlemagne expanded as far as the Sava, Danube and Elbe rivers. It was the eastern part of this empire, inhabited by Saxons, less affected by the Roman Christian culture and recently forced to join this empire, that was ready for a reckless conquest to the east while Christianity was to give it the legal title and moral justification to do so. Germany had already begun to restore its strength since the accession of Conrad I of Franconia in 911. This year marks the beginning of the era of medieval Germany as a federation of princes and nations recognising the authority of the national king. Our St. Adalbert affected this policy to some degree through his influence on Emperor Otto III. How did that happen?

The Czech bishop's close friendship with the young German king and emperor was unusual, even astonishing. They were united not only by a certain mystical flame of spirituality, which provoked them to "lay down the crown and sit at the feet of humble brethren monks", but also by the ideal of restoring the Roman Empire as a world dominion, seeking the right balance between secular and ecclesiastical powers for the benefit of mankind. This idea was instilled in both of them by Gerbert of Aurillac, the future Pope Sylvester II.

On the one hand, Otto came from the Germanic tribe of Saxons, representatives of the semi-barbarian element which was advancing and trying to get hold of the reins of power, but on the other hand, he was proud of his mother Theophano's Graeco-Byzantine origins and considered himself a Greek just as Charles IV later considered himself a Přemyslid after his mother Elizabeth of Bohemia. Adalbert had undoubtedly influenced the emperor in the way the missionary idea was to be pursued among the Slavs between the Elbe and the Oder, Hungarians, and pagan Prussians in the Baltics. It was particularly the influence of St. Adalbert that made Otto decide to give up the predatory German militancy in favour of his ideal and to attempt to build a universal Christian empire of independent (national) states recognising the sole authority of the Roman Emperor and the Roman Pope over them. Many German historians view this influence as unfortunate because according to them, Otto III due to this approach called a halt to the "victorious march of Germany to the east" (*Drang nach Osten*) to which only Polabian Slavs succumbed later in time. Unfortunately, this German approach shows that Germans have never understood their role in Central and Eastern Europe when all their historical forcible attempts to dominate these parts of Europe have failed.

To win over the rulers of the new empires of Bohemia, Poland and especially Hungary, Otto III was willing to make concessions. Bi-liturgical Bohemia (the Latin and Slavonic liturgies of the Roman rite were used simultaneously here until the end of the 11th century) gained its own bishop Adalbert of Slavník already under Otto II,

which was a breakthrough in the hitherto claims that the German Church considered as granted. In 1000, Otto III together with Bolesław the Brave made a pilgrimage to Adalbert's grave. According to the earliest Polish chronicler, Gallus Anonymus, Otto III allegedly took the imperial diadem from his own head and laid it upon the head of Bolesław the Brave proclaiming him *"a friend and ally of the Roman people and a partner in the Holy Roman Empire"*¹, symbolically expressing that the Polish monarch would participate in his programme for the restoration of the Roman Empire. Poles rightly regard this act as a confirmation of Poland's full sovereignty. Similarly, thanks to the diplomatic skills of Adalbert's pupil Anastasius alias Radla with Emperor Otto III and Pope Sylvester II, King Stephen I of Hungary obtained the royal crown in the same year and achieved the establishment of the archbishopric in Kalocsa where the aforementioned Anastasius became archbishop. Radla later became the archbishop of Esztergom at the time when this territory was part of Slovakia occupied by the Poles under Bolesław the Brave.

St. Adalbert's work thus contributed to the national aspirations of the Czech, Polish, Slovak and Hungarian peoples, and his legacy rests with the recognition that the hope for their sustenance lies in mutual support of these nations in their struggle for freedom and their close cooperation in the future. This aspect of the legacy of St. Adalbert was aptly described by František Dvorník, the author of monograph on St. Adalbert, in these words: *"May Saint Adalbert be our programme for ensuring the future of the small nations of Central Europe, which, through misunderstanding of their own historical development and national resentment, have so often been at the mercy of their powerful neighbours."*² And let's add that this also applies to our neighbours to the west and east.

THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNION AS A COMMON FUTURE

But let's go back to the present situation. The aforementioned pressure exerted by superpowers on the Central European area and the emerging power vacuum in the countries of Western Europe, foreshadowing a possible change of paradigm, create the preconditions for the establishment of a new union of Central European states, which would provide its members with patronage, protection, and an opportunity to live and develop in line with their own values. Logically, it should be based on the countries of the *Visegrad Four*, and the union would naturally expand to include other partners that would mostly benefit from this concept. Any functional state formation must be built on a common set of values and ideas that will contribute towards shaping of its identity. Moreover, the national independence of individual countries in Central Europe will have to be respected. But before we move on to the fundamental values in which such union would be anchored, I would like to share a few observations from elsewhere, namely from Thailand – a country on the other side of the world where I was living for several years, which was an inspiring experience.

Thailand, formerly Siam, is a rather interesting phenomenon in terms of state sovereignty in the entire south-east Asian region. Thailand has never been colonised and its elites managed to manoeuvre skilfully and maintain a high degree of national sovereignty and independence even in the difficult times from the 18th century up to now. Thailand's national ideology rests on four basic pillars: **homeland**, **faith**, **monarchy**, and **nation**. The homeland is seen as a permanent home for all Thais within the existing borders, which every Thai must respect and defend. All the Thais are educated in this respect from childhood both in their families and, above all, in the entire educational system. The Thais regard serving the country (whether in the army or in the civil service) as a matter of prestige and honour. Thailand's economic doctrine is comprised of maximum national self-sufficiency in key segments of the economy (food, energy, medicines, weapons, etc.), control over land ownership (land cannot be officially owned by foreigners), control over majority ownership of businesses and companies (foreigners are allowed to own no more than 49 per cent of any Thai company), and support for domestic industry and agriculture through targeted customs measures. Faith means Buddhism, although all other religions such as Islam and Christianity are fully tolerated. The monarchy is the pillar uniting everything. The monarch is a Buddhist and his protection, including protection of his honour and reputation, is greatly promoted. Being a Thai means having a Thai name, including members of minorities (the exception being Muslims in the south of the country), speaking and writing Thai. The Thais are taught both at school and at home to be tolerant towards others, but at the same time to be proud of their country and nation. You have to be born a Thai, you cannot become one. Obtaining the Thai citizenship is almost impossible for foreigners and even many members of hill tribes that have lived in Thailand for hundreds of years still do not have it. This prevents the forming of groups of disloyal "citizen-migrants", which are currently seen in Western Europe, who can potentially become tools for attempts to take over and disrupt the country from the outside. After all, Central Europe has had centuries of similar experience. Following this geographical detour, let's stay in Europe from now on.

The building blocks of the envisaged Central European Union are demographically relatively homogeneous nation states whose long-term identity consists of **family**, **language**, **nation**, and **homeland**. Their significant common feature is an absence of a colonial past, which – unlike in Western Europe – does not give rise to any resentments. Today, these countries are shaped by a sense of actual external threat and desire to survive. All these countries want to be a part of one geopolitical bloc (an experience dating back to the Danube monarchy), but the union does not plan to create any kind of superethnos – we are neither "Europeans" nor "Central Europeans" – each nation retains its full identity. In contrast to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the union should purposefully prevent the creation of conditions that would give rise to a "*dungeon of nations*" to which especially the Hungarian part of the monarchy was heading after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867.

Adopting a common ideology by the union is a topic of special interest. It is actually due to regard to national history, which was full of natural interstate conflicts (among rulers) and thus varying interpretations of history, that no common interpretation can be reached. The only solution is to rely on uniting historical events where the attitude of all participating states in the union was basically the same and interpretation of which is unquestionable (e.g. the defence of Vienna against the Turks, the struggle against Nazi Germany, the non-violent Christianisation, the fending off the Mongol invasion, etc.). For a better understanding, in contemporary Russia, such a unifying event is the *Great Patriotic War* where otherwise divided groups of the recent Russian history (White Guards, Red Army, Russian Orthodox Church, kulaks, internees in labour camps, and the Soviet elite) are united on the same side of the barricade.

The Central European Union should aspire to meet the expectations that the EU has failed to meet. It should not only create a single internal economic area, but also become a bridge for and not a barrier to external global and interregional cooperation – from north to south and from east to west. It should enable its members to jointly develop strategic goals that would give them an opportunity to become world leaders in individual fields of science, research and manufacturing. From the outset, it is necessary to emphasise that the state is a service organisation, attempt to minimise the institutional and bureaucratic infrastructure of the union from the beginning, and not foster conditions for the emergence of the *deep state*.

CORE VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

The Central European Union under consideration is, in terms of long-term cultural identity, a Christian space where (depending on the disposition of a particular country) either Catholics (in the northern part) or Orthodox believers (in the Balkans) are predominant while the vast majority of the population of those who are officially non-denominational or do not publicly profess their faith recognise the validity of the Christian code of values. A family consists of a father, a mother and children, and the male and female roles are seen as complementary elements of a harmonious unit, which is a concept preferred even by non-denominational people.

It is important to promote a broader and multi-generational perception of the family, which, in addition to parents and children, also includes grandparents, relatives and other members of the ancestral union. The social system should be based on a pro-natalist policy because in a healthy society the population grows (!) as well as on the right to life, whether born, unborn or dying. Especially the area of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was historically characterised by a bourgeois (middle-class) society, which is a counterpart to oligarchy and class society. The general support for association activities serves as an instrument for reduction of (technologically enforced) social isolation that keeps deepening year by year. It is worth explaining that the mutual economic self-sufficiency of the union and its

member states is a value worth striving for, and that the Central European concept of the national economy represents a meaningful alternative to the currently proposed liberal economy. In this context, it is appropriate to mention the rehabilitation of cooperatives as a functional economic form and the promotion of a new economic form, the family cooperatives, which have proven very successful in other parts of the world not only in the economic sphere but also as a tool for social protection.

It goes without saying that the union should respect the national cultural identity of each member state and should also ensure the right to privacy of every citizen, which is an area where the EU and its Member States actually fail at present. The society should educate its citizens in patriotism and the ability to defend themselves even with weapon in hand if necessary. The defence of one's country should be a matter of utmost priority for all citizens, not just paid professionals. The value that we appreciate very much, especially after 1989, is the guaranteed freedom of speech. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that where there are no values, there is no freedom.

The difficult task will be to find a common and generally recognised authority, which the union will have as its representative and informal arbitrator and to which it will submit when necessary. The role of such an authority would be ideally fulfilled by an (authentic) dynasty, which, however, will not be easy to agree on given the historical context. Individual nations must also get used to the existence of such an authority in order to appreciate its benefits. Therefore, the solution is to proceed step by step and first search for a common president-like representative (regent), and only if he proves himself and gains (natural) respect, the potential dynastic principle may be applied to him (otherwise a "new president-regent" will be sought). That is why the candidates for the common president should be sought with regards to possible future dynastic considerations. For a true monarch is the embodiment of his country's values and an example to his people!

The union should also have certain common features. It is an endless topic and we want to limit it here only to outlining of certain thought streams. The most reasonable name for the union is one that does not favour any of its member states, e.g. the Central European Union (CEU). Given its desirable multi-lingual nature, it is necessary to seek a common language of communication for the community in the simplest way and to respect the *status quo* where the "Latin of modern times", i.e. English, is sufficiently mastered and used by almost all the inhabitants of the member states. The union should be seated in a small town like Visegrad, which, given its size, would not allow for the creation and existence of excessive administrative apparatus. In its symbolism, the flag should reflect the Christian value system of the union; the "Marian theme" could be inspiring. The anthem should be proposed by the head of the union in a specific, emotionally-charged situa-

tion that would guarantee its positive acceptance by the public in all member states. The magic of the whole project rests with making the concept of the Central European Union so attractive that over time, it would grow spontaneously across the whole area to all parts of the world.

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¹ See František Dvorník: *Saint Adalbert, Christian Academy*, Rome 1967, pp. 69–74

² František Dvorník: *Saint Adalbert, Christian Academy*, Rome 1967, pp. 98–99

What is the most appropriate polity model for closer cooperation between Central European countries?

As time progresses, reflections on the future course of the Central European countries and Czech Republic within emerge. Quite logically, they are pointing to the fact that the country should establish closer institutional cooperation with Central European and possibly other countries seeking a viable alternative to the centre-oriented homogeneous and ideologically uprooted European Union. In order to firmly anchor these reflections on realistic assumptions, it is necessary to recall the basic findings of government studies that are based on the long experience of past generations.

Government studies recognise the following types of states and their formations:

1. UNITARY STATE A unitary state is a state not further divided into state-like units, but only into units of territorial self-government. The legal basis of the unitary state is the constitution. This entity has one constitution, one citizenship for its inhabitants, and one system of state bodies. The Czech Republic is an example of a unitary state. Within a unitary state, a territory may be administered according to special rules – in such a case we speak of a **unitary state with an autonomous territory**. An example of such a state was the Czechoslovak Republic in 1920–39, with autonomy for Carpathian Ruthenia (in practice, however, very limited until autumn 1938) and from 1938 also for Slovakia. Similarly, post-war Czechoslovakia was a unitary state in 1945–68, when Slovakia was granted autonomy. Abroad, examples of unitary states with autonomous territories include Denmark with the Faroe Islands and Greenland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland with autonomous Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and Greece with the autonomous territory of the Monastic Republic of Mount Athos.

The unitary state cannot be used as a model for a union of independent states. In a unitary state, the existing states cease to exist and are relegated to mere units of higher territorial self-government or autonomous territories without sovereignty (Scotland in Britain, Tibet in China, and Corsica in France).

2. FEDERATION (FEDERAL STATE) A federation can typically be thought of as a composite or a federal state. It consists of territorial units having the nature and function of a state. Its legal basis is the constitution, which is amendable

by a majority vote of the federal member states or their deputies in federal parliament. However, in addition to the federal constitution, there are also constitutions of the federal member states. Decisions of the federal authorities are directly binding on all citizens of the federation. In a federation, the theory of shared sovereignty between the federation and its member states is applied, but in the event of a dispute, the federation has overriding powers, as disputes are resolved by federal bodies (parliament, court). However, in extreme cases, disputes can lead to further escalation in tensions ending possibly even in a civil war (see the USA in 1861–65).

Within a federation, a dual citizenship exists – citizenship of the federation and citizenship of a member entity of the federation (member state) – there also exists a dual system of state authorities (federal authorities, authorities of a member entity of the federation). For example, in the Czechoslovak federation, the federal authorities included the head of state (the president), the parliament (the Federal Assembly), the federal government, and the federal Supreme Court. The member states of the federation, i.e. the Czech and Slovak Republics, had each a fully developed system of state bodies: the head of state (the Praesidium of the National Council), the parliament (the Czech and Slovak National Council), and the national government headed by the president and the national Supreme Court.

A federation always has international legal personality. In terms of international relations, we distinguish between national and international federations. A **national federation** can only act as a federal state in international relations (Czechoslovakia in 1969–92). An **international federation** is a federation in which the federal state acts fully in international relations and, to a limited extent, the member entities of the federation may act on their behalf.

A different classification of types of federation is also possible according to whether the member states have the option of leaving the federation (Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia) or not (USA, Germany, Austria, Russia).

A federation model is unsuitable for future cooperation of the Czech Republic with other states. This is primarily because the emergence of a united people (political nation) cannot be considered as a source of legitimacy for the federation. By joining a federation, member states retain their status but lose their sovereignty, even if they can act in international relations to a limited extent (international federation) and have the right to withdraw from the federation. In federations, the position of the federal centre keeps strengthening over time at the expense of the member states as can be seen in the example of the USA or Switzerland. In these states, the federal authorities now have a range of powers that were undreamed of even by the greatest advocates of a federation when these federations were founded. This accumulation of power is due to the activities of the federal parliament, but also of the federal courts, which

generally tend to rule in favour of the federation in disputes over new competences between the member states and the federation.

3. CONFEDERATION A confederation is a looser union of member states, where the confederation itself is not a state. Its legal basis is an international treaty, which can only be amended with the consent of all member states. Decisions of the confederation bodies are binding only on the member states and they become binding on their citizens only after they are transposed and incorporated into respective national legislations. Confederation citizenship does not exist. It is possible to withdraw from a confederation. Examples of confederations include the German Confederation in 1815–66 or Senegambia in 1982–89.

The confederation is an appropriate model for functional interstate cooperation. Member states retain sovereignty, including international legal personality, and can withdraw at any time. Citizens have a direct relationship to their states, not to the confederation. However, it must be a confederation without federal elements. In order to strengthen the powers of member states, it is advisable to combine confederation with elements of a real union.

4. REAL UNION A real union is a union of cooperating states headed by a common head of state and sharing some other common bodies. The mutual relations among member states in a real union are governed by treaties. Although a real union legally consists of multiple states, it is perceived as a single entity in international relations as it has common bodies that are responsible for international relations and policies.

An example of a real union was Austria–Hungary in 1867–1918. The constituting element of the union was a common ruler, even though he held different titles (Austrian Emperor, King of Hungary, but also King of Bohemia and King of Croatia, Margrave of Moravia, Duke of Silesia, etc.) and a common dynasty with a common right of succession. The source of legitimacy of this union of states was loyalty to the monarch. Common state administration bodies through which the monarch ruled were established.

These areas included the defence of the state, which is why a minister of defence was appointed for the entire union. Within the Austro–Hungarian army, the monarch held the position of commander-in-chief. His role was also dominant in international relations, where the monarch was represented by the Minister of the Imperial and Royal House and Foreign Affairs. Another area was finance, for which a finance minister was appointed to fund common affairs and manage the single currency.

The other bodies were separate, established at the national level, with national parliaments forming parliamentary delegations based on parity rules to address common issues.

There was no common constitution or citizenship. The citizenship and constitution were Austrian or Hungarian. Externally, in international relations, Austria–Hungary was perceived as a single entity. Treaties and diplomatic relations (diplomatic missions) were exercised in the name of the monarch, who was the same person for both states.

A single currency was used – the crown; coins were minted separately in Vienna and Kremnica with different images (the Imperial Austrian eagle or the Hungarian coat of arms), but in the same denominations and metal composition and both variants were circulated throughout the real union. Banknotes were issued by the joint Austro–Hungarian Bank.

Examples of existence of joint bodies analogous to those in a real union can be also found in Germany where some federal states have formed joint state courts that are shared by multiple federal states. These include the joint Higher Administrative Court, the Higher Social Court, the Higher Finance Court and the Higher Labour Court for Berlin and Brandenburg and the Higher Social Court for Bremen and Lower Saxony.

A real union is the best model for an effective interstate union where the autonomy of individual member states would be preserved. The model presumes a small number of joint bodies and allows for achieving effective unity in selected areas without the need to establish bodies on supranational level. However, a real union can only work efficiently if the number of member states remains small (2–5). The higher the number of member states, the more pressure there is to introduce confederation elements, or outright transform into confederation.

5. PERSONAL UNION A personal union is a model where multiple states share only a common head of state. Examples include France and Andorra, the UK and Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

If there is no link between states other than the head of state, this is not a functional basis for effective interstate cooperation. A personal union is only a prerequisite for potential closer cooperation, which, however, does not derive from the fact of the personal union itself, but from additional mutual international agreements concluded for the individual areas in which the participating states wish to cooperate.

However, it should be stressed that the above overview is only a theoretical overview. In practice, it is possible to find a number of transitional forms where the official names do not correspond to the actual type of arrangement. For example, Switzerland today is a federation, but it still uses the name Swiss Confederation in Roman language.

ages. The Confederate States of America in 1861–65 used constitution as the legal basis of their confederation, but understood it only as a mutual treaty signed by fully sovereign states.

Paradoxically, this can be illustrated also by the current form of the European Union, which can be described as a unique entity. From the point of view of government studies, it is a confederation as it is legally based on an international treaty, but with elements of federation – the existence of common citizenship of the European Union or the direct binding nature of EU regulations for the Member States. A confederal trait is the issuing of EU directives, which are not directly binding and need to be transposed into the national law of individual Member States. However, the existing case law of the Court of Justice of the EU has also shifted this confederal trait towards a federal form by making directives directly binding if a Member State fails to transpose them into national law completely and correctly. And the decision on what is correct or incorrect is made by the Court of Justice of the EU.

SUITABLE OPTION FOR INTERSTATE COOPERATION

The model of a unitary state or federation is not an option for interstate cooperation, because it would have an unacceptable impact on the member states – they would have to give up their sovereignty. Establishment of a unitary state would lead to the end of their independent existence and relegation to the level of a territorial self-government unit. Also, the current bureaucratic centre-oriented model of the European Union, a confederation with strong elements of a federation, with which we are increasingly confronted, discourages any attempts to use a similar model.

Although a personal union is not excluded even for republics, it has been formed in practice only in monarchies. With the weakening of the *de facto* power of the head of state in monarchies, a personal union would now be a weak basis for lasting and deeper interstate cooperation.

The most appropriate model for interstate cooperation is therefore a real union or a confederation, or a combination of the two. As such, a confederation can consist of both monarchies and republics. A real union can in practice consist only of monarchies. In theory, a real union with appointment of a republican head of state would be possible, but the election of a head of state would become a politically destabilising element.

Logically, a republican head of state would always have to be a citizen of a member state. Voters would thus naturally prefer a candidate from their state – who would be “theirs”. This would turn every election of a head of state into a struggle between the individual member states and might even lead to deterioration of their mutual relations.

Such a situation could be avoided by introducing a model based on the functioning of a hereditary monarchy, in which the head of state ascends automatically, based on dynastic law. A dynasty can, through its long-term and deliberate ruling, establish itself as a family standing above individual member states and nations.

A very nice example is Belgium, where it is said that the only Belgians are the King and his family, while the other citizens of the country are either Walloons or Flemings.

Loyalty to the ruler and his family is also an important source of legitimacy for a common union. Enduring allegiance raises a requirement for a permanent head of state and a permanent dynasty, that is, it requires a head of state that is not limited by relatively short terms of office.

Throughout history, the source of legitimacy of classical monarchies has been the will of God, rather than elections. This is also why royal power declined in monarchies with an elected monarch. In these, the ascension of the king was derived from the electorate – the members of the state, rather than from God, and elections were often thwarted by electoral corruption and vote rigging. As an example, the royal elections in Poland can be mentioned.

A member of a legitimate dynasty may ascend to the throne even if the ascension of the first ruler is not based on election by contemporaries. All that matters is that they recognise the right to the throne, which can itself be based on facts that are independent of them, such as continuation of the reign of an established historic dynasty.

COMMON AREAS OF GOVERNANCE

Austria–Hungary may be a good example of how few matters need to be governed jointly, and yet such a state formation is commonly perceived as a single state unit. These basic common areas of governance included the common head of state, military and national defence, foreign policy, and finance.

A common **head of state** is primarily a unifying element allowing the citizens to identify with the whole union. Its primary purpose is to represent externally, which cannot be achieved through anonymous power exercised by authorities but requires a specific person that is known to all.

The **military** and the state defence are key to guaranteeing long-term survival of any state formation. Foreign powers need to understand that an attack on one of the member states will provoke war with all of the members of the union. Therefore, mutual military alliance and unified command, which derives from a common head of state as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, is essential. A joint

army is not necessary. Member states may have their national armies, but they must be able to deploy jointly under a single command. This model does not even require a common language for the rank-and-file soldiers. Even in the Austro-Hungarian army, where German was the language of command, only officers were required to speak German. The men were commanded in the regimental language, which corresponded to the language of the territory from which the regiment was recruited.

Common **foreign policy** ensures that foreign states perceive the union as one state formation. Here, too, a common head of state is essential. In terms of international law, a state is represented by its head of state and other state officials formally act on behalf of the common head of state.

Common finances are used to administer common affairs (head of state, military affairs and defence, foreign relations), but also external affairs – a single customs policy and a single customs territory, which is a precondition for the existence of a free market among member states. In addition to the management of common finances, financial matters would certainly be administered at member state level. As regards common finances, it is possible, but not necessary, to introduce a common currency. In case of different currencies, their free convertibility would always have to be guaranteed, along with the free movement of capital among member states.

As far as other areas of running the state are concerned, it is possible, but not necessary, to manage jointly other public affairs too. In such a case, a list of shared competencies should be governed not by the founding international treaty, but rather by further related treaties that might be withdrawn any time without any adverse effects on the founding treaty on shared competences.

SHARED COMPETENCIES

In legal terms, the common formation would be based on an international treaty, which would also address the administration of the above-mentioned shared competencies. The arrangement of shared competencies should be based on whether the entity is a real union or a confederation, or, as the case may be, which elements of the real union or confederation prevail.

The common head of state may be defined as the only common authority, having a seat and the relevant apparatus in each member state. It is desirable for the common head of state to master several languages used in the common entity, although it is not necessary for him to master them all. As an alternative to the existence of a common head of state, theoretically, a confederal body could be established, comprising the heads of individual member states. However, an important unifying element would thus be lost. Without a common head of state, the common entity could become just a bureaucratic formation that the member states' citizens would not be able to identify with.

Shared governmental competencies can be also addressed through common ministers at the union level, or through the existence of overarching confederal bodies. The institute of common ministers of foreign affairs, military affairs, defence and common finance would be based on the existence of one person (minister) connecting the member states' governments. The relevant ministry would have offices in national capitals of member states. The minister would guarantee consistency of the common policy and would not get involved in issues that do not concern the entity's common policy. Personal participation of common ministers at meetings of member states' governments would ensure information sharing among the governments and serve as a token of mutual trust. The institute of common ministers would also prevent conflicts over competencies.

Apart from common ministers, executive cooperation could be also achieved by setting up separate confederal ministries. In addition to member states' ministers of foreign affairs, military affairs and finance, confederal ministries of foreign affairs, military affairs and common finance would be established. They could be managed in two ways. First, they would be headed by a minister other than ministers of individual member states. Second, it is possible to have a collegial body comprising all the relevant member states' ministers adopting their decisions collectively. The founding international treaty would determine what types of decisions must be adopted unanimously or by majority, while identifying the type of majority (qualified, absolute, simple). When chairing meetings, the ministers would rotate following a fixed order. The disadvantage is that disputes may arise over competencies, i.e. what falls within the competencies of the confederal ministry and what falls within the competencies of member state ministries.

Clearly, it is not possible in this paper to elaborate on all details pertaining to the functioning of the entity that the member states choose to cooperate in. When shaping the future cooperation among member states, the founding treaty will play an essential role. Its quality will be crucial when defining the scope of competencies of the entity and when establishing grounds for related agreements and treaties among the member states.

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The Central European Union as a defensive wall against chaos and security threats

The recent call by retired French generals, subsequently endorsed by many active-duty soldiers, warning against the outbreak of civil war in France and emphasising the need for a fundamental change at the national governance level, is clear evidence that the world west of the Czech borders is on the verge of far-reaching social changes. It would be extremely irresponsible to think that they do not concern us. The creeping Islamisation of the West, facilitated by the liberal migration policy over recent decades, forces us to adopt a new strategic stance in our foreign policy in order to protect our very existence. Given the circumstances, we may ask, quite legitimately, if we wouldn't be better off with a different model of cooperation with our European neighbours and near abroad countries rather than the European Union in its current form – namely the Central European Union (CEU). It is required by the objective international situation as a means of defence against the chaos and security threats ensuing from the efforts to Islamise Europe. For quite some time, it has been accompanied by a gradual replacement of the indigenous population in European countries with migrants from Asia and Africa. We are likely to face two basic types of threats. The first one will be a civil war in the streets of Islamised Western European cities, leading to the break-up of the EU and subsequently to the emergence of several Islamic caliphates. In terms of military support, they will use – overtly or covertly – backing of Islamised Turkey. At the same time, a direct military intervention of Turkey to open up migration routes to Europe cannot be completely ruled out. It is in the interest of the Czech Republic not to face such developments alone, short of allies. Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, but also other countries to the south or east of our borders will have a common interest and that is averting threats arising from developments in Western Europe.

If such a dramatic turn of events does take place, the foreign policy of the newly emerging union will be fully subordinated to its defence policy. National foreign ministries will primarily deal with issues of war and peace while playing a key role in the building of new alliances and treaties. Once the situation has stabilised, primarily by developing strong, well-defended borders for the whole CEU, further common foreign policy goals will be formulated.

We will be able to draw on the experience of the Russian Federation after the collapse of the USSR, distinguishing between near and distant abroad. If necessary, armed forces will be able to intervene in near abroad (e.g. Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo and Western

European caliphates). An important role will be played by the intelligence services, whose tasks will be not only to gather information but also to actively fend off security and economic threats. Intelligence services in all countries of the CEU will cooperate as closely as possible, even though Allen Dulles' axiom that states may have allies, but intelligence services know only competitors and enemies, will not change.

One of the most difficult tasks of the future union will be to agree on what will be the domain of foreign policy of individual member states and what will remain the area of common interest. The search for an appropriate position in a multi-polar world should be guided by an effort to effectively "manoeuvre" among superpowers (USA, Russia, China) and their own newly formed multilateral institutions on the one hand, and a principled, even aggressive policy towards threats (i.e. near abroad) on the other hand. It is probably the only way of earning much-needed respect while making the impression of an entity that is willing to talk to everyone. In that regard, the CEU could be a soft version of contemporary Israel. We must bear in mind that after the break-up of the EU we will live in a country whose security and political circumstances very much resemble those in today's Middle East or North Africa.

All the necessary steps will take place under time pressure; there will be no time to establish new institutions. With one exception – a selection or the official election of the head of the union, i.e. a statesman who will prove himself useful in the initial stage of our civilisation defence. If someone like that is found, he will become the face and voice of the international policy of the CEU, a symbol of its existence and viability.

From the viewpoint of international policy, the most appropriate future arrangement of the CEU seems to be a confederation, i.e. a loose union of member states with international legal personality which retain their own sovereignty. The international policy of the CEU will be executed by foreign ministries of the member states on a rotational basis. The term of office of the presiding foreign minister should be at least one year; he would be assisted by his national office; the foreign policy agenda would be developed and coordinated by a council of deputy foreign ministers of the member states on a continuous basis. When it comes to issuing visas, there is a long-standing best practice introduced by the Schengen system that will not need to change much. There will be two types of visas – national and Central European visas, the issuance of which will require the consent of all member states, because *persona non grata* databases will continue to exist mainly in national registers.

Other aspects of the operation of diplomatic missions will follow-up on the existing EU practice, whether it concerns the designation of their representative offices as national and Central European ones. Each member state will develop its own optimised network of embassies in countries of their economic or other interests; at the same time they will represent other CE member states that will not have their

own representation for some reason (e.g. due to economic constraints). If necessary, they will issue visas and provide consular services to all citizens of the union. At the same time, the existing embassies of the allied countries will continue to operate in all countries of the future CEU as a sign of mutual respect for sovereignty.

In the early years, greater emphasis will be undoubtedly put on well-functioning intelligence structures rather than on diplomacy. Only once we build secure external borders and provide for the defensive capability of the union, we will be able to draw on the positive experience from the Schengen system era. The result will be a combination of a self-assured or even aggressive policy towards our neighbours and very good relations with the superpowers in the new multi-polar world.

I anticipate the objection that it is too early for such reflections, that instead of musing on possible future developments of the political situation in Europe, it is more appropriate to focus on solving more immediate problems. However, such an attitude is wrong for two reasons at least. The erosion of Western Europe, including its Islamisation, is not a cacophony of a distant future, but an ongoing process. Therefore, to start thinking about what will happen to our nation state existence only after the demographic structure of our society begins to change irreversibly is absolutely reckless to the point of treason. Let us illustrate this using the following historical analogy:

During the Second World War, the legal and historical continuity of Czechoslovakia's existence was ensured by the Czech government-in-exile led by President Edvard Beneš in London. It coordinated domestic resistance and all democratic politicians assumed that the post-war political arrangement in Czechoslovakia would build on the traditions of the First Republic. However, the leaders of the Czechoslovak communists exiled in Moscow took a different path and prepared their own power-seizure scenario already during the war. When the time came in April 1945 to declare the government's post-war policy in Košice, the only comprehensive document available was the Communist Party proposal. The representatives of the Western exile had to accept it whether they liked it or not and the Košice Government Programme opened the way for Czechoslovakia to become part of the Soviet Bloc of its own initiative. Life in our homeland would have probably developed differently if it was not the Communists, but their opponents, who came up with a sophisticated model of our domestic and foreign policy direction.

This example clearly shows that being prepared for change is a prerequisite for being able to actively participate in shaping the future. The absence of a sound analysis of the existing social and geopolitical processes and changes, accompanied by passivity in thinking over specific ways to pursue our enduring national interests, would leave this country at the mercy of forces and events over which it would have absolutely no control.

We are at an existential crossroads – we will either find a new form of cooperation with our neighbours and other European countries that resist the processes of disintegration, or we will become their well-deserved victims. It is high time to make the right choice.

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Common defence of the Central European area

Throughout history, the territory of the envisaged Central European Union (CEU) has been a place of many global, regional, national, and proxy conflicts. At present, the political stability and security of the area is safeguarded by the North Atlantic Alliance. However, this arrangement is not designed to guarantee reliable quick response to protect the populations of Central Europe against emerging global threats.

The CEU project is based on the premise that the use of combined knowledge, resources and determination can be more effective than relying on building defence and security capabilities on national level only. It is especially topical in the situation where conflicts between states are taking form of hybrid warfare. Currently, such forms include cyber attacks, disinformation, attacks on financial and energy systems, or tectonic interference, where identifying the attacker is often difficult.

FORMS OF HYBRID WARFARE

It can be expected that the classical definition of the attacker–defender and of “conventional weapons”, whether these are classified as firearms, biological and chemical weapons, will be abandoned and that countries will face “softer” threats through the use of cheaper and more targeted techniques. With continuing digitalisation, the methods in use will primarily focus on influencing and destabilising the populations by exposing them to stressors on a mass scale. Targeted schemes will be used with the intention to erode family, community, and ethnic cohesion, trust in political and legal systems, and to weaken the determination of the populations to defend themselves. We have already witnessed that recently.^{ti}

Another threat to which individual states will be exposed will be the use of violent means by individuals and groups in pursuit of their own political interests (here we can expect to encounter various forms of terrorism). Similarly, controlled and uncontrolled “migration” is a threat we have already been facing; its effective solution lies in a mix of social, defence and security measures implemented already in the countries of migrants’ origin.

As globalisation progresses, we will also see increasing direct interference by anonymous corporate groups in pursuit of their commercial or political interests regardless or even contrary to the political will of national governments.

The use of violent attacks as a political safety valve to relieve accumulated political, civil or even religious stress in the population of the attacking states has already been a major problem and will continue to be so also in the future. An example is the lack of ability of the Islamic community to codify the interpretation of the Koran, resulting in the creation of autonomous nests breeding “liberation” and “chiliastic” movements with clear imperialist aspirations.

Last but not least, one of the problems is the defence and security assistance in case of global threats such as droughts, floods, fires, pandemics, energy and food shortages or threats from space.

The nature and severity of these threats go beyond the capabilities of individual states. For this reason, the implementation of the CEU project is the only viable alternative. Cooperation between member states will require reaching mutual agreement on the points discussed below.

PREREQUISITES FOR COMMON SECURITY POLICY

The key prerequisite is mainly building good relations between the citizens of the participating states in the long term. To this end, appropriate projects should be developed for the ministries of education and culture in individual states to facilitate and promote travel and cultural exchange. Through tourist mobility, the citizens of these countries will get an opportunity to identify with the geopolitical space of the CEU, to view the area extending from sea to sea “as their own”.

Despite the complications that may have existed between the states in the course of history, a way to reach common determination must be found. It will ensue from the common use of the shared space while unconditionally preserving national specificities, which no one will try to downplay or negate, but on the contrary, will emphasise them as an enriching diversity. It will therefore be desirable to further promote interstate or regional cultural, sociological and historical research (primarily in the field of cultural heritage and traditions) and to maintain and develop existing student exchanges.

In this context, it is also advisable to focus on harmonising the curricula of history and political geography classes, preferably starting from primary education. Here the connecting elements should be consistently emphasised (common Central and Eastern European cultural and religious traditions, examples of transnational cooperation in critical times – the defence against the Ottoman Empire from the Jagiellonian era to the defence of Vienna, the liberation struggle in the Balkans, etc.).

The second prerequisite for finding a way to ensure common security is reaching consensus and finding space for developing joint military–industrial projects. These

could include both funding of fundamental research in areas of critical importance (chemistry, biology, physics) as well as distributed assignment of partial tasks relating to the preparation and subsequent implementation of specific projects.

The aim should be to develop common defence projects to address various types of threats in which the involvement of individual states would vary depending on their competences.

A common institution could be established to plan, commission and manage such projects. By focusing on scientific and research projects on the national level, such institution would also become a partner for universities and research institutions.

This platform might also be used to establish a Central European Defence Alliance (CEDA) that could be based on the core principles of the original NATO Charter and in which all members would undertake *“to settle all international disputes exclusively by peaceful means on the basis of the UN Charter”*. The other points would serve as recommendations only and would always be subject to approval by national governments (or legislatures). The main trigger for activating common defence mechanisms would be a request by a member state submitted to other member states. The CEDA armed forces would be composed of both the existing national armies and of militias of individual member states.

For the command and coordination of common defence, it would be advisable to create a cost-effective and efficient *Defence Council* at the level of national defence ministers (e.g. with the participation of deputy ministers for military procurement). Its basic tasks would be to identify real threats, categorise them in terms of the response time needed for their elimination, define competencies in dealing with threats, find the most appropriate tools for threat elimination, and find consensus for the creation of joint armament programmes.

An essential prerequisite for a functional common defence is the ability of each member state to defend its national border at own technological level. However, the self-defence capability could be complemented by an option of supranational protection provided at the CEU level.

Given the current technological advances in military and defence, the capability to jointly acquire data from visual and electromagnetic reconnaissance using remote sensing seems also essential. Similarly, integration in a common geo-referencing system with common visualisation and access by all member states will be desirable. These steps could become a precursor to a common system of protecting not only the national borders but also critical infrastructure against globally operating weapons (e.g. ballistic missiles or cruise missiles).

Another priority will be a project for joint defence against EMP weapons (weapons using electromagnetic pulses) and cyber threats. EMP weapons and tools can render inoperable not only the current military equipment, but they can also put out of operation all critically important systems in the civilian sector essential for the functioning of the state, exercise of state administration, storage and distribution of products, or sectors such as the power industry, telecommunications, or health care. Any disruption of these systems would have fatal consequences for the populations of the affected areas, probably even more devastating than the use of conventional weapons.

A prerequisite for the successful implementation of these projects is, of course, finding the necessary political consensus on the fact that the defence of the homeland is a national priority. The possibility of re-introducing compulsory military service in some form is closely related to this. The purpose of compulsory military service should be to ensure that every citizen of a country knows how to behave in the event of a threat. This does not include only military threats, but all scenarios addressed by civil defence measures. Compulsory military service should provide training to all citizens on how to respond in specific situations. There is no doubt that such training should be in line with the requirements on common defence of the countries involved.

CIVILIAN ENGAGEMENT AND RETURN TO TRADITIONAL MILITARY PRIORITIES

Also, the reintroduction of civil protection programmes against weapons of mass destruction – developed in agreement of all member states – must become an integral part of this preparation. Within this framework, sufficient material and human resources must be secured to establish operational shelters, storage facilities and training capacities. If such civil protection system is developed, it will be necessary to reintroduce civil protection instruction in schools and renew support for organisations cooperating with the army. A wider involvement of fire and rescue services – especially voluntary ones – seems to be indispensable to serve as a kind of “mobilisation” reserve. In the Czech Republic alone, it is possible to activate about 300,000 members of fire and rescue corps in this way.

In order to secure fulfilment of combat tasks, it will also be necessary to find consensus on block transformation of armies. Currently, the military is organised in two blocks. Firstly, there are the formations that de facto correspond to expeditionary corps in terms of their function, response time and compatibility (their main activities include expeditionary security operations outside the territory of their state). And then there is the “domestic national army”, which is responsible for the defence of national territory, development and maintenance of military infrastructure, and selection and training of military personnel. There is no doubt that the tasks of the army on own territory are gravely underestimated today; therefore, its current role needs to be reassessed and redefined according to the expected development

of the security situation so that the national armies would be able to take effective action in the event of a national threat.

In order to ensure good protection of the CEU area in the near future, it is necessary that the individual participating states redefine their priorities. The tasks and especially the development of national armies will need to be given priority over the tasks of building expeditionary forces for hypothetical joint security missions. Relying on someone else to solve the security crisis for us is really naive.

In this respect, it seems useful for the national armies of the CEU member states to strive for the highest possible degree of mutual compatibility – a common language of communication, a common system of command, common calibre of ammunition and weapons. Joint military exercises seem to be a key factor and it needs to be ensured they do not prepare for imminent threats only. A short response time with subsequent elimination of the threat is imperative. However, it will also be necessary to organise exercises that take into account the possibility of a longer-lasting positional conflict and to test systems of logistic support during a prolonged combat exposure.

The mutual compatibility is closely related to the development of a unified system of standardisation and codification. It applies both to the material supplies area and to the area of terminology and communication, which will be important for identification and elimination of emerging threats. However, this cannot be achieved without consensus on the identification and prediction of specific threats. In order to achieve a qualitatively satisfactory result, it will be necessary to create a meta-data environment providing high-quality and uniformly structured intelligence data (this will be particularly important for cases where a very rapid response to a threat is required).

Ongoing consultations on the sequence of steps to be taken will need to be secured at the CEDA Defence Council level (risk definition, threat analysis, crisis plans, national response capability). In a real-situation deployment (i.e. in conflict resolution), the commander of the respective national army on whose territory the action would be taking place would always be in command. The armies of other member states would play a supporting and cooperative role where required.

One of the key principles of the CEDA should be the declaration of the absence of nuclear weapons on the CEDA territory. Yet the CEDA should clearly have the ability to strike against nuclear weapons carrier systems across their entire existing range in order to be an alliance respected by potential adversaries. This will require introducing a hierarchy of the transmitted data and response times to these specific threats. The CEDA Defence Council should have the main say.

ADVANTAGES OF AN ABSENCE OF A HEGEMONIC POWER

The CEU does not necessarily need to be dominated by a hegemonic power (like the US in NATO, or like the former Soviet Union in the Warsaw Pact). The absence of a hegemonic power can be a benefit that may contribute to a more efficient response at times when efficient defence against a common threat needs to be secured rather than promoting the sphere-of-influence interests of a hegemonic power. At the same time, this eliminates potential disputes over funding as a clear structure of proportional contributions paid by individual member states to finance common defence can be set up and it thus cannot be expected that a hegemonic power would bear the brunt of the financial burden in exchange for asserting its influence. This would also allow avoiding unwanted political pressures of the hegemonic power on procurement of armaments for national armies.

Cooperation in the field of defence would not only lead to greater stabilisation of the area, but also to a more significant development of the scientific research base and thus to the strengthening of the economic power of the area in the field of advanced technologies. The key benefit, however, would be the strengthening of good neighbourly ties stemming from the knowledge that the space of the CEU is determined by the member states themselves, and not under passive pressure of the neighbouring countries striving to make the CEU states comply with their economic and political interests.

It should be borne in mind that the ability to defend effectively against all threats is one of the defining aspects of state sovereignty. The same applies to a community of states that choose to cooperate closely in order to be able to fend off all threats and pressures coming from outside their territories. Common defence must be addressed from the outset as one of the most pressing CEU needs. If the CEU project is to succeed in the long term, common defence must be a priority for all participating nations and states from the outset.

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Security in the Central European Confederation

It may sound surprising, but the most important prerequisite for a sense of security is a clarified identity. We all feel a sense of belonging to a particular group of people. As for me, I am Ostravian, Czech, European and a white male. And I am sure I could find other groups of people I could identify with. And it is also true that while I feel at home in Pilsen, although I come from North Moravia, I don't feel the same way in Moscow or Madrid. What I am saying is that my proper identity is neither Ostravian nor European. I am primarily Czech because of the common language, culture and historical memory. This identity has been developing over centuries, and the progressivist idea of melting nations in the melting pot of the European Union and forming of a new European "nation" is a defunct artificial construct. To define national security, we first need to clarify who we are and where we belong.

Another crucial factor that fundamentally influences our sense of belonging and hence security is the family. It is this primary community – if well-functioning – to which we relate not only our existence but also our sense of real security throughout our lives.

The next "circle of security" is neither the city nor the European Union but the nation state, in this case the Czech Republic.

Effective border protection is another essential prerequisite for ensuring the security of us all. Borders have served and still serve various purposes and are understood in various ways depending on that. The boundaries between districts within our homeland are purely formal, administrative boundaries without any relation to the security of the Czech territory. The boundaries between regions of the former Soviet Russia were of similar nature. They were closely guarded, any movement across them was strictly controlled and recorded, but they had virtually no significance for the security of the respective regions or for the security of the state. Only our state borders, guarded more than 30 years ago by border guards, more consistently in the south and west, and less so in the north and east, have always been crucial for our security. Nowadays, our state borders are completely penetrable along their entire length. This needs to change immediately.

The concept of borders has of course changed throughout the history of various territories. They are not always defined in line with settlement by homogeneous nations, which contributes to the long-term instability of these states. A typical

example of that is the divided Ukraine or Belgium. Even large and powerful states tend to disintegrate unless comprised of a homogeneous nation. The Soviet Union, which had sought to mix different peoples and unite them under a common language and ideology for more than 70 years of its existence, eventually failed to cope with the eccentric tendencies of various nations and cultures and broke up into nationally homogeneous entities when hit by the first truly major internal crisis, commonly known as “perestroika”. On the contrary, ethnically homogeneous states tend to maintain long-term stability. Based on such historical experience, we must necessarily conclude that it is clearly naive to see the European Union as the basis for a future homogeneous state. The common EU border, defined by the Schengen Treaty, is now protected by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). Nevertheless, the Agency’s activities are reminiscent of a non-governmental organisation assisting border trespassers, rather than border guards consistently protecting the external borders of the European Union. Armed forces of individual nation states remain the only truly effective border guards, although their capabilities and readiness cannot be considered optimal in recent years.

When contemplating about our Central European area in terms of cooperation necessary for future survival, it may be useful to search for historical parallels. The Czech nation existed as part of the Austrian monarchy for three hundred years, a period etched in the historical memory of our nation as the “dark era”. From a security point of view, however, that era was certainly far from being dark. Although the union was not always able to effectively resist external threats and was mired in wars for much of its existence, it was always capable of fending off major threats to our civilisation. Invasions by Swedes, Saxons or Napoleonic armies certainly caused a great deal of trouble and economic loss to the Austrian monarchy over the centuries, but they never posed a threat to the very essence of our civilisation. The attacks by the Ottoman Empire, however, were strikingly different. Its attacks brought along not only a completely different religion but also a completely different way of ruling the society and different lifestyle. The peoples of the Austrian Empire were always able to rally together against that fatal danger and resist it with the help of other Christian nations.

The common history of Central European nations shows that borders may be protected even in cooperation among several countries, although the effectiveness of common action of national armies cannot be overestimated as indicated by the conduct of some Czech soldiers in the Austro-Hungarian army during the First World War, with their waning loyalty to the Empire. Nonetheless, it is possible to count on the common action of several nations when facing a common threat. Such behaviour of various nations has happened many times in history – from the alliance of fractious Greek city states during the Persian attacks to the cooperation of a number of nations in the defeat of Nazi Germany.

So what kind of security future should we be shaping in Central Europe today? The belief that individual nations would be able to raise armies capable of resisting a possible danger coming from one of their major neighbours, or even from another civilisation, is not substantiated. A viable alternative is, conversely, a common approach of the countries associated in the V4 alliance, possibly with the participation of other neighbouring states sharing common interests and value anchors. Such a union, however, cannot be construed as a unitary state or a federation, which by their nature and principles of functioning preclude the preservation of independent nation states. I rather see the future in a loose association of independent nation states linked by an unrestrictive type of a confederal treaty. On the one hand, armies must remain national and the responsibility for national border security should rest with each of the participating states. On the other hand, a higher form of cooperation would be feasible to safeguard the protection of external borders.

Identification of the threats that we want to jointly resist, coupled with finding the least common denominator of our interests, is imperative. This includes not only common action against mass migration, but also some areas that are clearly security-related although they might not be perceived as such by the general public, e.g. the area of energy resources. The Central European states will hardly agree on the preferred type of power plants (Austria's current opposition to nuclear power is well known), but they can adopt a common strategy on the import of key raw materials for generation of power, such as gas and oil.

The fundamental security issue on which all the cooperating states should implicitly agree is the defence of our traditional civilisational values, which the current European Union effectively undermines instead of protecting. Families, comprised of a man, a woman and children. Let parent one and parent two live outside the boundaries of this community. Maintaining our version of democracy will be key as well. I deliberately say "our version", because it differs substantially not only from the Russian or Chinese versions, but also from the American one. Defence against the migration of people from other cultures hostile to our own must be vital. For the sake of clarity, I have no problem with people of other religions or other races, but I do have a problem with attempts to mix these often antagonistic cultures. I am able to imagine an arrival of a small group of Russian Tatars of Muslim faith in this country and their integration into our Central European culture more easily than a mass migration of members of a South American nation, even if they may be originally Christian. For religion is not the only factor determining whether various ethnic groups can live side by side. The overall culture of a given nation or ethnic group is key as shown by the difficult integration of the Roma ethnic group into numerous European nations.

The asylum and migration policy is now one of the main sources of disputes among the EU Member States, and might even lead to the breakup of the EU. Although

the said issue was perceived very similarly by most countries in the early days of European integration, over the last twenty years, the opinions of individual governments have begun to differ considerably depending on the degree to which the liberal progressivist ideology of multiculturalism has taken hold in their country. Therefore, the hitherto experience shows that without a common view of who is deemed worthy of political asylum, who can be granted permanent residence or citizenship, and who can be permitted to work in our area, any vision of closer cooperation among Central European countries is meaningless.

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Central European Union should oscillate between a customs union and a common market

More than thirty years ago, changes took place that raised great expectations among many people in Central Europe. From a strictly economic point of view, however, these changes have brought, in addition to some benefits, undeniable economic losses to the post-communist countries. For example, the French economist Thomas Piketty ranks the Czech Republic among the most severely affected countries, as hundreds of billions of crowns flow out of the country every year. And we should say that the same applies also to other countries of the Visegrad Four. In relation to this, the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has long been drawing attention to the disproportion between the revenues going to the old EU countries and the EU subsidies provided to the Visegrad countries. In simple terms, much more money is leaving these countries than they get from the EU funds. The second phenomenon inconceivable for the Central European countries in the early 1990s after they regained their political freedom is the current neo-Marxist rhetoric of top European politicians (and Western politicians in general) associated with the ideology of multiculturalism and the gradual "Islamisation" of Europe. Thirty years ago, hardly anybody in eastern Europe could have imagined such a situation, in particular, because the "East" had only a vague idea of the real functioning of (Western) European integration and its actual objectives. One of the latent problems of the European Union project was the fact that it had three "Fates" with different sets of values. The first Fate was the Christian Democratic movement, which is reflected, *inter alia*, in the symbolism of the EU flag, whose twelve gold stars on a blue field refer to Marian inspiration. The second Fate was the culturally left-wing, federalist and strongly anti-Catholic vision of Altiero Spinelli, after whom the main building of the European Parliament is named, expressed in the Manifesto di Ventotene. And the third Fate was the United States of America, which considered the European integration as an instrument of its post-war world rule, part of which was the suppression of competitiveness of Europe as a political and economic rival of the new hegemon.

In this context, it is appropriate to say that the peaceful fall of communism was part of a planned global transformation of the world. Since the 1950s, both in the west and in the east of the Iron Curtain, there had been debates about the "communist gradualism", which intensified even more when Nikita Khrushchev assumed the leadership of the Soviet Union. The "cultivation of communism" was directly linked to the theoretical premises of convergence between communism and market econo-

my only to be replaced by the globalisation project in the early 1990s. However, both the convergence project and the globalisation project did not foresee the renaissance of the proven concept of a Central European bourgeois state, which, with modernisation since the second half of the 19th century, became an excellent environment for the development of legislation and national economy.

What are the premises for the possible establishment of a Central European interstate entity? There are basically three of them: legal, administrative-territorial, and financial-economic.

The legal premise must be based on the principle of organic growth, which means that the laws are amended based only upon the accumulated case law. That is why the Central European Danube Monarchy insisted on the clarity of emerging legal regulations and held the view that only what clearly does not work should be eliminated from the legal system. It also explains why Alois Rašín, the author of the first law establishing independent Czechoslovakia dated 28 October 1918, adopted the Austrian body of laws. Its clarity served well the Czech national business interests not only during the Czech economic emancipation in the second half of the 19th century but also during the First Republic.

From the point of view of state law, it should be noted that the European Union has deliberately compromised the internal integrity of its Member States by demanding the "regionalisation of Europe". It expected that the newly fostered regional awareness would override and erode the centuries-old national identities of individual countries. The introduction of regions and the NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics – artificial territorial units created for statistical purposes by Eurostat) has distorted the natural structure of historical lands of which the Central European nation states have long consisted. Conversely, the creation of this regional intermediate element was associated with the cancellation of districts as basic administrative units with professional district authorities overseeing the legality of municipal activities and acting as the main plank of state administration in districts. By breaking up district authorities, the bourgeois principle of the municipal system was ultimately destroyed. Instead of restoring the successful concept of bourgeois *ordoliberalism* after 1989, the EU accession process has petrified the inadequate internal structure of nation states. The development of Central European nation states will thus have to go hand in hand with the renewal of their organic internal structures.

The third premise for the confederation of Central European countries is the existence of domestic bank capital. It was the elimination of domestic bank capital in the first half of the 1990s that opened the way for domestic economy control by supranational banks. In the Czech Republic, the key destructive moment was the induced

collapse of Investiční a poštovní banka (Investment and Postal Bank, IPB) in 2000, which ultimately led to the loss of control over a significant part of the domestic economy and its overall slowdown. This is one of the chief reasons for the current negative situation, where low value-added production dominates in the Czech economy. Our ancestors correctly realised as early as in the 19th century that the development of national industry is directly linked to the existence of a national banking system. This successful national economic concept may be exemplified by the history of Živnostenská banka (Trade Bank), founded in 1866, which as an umbrella organisation of a network of small Czech savings and loan associations became the engine of the Czech economy in both the Austro-Hungarian era and in Czechoslovakia between the world wars (First Republic), and whose systemic role was purposefully destroyed by German Nazis after the occupation. On the eve of the Great War, our ancestors managed to build a comprehensive Czech banking system controlled by Czech capital. It consisted of the significant Zemská banka království českého (Royal Bank of Bohemia) as a public institution not so easily subjected to hostile takeover. The role of royal banks was primarily to finance development of national infrastructure. Czech companies were thus able to assume the role of general contractors; infrastructural development financed by domestic capital pulled along other sectors of the national economy, as well as Czech businesses. This was complemented by the people's banking sector comprising several hundreds of credit unions and local savings banks.

The potential Central European Union (CEU) must learn from the mistakes of the European Union, which should have never adopted the Lisbon Treaty, which was rejected as the "Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe" by the Dutch and French citizens in a referendum in 2005, and in 2008 by the citizens of Ireland who were forced by the EU to repeat the referendum. The EU should have remained as it was before the Maastricht Treaty whereby it had been formally founded. Here, a metaphor applies that the state and society are living organisms that should develop organically like a tree, which is definitely not the case of the EU.

What forms of economic integration can be considered for the CEU?

- **Free trade zone** (e.g. EFTA, CEFTA);
- **Customs union** – common customs duties vis-à-vis third parties (common customs tariffs)
- **Common market** – free movement of goods, capital, services and labour
- **Economic union** – states transfer part of their powers to supranational institutions, thus generating problems that can be fatal to integration
- **Monetary union** – poses insurmountable problems to countries overburdened with debt; it requires a common fiscal policy which can only be implemented within the framework of a federal state

The Central European Union stands a chance of survival only if it does not create extensive common institutions. Full economic and political integration never works well, as can be seen from the example of the former GDR and the rest of the Federal Republic of Germany, where both territories are part of one federal state and yet significant economic (political, cultural and demographic) differences persist. The real economic integration of the CEU will thus **need to find a balance between a customs union and a common market**. Keeping member states' national currencies and central banks is in the interest of the member states, but also of the entire union, because they represent a powerful tool for the national economy. Only those parts of the Union that have been integrated to a significant extent may have a common currency, such as the Czech and Slovak Republics in the past whose common currency proved viable.

The optimum economic zone ensues from the optimum currency area theory. It is therefore important to establish a single (non-)customs area for the Union and a common external tariff vis-à-vis third parties. This means that clear and firm protection must exist outwards, regulated by common international treaties with other (global) economic entities. The common economic space of the Union must be identifiable by free movement of goods and capital. A general principle applies that cooperation at the transnational level should only take place if desired by both (or all) stakeholders. Therefore, free movement of services remains to be an open question. It is an indirect instrument of employment that can be effectively blocked by administrative barriers even if declared "free" (as can be seen on the example of some developed EU countries and their attitudes towards new Members States). Nevertheless, some form of free movement of services should be implemented in order to enhance the economic strength of the Union as much as possible, which implies common regulation of the freely moving services segment (e.g. a common system of bank licensing). Free movement of labour is an open question too. It will always be affected by conflict between territories at different levels of economic development (not only because of the price of labour, but also due to different practices and regulation patterns). The CEU must also be defined by internal visa-free travel for its member states' nationals with one exception: the rules of free movement of third-country nationals will remain the sole discretion of each member state.

The key aspect of Central European integration is that the Union must have no common (supranational) taxes. By definition, the common budget of the CEU should be "contributory", including only two types of contributions from national budgets:

- a) **To the common budget** (per capita per year, i.e. per population)
- b) **For a specific project** (based on a specific intergovernmental treaty)

A common budget should only cover the minimum agendas of the Union's common institutions, i.e. the office of the Head of the Union ("ruler's court"), the Foreign

Office (similar to the Commonwealth Office, if exaggerated analogy is used, with embassies paid for by member states, or funded through contributions to the country representing the Union), the War Office, the Strategic Planning Office (managing the science and research complex), and the Arbitrator's Office. The CEU's annual contributory budget should amount to several billion Czech crowns (in today's value), which would correspond to a contribution of approximately CZK 0.5–1 billion per member state. It is very useful to stipulate a maximum total number of civil servants in the Union's supranational institutions, which should not exceed a specific number (e.g. 300 persons) with equal participation of member states' representatives.

Notwithstanding the above, there should be a targeted **political pressure** created at the supranational level concerning common types of levies and their rates. As a minimum, it will be necessary to agree upon "brackets" for basic tax rates (the highest and the lowest levels), through common binding documents in order to prevent tax competition. Standards must be unified and a common certification system established. A common methodology for setting standards and for subsequent certification is also crucial to keep the dynamics of the Union's economy. It is of the utmost importance to create common competition rules to prevent one state from supporting a company or a sector to the detriment of another member state.

It is in the interest of member states to have an internally diversified economy that is able to withstand business cycle fluctuations. The Union can help by issuing guidelines and exerting political pressures. The CEU does not foresee the existence of any common taxes. It is therefore logical that no subsidies will be distributed at the supranational level. As regards common projects, member states will develop their respective parts of common projects on their own territory, paying out of their pockets, or they will contribute to common projects with a pre-set amount based on a joint project implementation agreement. Potential member states will need to understand fairly quickly that strategic projects of national importance will need to be removed from the (existing) EU subsidy system without undue delay. A typical example is the national transport infrastructure, which, owing to the EU subsidy rules, cannot be implemented by the existing EU Member States, unless they start funding it from their own national budgets.

An example of a common infrastructure project could be the Danube–Oder–Elbe (D–O–E) Canal, which would be beneficial and of key economic importance for all Visegrad member states on the north–south axis. Efficient transport of goods by water from Poland through the Czech Republic to the Danube (and vice versa) would require the construction of dockyards and shipyards in Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic. It is crucial to involve domestic companies with regional footprint, which will thus acquire the opportunity to grow, which is currently very difficult. Furthermore, I consider the common **agricultural policy** to be a car-

dinal issue. In the near future, pressures for a zero emission society may trigger attempts to reduce animal production. To that effect, stricter conditions may be imposed on post-communist countries in comparison with the old EU Member States. In other words, the agricultural policy of the EU may very soon reunify top politicians from the Visegrad Group in the same way as recent resistance against migrant redistribution schemes. And, last but not least, the CEU is and will be amalgamated by its energy policy, based on protection of existing nuclear units and the construction of state-of-the-art nuclear blocks in the future.

The Union must have common economic diplomacy vis-à-vis transnational (global) economic stakeholders (e.g. internet, software and technology giants). However, the process of creating a common economic space for the Union will remain a matter that will need to be cultivated continuously. To make it work, the following processes should be supported and further strengthened:

- The Union must be tight in terms of geography (forming a closed unit), transport, communication, information and mental setting
- Intensive trade among member states must be promoted from the supranational level (to gradually release all members from their dependence on Germany);
- Common concepts (policies) must be developed to eventually harmonise the common economic environment (e.g. common debt brakes)

The establishment of an organic legal system and a well-functioning internal structure for each member state, as well as the development of nationally oriented banking and financial capital sectors will make it possible to develop a bourgeois state structure that will support continued development of the national economies of the envisaged CEU's member states. This development of the common economic environment will thus be linked to parallel **nationalisation of member states' internal economies**, leading to the emergence of nationally owned firms as a tool to generate added value, i.e. a benefit arising from international division of labour, which applies not only within the CEU's economic space, but also outwards. The integration level of the whole formation will then reflect current perception of external threats and positive experience with mutual cooperation. If the Union becomes and remains a living organism, there is no need to worry about its future development.

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Vision of Central European strategic infrastructure

It is surprising that many people consider energy, water, heat, gas and data distribution networks, let alone transport infrastructure, i.e. all types of motorways and roads, railways, waterways and air transport corridors, as a matter not worthy particular political attention. On the one hand, they take them for granted (when fully functioning), and on the other hand, they refuse to discuss their development, referring to their technical complexity, which makes them comprehensible only to a small pool of experts. At the same time, the infrastructure, both the functioning and the (more or less) collapsing one, is a scene of fascinating everyday life along with all of its dramas.

But let us start from the very beginning. Every rational human society should be able to **define the strategic infrastructure existing in its territory**, because it determines the success or failure of all its efforts. It definitely needs to ask itself what service is expected from it, in what quality and at what price. In this respect, there is no need to distinguish whether we discuss a single nation state or a group of states that have decided to co-exist and cooperate closely. What does the term strategic infrastructure include? It definitely includes transport systems, i.e. highways, motorways, railways, waterways, telecommunications, communication networks, air transport, product pipelines (not only gas and oil pipelines, but also water mains and often ignored sewerage systems), but also energy, raw materials management, control data management, data network operations and data storage facilities.

The infrastructure comprises technical and organisational processes ensuring proper functioning of the common space and defining the rules of their development, use and sharing, thus creating a technical and organisational platform for economic, social and defence activities, i.e. a platform for the natural day-to-day running of the society and the state including all aspects. Network infrastructure needs to be built and developed, but also – and this is often a stumbling block – maintained. Creation of clear rules for sharing distribution networks and the strategy for management of basic energy resources (their purchase, production, distribution, storage) is a separate chapter. A particularly sensitive issue is the enforcement of information management strategies, as well as security strategies, priorities and standards required for data connections to the surrounding area. In terms of strategic risks, even the cheapest cloud is more expensive than the most expensive storage on own territory and under own control. It means that objective information

security requirements must be part of every tender whereby suppliers of suitable solutions are chosen.

How to untie the proverbial Gordian knot of the apparent contradiction between the need to preserve the operational parameters of most infrastructure networks, and the strategic security of both the systems and their data users? How to do that for the purposes of the foreseen Central European Union (CEU) promoted by St. Adalbert's followers? The principle is simple: Decision-making algorithms and infrastructure management should exist at the lowest possible level. In order to enable people, goods, data or energy travel across several countries, we do not need to create multinational juggernauts that will sooner or later become unrestrained. It is quite sufficient to conclude an agreement on common standards, to establish a small coordination centre with no permanent staff but hiring elite experts (they are never as tempted to abuse their power as career bureaucrats in the deep state). And for the operation itself, all we need is a dispatching centre at the corresponding level, the operation of which is nowadays a matter of routine for any kind of infrastructure.

Based on a substantive agreement, its development can remain firmly in the hands of particular member states (paying out of their own pockets, or contributing ad hoc as per agreement to participate in the construction and joint operation of the strategic infrastructure). However, there is always one precondition: distributed infrastructure management systems should be used, allowing autonomous operation of the smallest components possible, capable of independent operation for at least a short period of time and being able to reintegrate into the common network.

The energy sector and smart grids should serve as an example, because they function exactly on that principle. What does such system consist of? Basic elements of the network (a factory, smart building, family house, hospital, monastery, etc.) are capable of independent operation. In the event of a failure of an extensive and complex network, an apparent paradox occurs automatically at first – the network does not wait until a defect, e.g. a blackout, causes a widespread power grid cascading failure. It quickly and automatically disconnects down to the lowest possible levels. The point of defect becomes isolated and the failure cannot cascade. The "healthy" rest of the network starts re-connecting itself just as quickly – we are talking milliseconds – without requiring an outside intervention. That is why the customer usually does not become even aware of the problem. And the result? Minimal data transfer requirements (only the minimum necessary information is transferred), no need for remote cloud storage services, and very high network stability. In addition, energy from backup sources in buildings and institutions can be resold in times of seamless operation, which render meaningless another mantra of the builders of a brighter tomorrow, the need to invest billions in the so-called "green" energy.

Let us now summarise the most important **principles of security and stability** of infrastructure and networks:

- As a matter of principle, cloud storage services are never used; it makes data secure and dramatically reduces requirements for the internet transmission capacity. Which brings us to the question why we actually need the wildly promoted 5G networks;
- The key principle is subsidiarity, i.e. as many matters as possible are built and managed at the national level, while common technical and connectivity standards are agreed at the central level;
- It is crucial to create a coordination point for critical (strategic) infrastructure in the form of a standing coordination committee and a small dispatch centre;
- It is important to avoid creating useless institutions – decisions should be taken by expert committees to which member states would appoint permanent or ad hoc representatives; I recommend implementing a rotational principle, where the administration services are provided by the host country, rather than using a permanent bureaucratic apparatus;
- Coordination groups for individual types of strategic infrastructure should be established by agreement among the representatives of nation states who need to agree on the establishment, status, and agenda of such groups;
- The jointly agreed solution should be implemented by agreement among the representatives of nation states;
- Key infrastructure parameters: stability and protection of national interests, or the interests of the Union;
- Control data stored in multiple locations are crucial to enable control over the systems; these data must always fully remain under the control of their users and should be sent for processing only at critical moments when needed (no clouds outside of national borders!).

What are the implications of the above for individual modes of transport?

For **air transport**, the key strategic interest of the state is maintaining control over its airspace. It is important for nation states not only to control civil aviation through an air traffic control institution, but also through a parallel military system (parallel corridors).

Thus, in emergencies, priority may be given to the military system (war, rescue operations, response to natural disasters) while still maintaining some civilian transport of passengers and goods. This traditional duality is important not only for national security and defence, but also as a backup in case of crises (strikes of civilian personnel, epidemics, etc.). Similarly, it is advisable to have backup (military) emergency structures to control all critical infrastructure elements, i.e. the railway network, data networks, but also roads (it is little known that the much ridiculed “traffic officers” in

the army were able to replace the traffic police and today they could also be supported by road traffic control centres controlling the road traffic or winter maintenance). Today, possibly with the exception of Hungary, no purely capacity-based cargo hub exists on the territories of member states of the envisaged CEU. The best candidate for implementing a project of this type in the Czech Republic would be Milovice in Central Bohemia, a silent witness of illogic approach to development of strategic infrastructure projects. While this abandoned and derelict site offers the most favourable conditions in the entire Central European region – in terms of climatic conditions, available space, take-off corridor over an uninhabited area of former military training grounds, the exact opposite is true for the Ruzyně airport in Prague, in which billions of crowns have been invested.

For **motorways and road infrastructure**, it is necessary to reformulate national priorities through a CEU expert group (strategic interconnection points within the CEU's territory must be planned first, followed later by the connecting routes). In contrast to today's EU policy, it is necessary to take national priorities and the principle of connecting urban residential areas as a starting point, taking into account also requirements on the logistics (strategic commodities and civil transport flows) of goods (smart motorways). Technical standards need to be set both for the strategic infrastructure and for the vehicles (optionally, joint tenders can be used while respecting the national economic interests relating to infrastructure). A great inspiration for a high-quality road infrastructure is the visionary publication dated 1937(!) entitled *Budujme stát pro 40 miliónů lidí* (*Building a State for 40 Million*) by J. A. Baťa, who, with his skilful routing of the infrastructure (today's D1 motorway is paradoxically routed along the least suitable path, since perhaps only the Sněžka mountain has worse climatic conditions than the motorway section near Větrný Jeníkov), managed to serve the entire territory of interwar Czechoslovakia, i.e. an area considerably larger than the territory of the Czech Republic today, in the least costly way possible via a single motorway.

For **rail transport**, it is important to restore resilience to hybrid threats throughout the CEU area, define national networks and transnational interconnection nodes and routes, define the development objectives for high-speed rail, and develop a methodology for tariff convergence with emphasis on logistics and economics. Surprisingly, even J. A. Baťa, in the above-mentioned book, writes about tariff policy as an instrument of national economic policy. It is certainly worth mentioning that the introduction of state-of-the-art computer technology in railway management has reduced the throughput of key railway lines by about one third. It is not only for this reason that the entire CEU railway infrastructure needs to regain its resilience to hybrid threats and ability to function even in a crisis mode, which at least the Czech railway has lost completely for the first time in its history.

For **water transport**, the key theoretical priorities were defined even much earlier than the above-mentioned Baťa's projects – already during the reign of Charles IV. Today, the most important project is primarily the interconnection of the Central European waterways (Danube–Oder–Elbe), supplemented by development of small-scale water works (in combination with small hydroelectric power plants) wherever appropriate (see the Baťa Canal in the Zlín region). The desired benefits of such a strategy are positive environmental effects, active water management, water retention in the landscape and enhanced stability of electric power supplies. Note also that relatively wide "prosperity zones" flourish around all waterways. As far as maritime transport is concerned, it should lay fully within the competence of the nation states.

The **energy sector** is the family silver of any national economy, but it has been largely neglected in the case of the Czech Republic. Out of all distribution networks and their respective infrastructures discussed, the power distribution networks perhaps create the widest range of multiplier effects. In addition to the importance of reliable power supplies for the national economy, we should also keep in mind that the power sector is an important tool for international relations. So far, the Czech Republic has not been able to benefit from the fact that its power grids are essential for the German power system, which would otherwise have completely collapsed. So far, we have also missed the opportunity to become the imaginary "main switch of Europe" as part of a system controlling the emerging smart grids infrastructure.

So let's summarise as follows:

- The basic building blocks of power infrastructure would be island power systems built and operated on the smallest possible scale, down to the level of individual buildings;
- In the event of an emergency, the system should be able to disconnect the network as quickly as possible into autonomous units and then re-connect them to form a new, fully functional network;
- Energy self-sufficiency means achieving self-sufficiency in electric power generation and building self-sufficient distribution systems capable of islanding (= strategic stability);
- Electric power should be seen as a strategic commodity;
- It is in everyone's interest to coordinate electric power overflows;
- The Czech Transmission System Operator (ČEPS) is an instrument of political power;
- For the Czech Republic in particular, it is desirable to be and remain the "main switch of Europe" and to maintain the coordination of European electric power flows on the ČEPS platform (see the mentioned Baťa concept). The Czech Republic should strive to attain this role not only with regard to its geographical location, but also to the size of available generation and transmission capacities;

- Power transmission mechanisms need to be established (an agreement among transit countries) and this task could be overseen by a standing committee;
- Developing minimal applicable standards for energy security is essential;
- Smart solutions need to be built, e.g. fast nuclear reactors (burning up spent fuel), fast gas-fired mini-power plants, and it is also essential to put in use neglected hydropower generation capacity;
- Strategic scientific research to address energy-related issues should be initiated and supported at transnational level.

Product pipelines, i.e. natural gas and oil distribution networks, need to be equipped with a compatible decision-making system (the respective ministry in each country in charge of infrastructure) and a single coordinating control centre at the supranational level should be established. Let us not forget the bitter experience with the naive and uninformed activist approach to privatisation of water supply and sewerage systems operators – let us never let happen anything like that again! Strategic core infrastructure, in particular in areas where competition cannot be established, must remain fully under state control.

We must not forget the strategic importance of coordinating control over raw material resources, including safeguards to guarantee mutual assistance in crisis situations. It is necessary to define core strategic commodities and a system for their qualitative and quantitative management including minerals recycling. As described above, the key requirement is that these resources (minerals, foods, gold reserves, etc.) are always stored on the territory of the nation state.

The Achilles heel of security and stability of distribution networks is strategic data, their transport, storage and, above all, protection against hybrid threats. The focus must always be on national strategic data. At the CEU level, it is imperative to develop a common strategy and standardisation processes governing the management, transfer and storage of information and data. The key principle is identical as for commodities: data must be always stored on the territory of the respective nation state, and effective common defence against external threats must be ensured regardless of whether these are man-made (cyber warfare) or natural (electromagnetic storm).

A well designed, developed and operated strategic infrastructure, in addition to its fundamental importance for the everyday operation of the country including its transport and technological systems, is crucial also for the national economy. In addition to their direct contribution towards a prosperous national economy by creation of a functional infrastructure offering sufficient capacities, investments in infrastructure can bring also very strong multiplier effects that contribute to the dynamics of the national economy as a whole (each crown invested in an infrastructure project

generates returns exceeding the initial investment many times through participation of multiple subcontractors within the supply chain).

In this country, such investments could start a similar process as witnessed in the Czech lands at the end of the Austro–Hungarian era (see the financing of infrastructure projects by Zemská banka and Živnobanka). By investing in infrastructure – of course, using purely national sources of funding without the destructive and enslaving influence of European subsidies – it is possible to start rebuilding the destroyed national industry and banking sector. The nationalisation of the Czech economy, i.e. the transfer of ownership of companies in key segments to the Czech state and Czech private structures, should be initiated without further delay and it should be based on inspiration by all available historical and foreign models (the history of Živnobanka, the nationalisation of raw material resources and pipelines in Russia in the late 1990s, the nationalisation of the Thai economy in the early 1990s, etc.). An example is Poland, which already started building a completely new transport infrastructure using its own resources – a national airport, a new motorway network and a new railway network, including high-speed railways.

This process must also include some form of social agreement (regulation of clan–corporate groups and their interests) between the state, Czech business structures and the citizens, which would indicate that it pays off to work for the state rather than betraying its interests in favour of transnational (foreign) structures. This attitude towards the Czech “oligarchs” is motivated by the fact that today (unlike in the 1990s) they are no longer needed as an instrument of supranational governance; they have become redundant.

The above steps will lead to the restoration of the institution of the state as the only system capable of ensuring protection of the society and its values while setting a balance between the rights and freedoms, protecting the rights of individuals and structuring a self–conscious community of people (not a servile flock of sheep, easily controllable by digitalisation and artificial intelligence).

If you have read this essay up to here, let me reward you with an optimistic conclusion to our reflections on the possible emergence of the CEU: **building, developing and operating networks of any size is certainly possible** and it is definitely achievable:

1. **Without the existence of large multinational economic entities** with their tendencies to get out of control and aggressively pursue own economic and political interests;

2. **Without the need to transfer huge amounts of data** and store them on remote cloud storage systems and thus without the risk of not only technical failure, but also hostile disruption or spying;

3. **Without the establishment of large permanent bureaucratic control structures** that sooner or later turn into an uncontrollable, offensive deep state that consumes everything constructive and democratic.

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A word in conclusion

I am really honoured to be given the opportunity to write a final word for a collection of texts for which the introductory word was written by the Archabbot of the Břevnov Monastery and in which the authors of the contributions are renowned experts.

The authors presented their perspectives on what the place of the Czech Republic on the geopolitical map should be and introduced their vision of the future of Central Europe. A vision that some may see as bold or even controversial. But who can be sure of how the European Union will evolve and what will the future of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe be? Ronald Reagan once aptly observed: "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction." He was well aware that freedom is not only a gift from above, but also the fruit of thousands of years of history and the struggles of our ancestors. Yes, even for the freedom of our nation, blood has been shed in past centuries. Freedom was, is and must remain part of our existence. It is like air, which we need for breathing. But would we be able to tell soon enough that we are starting to choke?

We are aware of the loud proclamations by some politicians that the European Union is our common home. However, I am certainly not the only one who can observe increasingly marked differences between nations once living on opposite sides of the Iron Curtain. I am neither the only one who is finding that nations living to the west of our borders are not as sensitive to signs of repression of freedom as we are. Let us make no mistake – political correctness, kneeling before football matches or Friday truancy in the name of climate protection are only the beginning. Unlike us, who still remember the totalitarian regime very well, people in the West do not fully realise that if we do not pay sufficient attention to isolated signs of loss of freedom they can quickly turn into a permanent reality.

Most people who witnessed the loss of freedom that occurred during the enforcement of Nazi ideology are no longer alive. There is hardly anyone left to recount these horrors to the current generation in a truly human way, and unfortunately few are able to be fully aware of the historical experience and learn from it properly. "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," said Jean-Paul Sartre.

More and more often, we are witnessing how the V4 countries, together with other "post-communist" states, are standing against the attitudes that are gaining on influence in the Western EU countries. A typical example is the perception of the activi-

ties of the Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg. While in the Western EU countries this activist was adored, received by prime ministers and frenetically applauded by businessmen in Davos or statesmen at the UN headquarters in New York, in the V4 countries astonishment prevailed over the hype around this girl who, as many believed, was in need of professional medical help rather than admiring applause.

The V4 countries have a similarly disparate view of other promoted “policies”. The opinion that illegal migration from Muslim countries should be encouraged, expressed in Angela Merkel’s famous slogan “Wir schaffen das!”, was and remains completely marginal in the V4 countries. The V4 countries, as well as other Central and Eastern European countries, are certainly not xenophobic, as tens of thousands of Vietnamese, Slovaks, Russians and other nationalities living in the Czech Republic alone show. However, we look with astonishment at the attitude of Western European countries whose governments welcome illegal migrants from Muslim countries, relativise the costs of their integration and the deteriorating security situation, and gloss over the impact of the increasingly large Muslim community on political life in their countries. They have also repeatedly raised the demand for “fair” quotas for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Do you recall the German Chancellor’s statement that “Islam belongs to Germany”? Since when? Although many intellectuals and writers (Sarazzin, Houellebecq, Hirsi Ali) have warned of the impact of the Muslim population on everyday life in Western European countries, it is perhaps only the recent warning voiced by the active and retired high-ranking officers of the French army according to which France was heading for civil war that will make governments of these countries adopt more rational attitudes.

There are many other similar examples that could be mentioned: The obsession over combating climate change and the irrational closure of coal and nuclear power plants accompanied with transition to total electromobility leads to an ill-conceived and risky revolution in the energy sector and to dependency on the Russian gas. The impacts of the Black Lives Matter movement, looking for racism where there is none. The efforts of progressive reformers to recognise dozens of new genders with proposals that 10-year-olds should be given “free” option to choose their own gender. The countless “policies” at which we look with amazement, but which, unfortunately, are promoted and fuelled by many NGOs, always find fertile ground among our politicians who feel that this particular topic is “cool”.

These and other differences are reasons for ever closer cooperation among Central European countries that find a consensus on these controversial issues. The issues these countries have to deal with today are not easy and the debate leading to solutions to the problems we face is not just an add-on to our public life. That is why I welcome the opening of discussion on these topics.

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Prague, 27. 5. 2021

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The association Patrimonium Sancti Adalberti, z.s. was founded in June 2020 with the aim of studying, formulating and interpreting the heritage of Saint Adalbert in the context of the Central European region and its value-related, cultural, religious, economic and state-law needs. To promote this idea, the Association also intends to organise seminars, conferences and other public activities.

The Association has a dignified seat in the capital of the Czech Republic, in Prague 6, symbolically in the Břevnov Monastery founded by Bishop Adalbert of Prague in 993, and has been registered in the Register of Associations administered by the Municipal Court in Prague.

The members of the Association are not only experts on the spiritual and historical legacy of St. Adalbert, but also economists, constitutional lawyers, experts in infrastructure, security issues and international relations. The chairman of the Association (its authorised representative) is Ing. Tomáš Kulman.

The Association strives to create a discussion platform that seeks to analyse in a structured way the cultural, historical, global political, economic, defence and security aspects of the Central European area with regard to its possible future state-law structure.

The debate has been initiated with regard to the fact that the global political situation in Europe is changing and, regardless of the opinions of its populations, the great powers are not only thinking about re-organising this area, but also planning it to some extent, of course to suit their own interests. Therefore, the logic dictates that the countries of Central Europe should take the initiative and actively engage in the process of defining and politically shaping this area in order to avoid being traumatised by “about us, without us” decisions.

Currently, the Association publishes its first collection of texts entitled “Saint Adalbert and the Central European Space”, in which it addresses the key topic from various angles and aspects.

The activities of the Association are funded through donations from Czech legal entities and associations and by contributions from Czech endowment funds and foundations; the Society does not raise any funding abroad.

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