

CONFLICT  
COMPETITION  
COOPERATION

IN CENTRAL EUROPE  
IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURIES.  
THE INTRICACIES  
OF THE POLISH-CZECH RELATIONS

edited by Dušan Janák, Tomasz Skibiński and Radosław Zenderowski



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**Translation by:**

Jana Bortlíková (*abstracts trl. from Czech language*)

Břetislav Kozíel (*chapters: 2, 7, 9, from Czech language*)

Leszek Wójcik (*chapters: 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11 + other elements, from Polish language*)

Jan Zasadil (*chapter 4, from Czech language*)

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Authors & Instytut Nauk o Polityce i Administracji UKSW

**Reviewers:**

Doc. PhDr. Jiří Friedl, Ph. D., DSc.

Dr hab. Krzysztof Kozbiał, prof. UJ

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Wóycickiego 1/3 Street build. No. 23

PL 01-938 Warszawa

Tel. : +48 22 569 68 29

E-mail: [ip@uksw.edu.pl](mailto:ip@uksw.edu.pl)

[www.politologia.uksw.edu.pl](http://www.politologia.uksw.edu.pl)

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## Introduction

The importance of the Polish–Czech relations has recently been growing in the context of intensified cooperation between the countries within the Visegrád Group, the Three Seas Initiative, as well as the European Union and the NATO. Of vital significance is also the development of bilateral cooperation, including dynamic growth of trade exchange, advanced cooperation in Polish–Czech trans-border regions (including local government and civil diplomacy). Those believing that we have always had good Polish–Czech relations will find it surprising that over the past three decades the relations between Prague and Warsaw have greatly improved.

Taking into account the past 100 years of mutual Polish–Czech relations in the sphere of political relations between the countries, we cannot help thinking that on one hand they have been marked by distrust, suspicion and aversion, but on the other hand, there have been many politicians and representatives of cultural elites on both sides who aimed at developing a new formula of Polish–Czech relations, in which conflicts and competition would be replaced by cooperation based on partnership principles. It seems that – at least before 1989 – the first of the above mentioned aspects dominated. And although the past 30 years have brought significant efforts aimed at improving the bilateral relations, the above-mentioned ambivalence in mutual relations can still be felt.

Proper understanding of the history of Polish–Czech relations is absolutely necessary if we want to understand the causes and conditions of particular distrust, prejudice or aversion on one hand, and the will and desire to understand and become interested in each other and to cooperate creatively on the other hand. It is also a *sine qua non* condition for successful Polish–Czech cooperation in various areas of social life – political, economic, cultural, in official relations on the central (inter-state) level) as well as trans-border, local, and often private relations.

The past 100 years of Polish–Czech relations and history politics were analyzed and discussed at an international scientific conference titled *Conflict – competition – cooperation in Central Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The intricacies of the Polish–Czech relations*, which was held on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020 in Warsaw and Opava. Its organizers invited outstanding specialists in the area of Polish–Czech relations, from two academic centers – the Silesian University in Opava and the University of Cardi-

nal Stefan Wyszyński in Warsaw. Political scientists and historians were asked to analyze particular aspects and periods in Polish-Czech relations. The conference thus offered an opportunity to announce the results of many years of scientific research and analyses, but above all, to confront opinions and ways of perceiving the most important events, phenomena and processes in the history of Polish-Czech relations.

There were two aims of the international scientific research project, whose part was the above-mentioned conference and the discussion of the research results presented at it, and whose final outcome are the articles included in this publication. Firstly, the scientists considered the significance of history politics in contemporary Europe and attempted to specify what content and form history politics adopted in Poland and the Czech Republic after 1989. Secondly, particular stages in Polish-Czech relations were analyzed before 1945 (with particular emphasis on the 1918-1945 period), 1945-1989 and after 1989.

\* \* \*

This publication consists of three sections devoted to different topics.

The first one, titled: *The History politics in Central Europe* includes: political and sociological analyses devoted to the concept and contemporary role of history politics (Radosław Zenderowski: *The History politics today and tomorrow – an attempt at conceptualization and predictions*) and two cases studies concerning the Czech Republic (Lukáš Vomlela: *The History Politics in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic*) and Poland (Krzysztof Cebul: *The History politics in Poland*).

The second and the largest section titled *The Polish-Czech (and Polish-Czechoslovak) relations before 1989* is composed of chapters devoted to Polish-Czech and Polish-Czechoslovak relations before 1989, with particular emphasis on the 1918-1989 period. The review of the Polish-Czech relations begins with a long article by Rudolf Žaček, divided into two parts – the relations before 1918 and the relations in the 1918-1945 period (*The Czecho(slovak)-Polish Relations Until 1945*). Taking into account the chronological criterion, the above chapter is accompanied by two texts of Polish historians: Bartłomiej Dźwigala analyses Polish-Czech relations in the period from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century (*The Polish-Czech relations in the 10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries in historical reflections of Oskar Halecki*), whereas Adam Buława concentrates on the 1918-1945 period (*The Polish-Czechoslovak relations before 1945*). The last two articles in this section refer to the communist period in the Polish-Czech and Polish-Czechoslovak relations. The first one was written by Czech historian, Dušan Janák, who in the chapter titled *The Czechoslovak-Polish Relations in 1945-1989*, analyzes mostly official – political and also economic relations between the countries, taking into account changes to border contacts (trans-border labor market, tourist traffic), also taking up the topic of cooperation between anti-communist environ-

ments operating in both countries. Dušan Janák's text corresponds with the analyses conducted by Polish political scientists, Jarosław Drozd, who in his *The Relations between Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1945-1989* emphasizes the hegemonic position of Moscow in (shaping) Polish-Czechoslovak relations.

The last section: *The Polish-Czech (and Polish-Czechoslovak) relations 30 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain: successes, failures, challenges*, starts with an analysis of the Polish-Czech relations in the past three decades performed by Czech historian Jiří Kocian, who in the chapter titled *The Czech-Polish Relations after the Fall of the Iron Curtain* analyzes four areas of the Polish-Czech relations in the discussed period. This chapter corresponds – chronologically – with the text of Polish historian and political scientist, Antoni Dudek, who in the chapter titled *The relations between Poland and the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic in the first years after the collapse of the communism system in the context of the European integration process (1990-1993)* conducts in-depth analysis of nine aspects of the Polish-Czech relations in the first four years after the collapse of the communist system (until the division of Czechoslovakia). The section concludes with the text by political scientist, Piotr Bajda, titled *The Polish-Czech Relations on the Eve of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Signing the Treaty on Friendly Neighborhood*, in which the author lists a number of factors shaping the Polish-Czech relations in 1993-2019 in the political, economic and social areas, taking into consideration the dimension of the relations between the governments (bilateral, within multi-lateral and regional institutions), as well as the scale of local government (border) cooperation.

\* \* \*

In addition to the already mentioned goals, the editors of this publication wanted to provide readers with interesting analyses of the Polish-Czech relations by Polish and Czech historians and political scientists, facilitating comparative studies, thanks to which it will be possible to identify both common and divergent conclusions and research prospects. We hope that this publication will contribute to the discussion on the modern history of the Polish-Czech relations and their contemporary political dimension.

We encourage readers to read critically this publication and to make references, polemics and supplements. In biographical notes at the end of the book we include email addresses of editors and authors of particular chapters, which can be used in order to share thoughts and observations after reading this publication.

We would like to thank KGHM Foundation, partner of our scientific research project, for the support we received in preparing both the conference and this publication.

*Editors*



Radosław Zenderowski

## The History Politics Today and Tomorrow – an Attempt at Conceptualization and Predictions

*(...) late modernity, having lost its faith in the myth of progress, forces political entities to engage in developing historical narrations<sup>1</sup>.*

*In place of interdependence of the past and the future, the so-called historicized present has appeared. out of which identity emerges<sup>2</sup>.*

### Introduction

The concept of history politics, though relatively new in social science (German *Geschichtspolitik* being its precursor), has been the subject of numerous works devoted to definition analyses aimed at capturing the essence and the subject scope of history politics, as well as developing a typology of history politics which attempts to indicate various models of history politics. Moreover, in recent years we have seen a considerable number of case studies devoted to selected types of history politics on central and local (regional) levels.

This paper does not aim to present the results of the research into this area so far, since one can find a number of such summaries of research on history politics in the subject literature<sup>3</sup>. This would unavoidably lead to banality if we repeated *de facto* the findings or initiated an argument with opinions that have

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1 A. Barszcz, K. Pilawa, *Polityka historyczna. Próba programu pozytywnego*, „Pressje” 2018 volume 53, p. 51.

2 J. Swacha, *Pamięć zbiorowa a nauka historyczna*, [in:] A. P. Bieś, M. Chrost, B. Topij-Stempińska (ed.), *Pamięć, Historia, Polityka*, Kraków 2012, p. 264.

3 In Polish political science see, most of all: R. Chwedoruk, *Polityka historyczna*, Warszawa 2018.

long been widely criticized. Thus, in order not to preach to the converted. I would like to focus mostly on the challenges that history politics is facing as well as those probably awaiting it in the nearest future. Before this, however, I will present the current state of research on history politics, making this section of my paper as concise as possible.

This article will therefore consist of two parts: in the first one I will present the main aspects and controversies found in the current debates on history politics and then proceed to outline the challenges facing history politics at present and in the near future.

## 1. History Politics as a Subject of Scientific Reflections

We have observed keen interest in collective memory since the 1970s, when it was no longer treated as an individual trait, but a social rather than individual capability<sup>4</sup>. History politics, sometimes described as politics of memory<sup>5</sup>, since its origin, in the 1980s, when the concept appeared in scientific literature<sup>6</sup> (history politics has been used at least since the Enlightenment times), has been in the field of interest of political scientists, historians, sociologists, philosophers and anthropologists. The relationship between politics and history was the subject of scientific reflection much earlier. “The question about the nature and limits of mutual merging of politics and history appeared shortly as a subject of reflection in modern history science in a text by German historian, Leopold Ranke *Über die Verwandtschaft und den Unterschied der Historie und der Politik* from 1836”<sup>7</sup> – observes Anna Wolff-Powęska. The works of Bronisław Trentowski, who used the concepts of “political historicism” and “history politics” were published in the same period<sup>8</sup>.

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4 *Ibidem*, p. 255.

5 Political scientists prefer the term “history politics” (its linguistic precursor being German *Geschichtspolitik*), whereas “politics of memory” (originating in the Anglo-Saxon culture) is favored by sociologists. K. Kačka, *Polityka historyczna: kreatory, narzędzia, mechanizmy działania – przykład Polski*, [in:] K. Kačka, J. Piechowiak-Lamparska, A. Ratke-Majewska (ed.), *Narracje pamięci: między polityką a historią*, Toruń 2015, pp. 63–64. In addition to these two concepts, the term “politics of historical memory” is used. D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec, *Rewolucja w pamięci historycznej. Porównawcze studia nad praktykami manipulacji zbiorową pamięcią Polaków w czasach stalinowskich*, Kraków 2011, p. 18.

6 It is assumed that the term became popular in the 1980s and was first used in the scientific circles by a historian specializing in ancient era, Christian Meier, during the convention of German historians in Trier in 1986. K. Kačka, *op. cit.*, p. 63. See Ch. Meier, *Eröffnungsred. zur 36. Versammlung deutsche Historiker in Trier, 8 Oktober 1986*, in: R. Augstein (editor), *„Historikerstreit“. Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung*, München 1987, pp. 204–214. However, several years before, H. Zinn published a book which did not arouse such significant interest in history politics. See H. Zinn, *The Politics of History*, Urbana-Champaign 1970. According to R. Chwedoruk, “The concept of «history politics» was intentionally used and scientifically conceptualized in Germany. Later on, according to the author, Poland joined the group of precursors of modern politics, and then – Russia. R. Chwedoruk, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

7 A. Wolff-Powęska, *Polskie spory o historię i pamięć. Polityka historyczna*, „Przegląd Zachodni” 2007 No. 1, p. 7.

8 R. Chwedoruk, *op. cit.*, pp. 125–126. In his book the author analyzes the output of such precursors of history politics as already mentioned B. Trentowski, R. Aron, H. Zinn, B. Magubane. *Ibidem*, pp. 124–138.

It should also be noted that whereas the concept and systematic reflection on the phenomenon of history politics are only a few decades old, politics of history itself (perceived in categories of political action), or various ties between politics and history date back to ancient times. “Even in distant eras of human kind, community governance consisted in taking political action, in which memorized information was implicitly or explicitly evoked and – consequently – mythologized opinions about the past were used in order to accomplish some determined goals”<sup>9</sup>. E. Ponczek claims that it was specific history pre-politics, “of which past political decision-makers were not aware, although they might have observed that reference to particular tradition justifies and legitimizes the execution of authority in the state”<sup>10</sup>.

It must be emphasized that **many historians** have expressed very negative views on the idea of history politics, considering it nothing but an attempt at political and ideological treatment of history and cynically instrumental treatment of the results of scientific research in form of historiography. To use J. Le Goff’s opinion, historians criticize “employing the past to revolutionary and political fight”<sup>11</sup>. This criticism is based on accusing politicians of selective approach to results of historical research and using them in their fight for power or abusing them in the process of legitimizing their rule<sup>12</sup>. As R. Chwedoruk observes, “In times when politics in its old form was expected to die, when the crisis of political institutions is developing, the concept of history politics has been popularized, thus implying *ipso facto* that politicians have annexed another area of social life”<sup>13</sup>. M. Kula, on the other hand, writes in one of his papers that “«history politics» is not only action taken to expand historical knowledge of the society. If this was so, I would accept that. Such knowledge is negligible and boils down to scarce information on a few symbols constituting an alphabet of social communication” (...) «History politics», however, does not promote knowledge but one specific and often selective or appropriately furnished version of history. Who decides what vision it is? How do we determine which vision is valid or at least which vision is to be promoted. Do we base this decision on the fact that we like one politician and his tradition while we dislike another one? Why should there be only one vision? In history it is much easier to say what is false than what is true. Visions will differ and this is natural, and even – I will venture to claim – desirable. One historical vision can be achieved only in a totalitarian state”<sup>14</sup>.

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9 E. Ponczek, *Polityka wobec pamięci versus polityka historyczna: aspekty semantyczny, aksjologiczny i merytoryczny w narracji polskiej*, „Przegląd Politologiczny” 2013 No. 2, p. 10.

10 *Ibidem*, p. 11.

11 J. Le Goff, *Historia i pamięć*, Warszawa 2007, p. 61, quoted after: R. Chwedoruk, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

12 J. Olędzka, *Konflikty pamięci a geopolityka przestrzeni poradzieckiej*, [in:] E. Dąbrowicz, B. Larenta, M. Domurad (ed.), *Świadectwa pamięci. W kręgu źródeł i dyskursów (od XIX wieku do dzisiaj)*, Białystok 2017, pp. 337-338.

13 R. Chwedoruk, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

14 M. Kula, *Polityka historyczna? Dla mnie nie, dziękuję*, „PAUza Akademicka” 2016 No. 338-339, p. 2.

Historians felt that their autonomy and freedom of scientific research was threatened, forgetting that some of them infamously supported various political regimes with their writing, often twisting it to match theses on the past promoted by representatives of the regime (be it authoritarian or democratic regime – though the latter is admittedly a much rarer phenomenon). For historians, as K. Kačka writes, “the most important task is objectivity and pursuit of the truth, which often contradicts the goals of politics – power and influence”<sup>15</sup>. J. Swacha points at fundamental differences between the goals of historiography and history politics. “The goals of memory and history also differ. The aim of history is to gain true knowledge of old times, using the most objective tools available. Collective memory is, by its nature, subjective, imperfect and evaluative. It contains falsifications. It does not aim at learning historical truth (...), but at providing an answer to the question of why a given group reconstructs its past in a particular way. Its main goal is to examine, «how the society experiences its past, not what this past is like»”<sup>16</sup>.

This does not only refer to the dispute between historians and politicians, as we can also observe that there is a dispute between historians and political scientists, though it is not as heated as the former one. While historical science is still dominated by criticism or at least distance to using history in current politics, in political science we can observe two approaches to the issue. The first one *de facto* repeats the reservations of historians concerning the potential abuse of history in political activity, whereas the second one offers some justification as to why certain historical events, people and institutions should be evoked in the political life of a state and nation. Some political scientists, especially the liberal ones, are prone to seek relations between history politics and nationalism or chauvinism. “Early nationalism consisted mostly in specific perception of history. History was interpreted nationalistically and the nation – historically”<sup>17</sup> – argues Anna Wolff-Powęska. History politics – perceived from the scientific perspective – claims R. Chwedoruk, “may appear as an atavistic reaction to globalization, digitization, waves of migration and related social tension and identity problems”<sup>18</sup>. That is why the (political) scientific community and the political community will consist of both advocates and fervent opponents of history politics<sup>19</sup>. It seems, however, that the opinions of the latter dominate, at least in the circle of the Western civilization (contrary to, for example, Russian political science)<sup>20</sup>. We must bear in mind, as P. Witek observes, that “History as a discourse of knowledge and politics as a discourse of power, supple-

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15 K. Kačka, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–64.

16 J. Swacha, *op. cit.*, pp. 260–261.

17 A. Wolff-Powęska, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

18 R. Chwedoruk, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

19 See E. Ponczek, *op. cit.*

20 More on arguments put forward by advocates and opponents of history politics: P. Witek, *Doktryna polityki historycznej – czyli „dramat” w kilku aktach*, „Historyka. Studia metodologiczne” 2011, volume XLI, pp. 88 and next.

menting and excluding each other, depending on the degree or scale of power and knowledge centralization or de-centralization, being complementary phenomena, play a specific cultural game whose sense can be found in the metaphor of history politics”<sup>21</sup>.

**In political science, history politics** is perceived as **one of specific policies** of the state<sup>22</sup>. It enjoys a special status, since, as observed by J. Chrobaczyński, “nobody speaks of «physical politics», «biological politics», «mathematical politics», and yet thousands insist that there is something they call «history politics»”<sup>23</sup>. Thus it must be assumed that **the state is the subject (the creator) of history politics**, or, to be more precise, its specialized organs, which initiate cooperation with non-state entities<sup>24</sup>. Similar to other specific policies, history politics is closely related to other (specific or sector) policies of the state, such as: education policy, scientific research policy, ethnic policy, religion policy, cultural policy, media policy, regional policy, and – last but not least – foreign policy. History politics is present both in the internal politics dimension and in foreign politics of the state. It seems to be **one of the youngest specific policies**, accomplishing its goals “in cooperation” with other, above-mentioned policies of the state. That is why many authors are of an opinion that history politics may be analyzed either as autonomous specific policy (remaining, however, in defined relations with other specific policies), or as a “component” of other specific policies<sup>25</sup>. In this presentation, each time we have **intentional actions of state organs or entities commissioned by them**. This should be emphasized, since some authors also include in history politics “all activities – conscious and unconscious, intentional and accidental, which lead to consolidation and strengthening of collective memory (...) or to its change”<sup>26</sup>.

It is assumed that the fundamental and superior **goal of history politics** of a state is to ensure integrity of the state and the nation, the functionality of a particular

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21 P. Witek, *Doktryna polityki historycznej – czyli „dramat” w kilku aktach*, „Historyka. Studia metodologiczne” 2011, volume XLI, p. 87.

22 We may wonder whether entities conducting history politics may include non-state nations (for example deprived of their own state). Wasn't Polish history politics most effective in the period of the partitions, when the Polish state did not exist? If we answered this question positively, we would be forced to verify the list of goals and methods of history politics. In this text, while avoiding to deny the claim that history politics may be the work of non-state nations, I assume that in principle the entity conducting such politics is a state, or, more widely, the state-building elite.

23 J. Chrobaczyński, *Jak polityka historyczna ustanawia, filtruje i usuwa bohaterów*, [in:] A. Bartuś (ed.), *Bohaterowie i antybohaterowie współczesnej Europy*, Oświęcim 2018, p. 99.

24 Reinhart Koselleck presents the pluralism of history politics actors in the 7 × P formula: professors, politicians, priests, pedagogues, poets, publishers, PR officers. R. Koselleck, *Der 8. Mai zwischen Erinnerung und Geschichte*, [in:] R. von Thadden, S. Kaudelka (ed.), *Erinnerung und Geschichte. 60 Jahre nach dem 8. Mai 1945*, Göttingen 2006, p. 13-24. Quoted after R. Chwedoruk, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

25 E. Ponczek, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

26 L. M. Nijakowski, *Polska polityka pamięci. Esej socjologiczny*, Warszawa 2008, p. 43.

political regime in power (*ad intra* activities), as well as to build the power of the state (in *hard power* and *soft power* dimensions) in international relations (*ad extra* activities).

The accomplishment of history politics goals in the first of the above-mentioned dimensions (*ad intra*) is particularly important in situations of deep political divisions and ideological tension inside a particular society. The aim of history politics is then to **strengthen the “common denominator” in the sphere of attitudes, norms and values growing from historical heritage of a particular nation**. The aim of this politics, which affirms a certain catalogue of values, is to support continuity between generations through inter-generation “transfer of collective memory” (**positive approach**). “Collective historical memory constitutes one of fundamental indicators of identity for the community carrying it, as well as an important factor in integration of such community in the area of values and ideas. The contents circulated in collective memory determine attitudes of community members and the shape of actions taken by them towards each other and towards members of other groups (and whole groups). They also affect the system of norms prevailing in a given community. What is particularly important, in contemporary mass societies historical memory appears to be an important tool of rule and social control”<sup>27</sup>. It must be remembered that “the process of rebuilding memory does not take place in the intellectual vacuum. Its context is most of all determined by the current historical memory, the results of previous experiences of community, including also the effects of politics of memory conducted so far”<sup>28</sup>.

National community can be reinforced through affirmation of commonly shared values, simultaneously and parallel to the **creation of a negative image of another country or nation**, presented on the following scale: “other – stranger – rival – enemy”, and specific events connected with it (**negative approach**). Referring to this aspect of history, J. Olędzka notices that “visions of history politics naturally build an area of confrontation, but do not automatically imply conflicts. On the contrary, their processuality offers an opportunity (in a short-time or long-time perspective) of dialogue between groups, nations, societies, states, and this action does not contradict the accomplishment of national interests of particular states. What generates conflict, though, is the instrumental treatment of politics of memory, introducing falsified historical arguments to public debate (also in international dimension), which not only treat history selectively, but also manipulate it according to immediate needs. Then conflicts over memory may generate disputes in the supranational dimension, antagonize nations, ethnic (including the diaspora) and confession groups”<sup>29</sup>.

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27 D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

28 *Ibidem*. p. 30.

29 J. Olędzka, *op. cit.*, pp. 339-340.

A strategy offering an alternative to commemoration is **policy of forgetting and erasing** from collective memory those characters, events and institutions that are considered inadequate to current political goals and the image of the state, or which are too antagonizing for a particular society. History politics usually uses alternating **affirmative rhetoric of glory and memory of “golden age”** and outstanding achievements of (representatives of) the nation and **victimizing the rhetoric of trauma and sacrifice**<sup>30</sup>. Daniel B. MacDonald puts forward a very interesting and, in my view, justified thesis that since the Holocaust the icon of Golden Age has lost its leading position in constructing national identities<sup>31</sup>. It has been replaced by an icon of national hecatomb, something that Dubravka Ugrešić aptly, though perhaps too bluntly, describes as “pornography of disaster”<sup>32</sup>. History politics, emphasizing the suffered harm, very often **supports repossession and reparation efforts**<sup>33</sup>.

A peculiar case is **rhetoric of guilt and remorse** for harm caused to other nations, an example of which is history politics of Germany after the Second World War, although elements of settling accounts with disgraceful past can be found in other history policies, though admittedly they never dominate the narration.

Politicians have a lot of **tools for building and maintaining memory**, ranging from the national anthem and the national emblem, names of public places (streets, squares, etc.), symbolism of places, people and events placed on coins and banknotes, monuments and commemorative plaques (both by erecting and pulling them down), onomastics of urban space, through an official catalogue of national holidays, “medal policy”, educational (school) programs, internet portals and sites, cinematography, to building and developing “institutional infrastructure of politics of memory” in shape of museums and memorial places, aimed at promoting a particular version of history or intentionally leaving ruins of cities and districts or concentration camps as “witnesses of history”, strongly appealing to our imagination<sup>34</sup>. In subject literature we can find the term “memory industry”, describing systematic and programmed history politics<sup>35</sup>. Apart from this official history politics created by political and cultural elite and expressed in the above-mentioned ways, we often encounter **grass-roots (non-state) history politics**, which is usually supported by political decision-makers as long as it is consistent with the officially decreed “pol-

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30 See R. Zenderowski, *Wyciąg wiktymistyczny w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej. O wyższości Holocaustu nad Golden Age*, „Studia Bobolanum” 2009 No. 3, pp. 65–93.

31 D. B. MacDonald, *Serbia and the Jewish Trope: Nationalism, Victimhood and the Successor Wars in Yugoslavia*, [in:] W. J. Burszta, T. Kamusella, S. Wojciechowski (ed.), *Nationalism Across the Globe. An Overview of Nationalisms in State-Endowed and Stateless Nations, Volume I: Europe*, Poznań 2006, p. 99.

32 D. Ugrešić, *Kultura kłamstwa (eseje antypolityczne)*, Wołowiec 2006, p. 269.

33 More on this subject: R. Chwedoruk, *op. cit.*, pp. 215–222.

34 M. Woźniak, M. Napora, *Przeszłość/historia w dyskursach publicznych. Wprowadzenie*, „Historyka. Studia Metodologiczne” 2018, volume 48, pp. 216–217.

35 See G. D. Rosenfeld, *A Looming Crash or a Soft Landing? Forecasting the Future of the Memory ‘Industry’*, „The Journal of Modern History” 2009 No. 81, pp. 122–158.

itics of memory”. It frequently becomes then a specific element of popular (mass) culture. Images of great heroes (for example the so-called cursed soldiers) appear on clothes, stickers put on car windows or coffee mugs. The so-called reenactment groups, reconstructing the most important events in the history of a particular nation, are becoming increasingly popular. And last but not least, church institutions (local Churches) are specific creators of history politics, especially in Central and Eastern Europe region, as for centuries they stored collective memory if a given nation lost its statehood.

As I have already mentioned, history politics is usually conducted **in two directions – *ad intra* and *ad extra***<sup>36</sup>.

In the case of *ad intra* history politics, relevant communication and messages with historical contents are directed at inhabitants of a given state. We must differentiate between the situation of ethnically homogenous countries (Poland, for example) and multi-ethnic ones. In the first case, as long as we do not have experience of civil war which built deep ideological divisions making any dialogue with fellow countrymen from the other side impossible, it is relatively easy to develop some sort of consensus concerning the contents of history politics, especially when some external threats are experienced. In multi-national states there are two types of history politics. The first one concentrates almost exclusively on the interests of the titular nation, marginalizing ethnic and national minorities and helps to reinforce the hegemonic position of the titular nation. The second type of history politics tries to take into account the positive role played by national or ethnic minorities in building (supra-ethnic) civil community, thus making the “politicized history of the state rather than a particular nation the subject of political history. These are, however, model situations. In reality we can find various variants between these positions. Then, history politics generally reflects to a smaller or larger extent the necessity to make some memorization concessions to minorities. It should be emphasized, however, that history politics in ethnically diversified countries is always “a walk on thin ice”, demanding that politicians show sagacity and caution in making explicit historical evaluations.

In the contemporary world, where *soft power* is becoming an important tool in building the state’s position in international relations, the international image of the state is of vital importance. Therefore, material resources of the state, with its economic and military base are not the only factors positioning the state in international politics. Opinions on the state popularized in international environment are equally important. The growing significance of the state image is connected firstly with the progressing process of foreign policy democratization, as it is often co-created by non-government actors (for example non-governmental organiza-

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36 A. Wójcik, *Polityka historyczna jako forma budowy wizerunku Polski na arenie międzynarodowej*, „Świat Idei i Polityki” 2016 Volume 15, pp. 441-445.

tions) and taking into account public opinion in making decision in foreign affairs, and secondly – with the dynamically developing electronic media market, including the social media. And so apart from traditional public diplomacy defined as “g2p” (*government to people*) we are witnessing the appearance of “new public diplomacy” known as “p2p” (*people to people*). This situation brings a number of consequences for the process of building a state image in the international space. History and its inseparable element – national identity, are among the most important indicators of the image of the state (and the nation). History politics in its *ad extra* variant aims at creating a vision of history for a foreign recipient that will arouse respect and that will effectively compete with rival narratives related to the history of a given state and nation, created by third countries (vide: Polish narration of the murderous attack of the Nazi Germany and the Soviet Russia on Poland in September 1939 *versus* Russian narration on Poland in the period between the world wars as a quiet ally of Hitler). It should be noted that history politics “in its export version” is, by definition, significantly simplified and exaggerated as it cannot refer to even elementary knowledge of specific aspects of history possessed by a “statistical” foreign recipient. History politics consists then in imposing “narration in international space through unambiguous evaluation of collective images of the past, made by means of relationally evaluative concepts, such as: guilt, responsibility, sacrifice or pride”<sup>37</sup>.

The shape, contents and ways of creating history politics are greatly affected by **the system prevailing in a given state**. In democratic countries authorities usually try to take into consideration certain pluralism of views on significance of historic events, persons, institutions and related values. Where deep ideological divisions concerning perception of particular elements of national history exist, political decision-makers often adopt the strategy of conscious concealment and, in extreme cases, “wiping out” particular events, characters or institutions from collective memory. It should also be pointed out that in democratic regimes we can observe grass-roots processes of creating collective memory, which, as long as they are not directly confrontational to the narration proposed by the governing elites, may enjoy their approval and support. History politics of authoritarian and totalitarian states is based on radically different principles. First of all, science and scientific research are closely subordinated to a particular regime, because they are expected to provide legitimization for the ruling party (including the leader) and its politics, even if this can be achieved by means of “twisting” the results of scientific research (in this case – in historical science) to comply with particular ideological assumptions. Secondly, generally, pluralism of various historical narrations is not allowed, while the official version of history is imposed on the society and its knowledge is often checked. Thirdly, a common feature of an overwhelming majority of non-democratic regimes is strong concentration of history politics on national en-

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37 A. Barszcz, K. Pilawa, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

emy, which can be a particular nation, state, country or ideological system, usually represented by a certain state or group of states. National enemy does not have to exist only outside the country, in many authoritarian and totalitarian regimes the postulate of fighting an internal enemy (5<sup>th</sup> column) is equally important<sup>38</sup>.

Historical discourse, including history politics, as observed by P. Witek “depending on the degree of knowledge centralization, may perform, in various ways, the cognitive, esthetical, ethical, evaluation, socialization, integration, legitimization and de-legitimization functions. The higher the degree of centralization of power, and thus of knowledge, in a given context the cognitive, ethical and esthetical functions are subordinated to evaluation, socialization, integration, legitimization and de-legitimization functions. History becomes the object and the instrument of power – official, idealized, affirmative history, *a priori* revealing identity attitude towards the future. The establishment of official history leads to the appearance of its *reverse*, in the shape of revisionist, insurrection, anti-history, which is the object and the instrument of emancipation. It is also characterized by *a priori* identity attitude towards the future. The lower the degree of power and knowledge centralization in a particular reference system, the more reversed the proportions in executing the primary property of historical discourse. History becomes the subject of politics and the object and instrument of self-reflection – critical history”<sup>39</sup>.

## 2. The Contemporary Challenges Facing History Politics

Since the origin of history politics, understood as activities of relevant state authorities (in education, scientific research, propaganda – within the country and abroad, culture and arts, especially cinematography, etc.) conducted through specialized organs or activities of other entities with the consent or support of the authorities, there have been significant changes in various areas, which are already determining the shape of particular kinds of history politics.

As far as contemporary challenges are concerned, it must be observed that, firstly, in spite of the fact that the state remains the main entity responsible for conducting history politics, we can observe the growing phenomenon of pluralism of politics creators. These include non-governmental organizations, more or less formalized groups of population, for example enthusiasts – participants of reenactment groups, or representatives of cultural elites and the so-called celebrities.

Secondly, it seems that other countries and societies are increasingly becoming addressees of history politics, which then becomes part of the already mentioned

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38 R. Kostro, *Polityka, historia, propaganda*, [in:] P. Skibiński, T. Wiścicki (ed.), *Polityka czy propaganda. PRL wobec historii*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 7-8.

39 P. Witek, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88.

public diplomacy. The aim of such actions is not only to build a beneficial and attractive international image, but also to deprecate the image of another country and, in extreme cases, to prepare the ground for potential invasion of that country.

Thirdly, the means (tools, channels) of conveying the contents related to history politics are changing dynamically. The improvement of methods and tools of mass propaganda and manipulation cannot be indifferent to the ways in which the goals of foreign policy are accomplished, both in *ad intra* and *ad extra* dimensions. Particular attention should be paid to the development of the social media, which has transformed masses that used to receive messages in traditional printed and electronic media into more active creators of information and self-appointed experts in almost every sphere of social life. A large part of “Internet celebrities” are other-directed and unaware that they become a tool in the hands of propaganda and manipulation specialists.

Finally, the form of communicating the contents related to history politics has also changed, which is closely connected with the changes occurring in communication tools and channels. History politics messages are dominated by short forms: tweets (up to 140 characters), videos (up to 4 minutes), memes, etc.

### 3. History Politics and the Global Challenges

The above mentioned circumstances and conditions of the contemporary history politics constitute the challenges it faces “here and now”. I only mention them here, without making any in-depth analyses, as I believe it is worth devoting more time to global challenges, whose symptoms can already be observed and which may soon thoroughly redefine history politics.

#### A. European History Politics versus non-European History Politics

Although history politics and scientific reflection on this phenomenon cannot be clearly attributed to a specific part of the world, since many countries belonging to different civilization circles use history in accomplishing their political goals, **history politics of the European countries seems to be particularly “intense”**. Some philosophical and political notions and concepts originated in Europe, probably thanks to specific “properties” of the Latin civilization and its complicated history. It was in Europe that the concept of a nation and a national state was defined, as well as the principle of human rights with its origin in inborn and inalienable dignity; the division into *sacred* and *profane* spheres, etc. The foundations of modern science, including historical science, were developed in Europe. At the same time it was Europe that for many centuries used political tools (colonization politics) and aimed at popularizing the values originating in its culture circle, without resort-

ing to violence, **in order to affect nearly the whole world and left its mark on it.** Including history into political discourse may bring totally different consequences in European countries than in countries outside Europe. For a long time we have believed that political discussion on history and its importance for our present situation, our place in the world, etc., determine our specificity. However, it should be noted that this has been a global phenomenon for some time now, as “in various contexts and in many cases under different names it has crossed the borders of the states – pioneers in conceptualizing this phenomenon. Post-colonial settlements of the states and nations outside the Western world with their past oppressors, building national and state identity by the societies of the former Soviet empire, demanding compensation for the historical wrongs done to various social minorities in the Western world, the renaissance of settlements with the Second World War in Europe seem to be never-ending and reaching their apogee”<sup>40</sup>. In the above mentioned context it should be remembered that history politics is gaining significance in at least two superpowers, namely Russia and China.

**Russian history politics** practically did not exist after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the 1990s historians were given access to many archival materials whose publication had been forbidden before. They were used to write history anew, without previous “ideological framework”. This process was initiated at the end of the 1980s, when M. Gorbachev was in power. The availability of such a wealth of archival materials led to heated debates on the past, which were aptly named “memory wars”. A. Daniel called historical awareness of the Russians of that period “pieces of a broken mirror” deprived of the complete picture<sup>41</sup>. This freedom of historical research and popularization of its results was ended during the long rule of Putin. As Jolanta Darczewska writes: “during his presidential rule access to archives was limited again, some documents from the Soviet times had their confidentiality period prolonged, and most of all, historical discourse began to be controlled, which radically changed the approach to historical issues. While at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it focused on what traditions to identify with, how to organize the symbolic space dominated by the dark picture of the Tsar and Soviet past, now it deals with questions such as **why neighboring countries do not appreciate the civilization role of Russia in their history, why they blame it for politics which resulted from historical necessity and why they are ungrateful for unselfish sacrifice.** The radical language of these debates, emotional accusations and generalizations have translated into a defensive attitude towards the Soviet Union, glorification of its superpower politics and «memory wars» with the memory of the societies neighboring the USSR”<sup>42</sup>.

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40 R. Chwedoruk, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

41 *Ibidem*, p. 167.

42 J. Darczewska, „Wojny pamięci”: *historia, polityka i służby specjalne Federacji Rosyjskiej*, „Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa

The beginning of V. Putin's third term of office in the post of the president of the Russian Federation – 2012 – was officially announced “the Year of History” (making references to “great” dates: 1612 – driving the Poles out of the Kremlin, 1812 – “the great patriotic war” with Napoleon). In that year the Military Historical Association (MHA) and the Russian Historical Association (RHA) were re-established. Under the supervision of the latter *The concept of the new didactic and methodological complex of homeland history* was prepared, popularized as “historical and cultural standard” (in Russian: историко-культурный стандарт, that is a factual compendium used to produce uniform message in history course books and publications)<sup>43</sup>. The task of developing the obligatory standard was mentioned several times by president V. Putin in his speeches. He accepted the final version of the compendium at the meeting with its authors on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014<sup>44</sup>.

In 2019 one of the most important topics taken up by RHA was **the liberation of Eastern Europe from the Nazi and Fascist occupation by the Red Army, with special emphasis on the activities conducted in the territory of Poland**. The task was supported by selective declassification of the Soviet archives, including archival materials from Eastern European countries which had been, in fact, robbed by the USSR. One cannot help noticing that Russia has recently based its history politics on the one hand on the myth of the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945), which is to integrate the society around the historic defeat of fascism, and on the other hand, **on emphasizing not only the difference between the Russian civilization and the civilization of the West, but only underlining the confrontational nature of the relationship between two civilizations as its inherent feature**. In this perspective, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are in a very difficult position. For some time they have been presented in a unambiguously negative light by the “export” version of the Russian history politics, which focuses on popularizing a catalogue of negative stereotypes (vide: the raging anti-Semitism of, for example, Poles, skillfully used by the Germans, the alleged collaboration of some political elites in Central and Eastern European countries, including Poland, with the Third Reich, etc.).

**The Chinese history politics** still seems to be in its embryonic form, which only means that we must carefully observe its development. After the death of Mao Zedong and the end of the Revolution in 1976, “the greatest challenges facing the Chinese Communist Party were the so-called three crises of faith: the crisis of faith in socialism, the crisis of faith in Marxism, and the crisis of faith (trust) in the party – observes M. Uszpolewicz, who also notices that they have released the postulates of democratization and liberalization of social life<sup>45</sup>. Theoretically, the grand plan

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Wewnętrzny” 2019 No. 20, p. 13.

43 See: Историко-культурный стандарт в системе ФГОС: системный подход к преподаванию истории в школе и вузе, [https://tsput.ru/rio/document/doc/istoriko\\_kulturny\\_standart\\_maket.pdf](https://tsput.ru/rio/document/doc/istoriko_kulturny_standart_maket.pdf).

44 J. Darczewska, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

45 M. Uszpolewicz, *Turystyka nostalgiczna a polityka historyczna w Chinach*, „Przegląd Orientalistyczny” 2016 No. 3-4,

of modernizing China, initiated at the end of the 1970s, which assumed the implementation of some elements of the capitalistic system into the socialistic one, was aimed at bringing about the changes expected to improve the living standards of ordinary citizens. However, the first fruits of these changes appeared several years later<sup>46</sup>. In the meantime, we could see the bloodily suppressed civil protest in Tiananmen Square in June 1989. In order to stop the process of delegitimizing the communist system, the Chinese authorities decided then to **thoroughly reform education** focused on building ties between citizens and the state and the party.

In April 1991 the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party issued a document on patriotic and revolution education using cultural relics, and the ministry of Education published **an outline of improving education in modern history**. “The studying of history was to become a protective measure against the so-called “peaceful evolution of the Chinese system towards Western models”<sup>47</sup>. M. Uszpolewicz writes that “in 1995 **a hundred places were selected for demonstration centers of patriotic education**. Forty of them were connected with international conflicts (the Second Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945, the Korean War, the Opium Wars), while 24 of them commemorated the conflict between the Communists and the Nationalists (1927-1949). These were mainly battlefields, museums, memorial halls, monuments. In addition, some other historic places showing the greatness of the Chinese civilization were included, such as the Forbidden City or the Great Wall of China, as well as places commemorating people who rendered great service to the revolution (though they were not always members of the party). Following the example of the demonstration centers, local authorities were opening new ones. Soon on the province level (only in Beijing, Hebei, Jiangsu, Jiangxi and Anhui) there were 434 of them, and on the district level – 1938”<sup>48</sup>. Specific practices of secular **pilgrimages to the above places of memory** were initiated, and in 2004 they were official named “**the red tourism**”, and their further development was announced<sup>49</sup>.

It is worth observing that in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the Chinese history politics was still in its infancy age and focused on Chinese citizens, and more broadly, also Chinese emigrants, as recipients of ideological contents. The so-called fifth generation of Chinese leaders, with Xi Jinping as *primus inter pares*, which came to power at the turn of 2012 and 2013, demonstrated greater boldness in addressing certain elements of history politics to foreign recipients. At the end

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p. 376.

46 The People's Republic of China (PRC) at the beginning of this century was the sixth economy in the world, but in 2010 it was already the second one, overtaking Japan – which was of great symbolic and psychological significance to it. A year earlier China overtook Germany and became the biggest exporter in the world, and in 2014 it also became the biggest trading country. B. Góralczyk, *Geostrategia Xi Jinpinga – Chiny ruszają w świat*, „Rocznik Strategiczny” 2016/2017 No. 286.

47 *Ibidem*, p. 377.

48 *Ibidem*.

49 *Ibidem*.

of 2012 a large photo exhibition was held in the Museum of Chinese History at Tiananmen Square, titled “The Road to Revival”, presenting the effects of “a hundred years of humiliation”<sup>50</sup>. We can assume that the increasingly assertive expansion of China, not only in the economic dimension, but also bringing particular (geo) political consequences, will frequently refer to history politics, which will provide relevant justification for the activities of Beijing abroad. The title of the above exhibition is not accidental and probably Western societies will be addressees of various historical settlements more frequently than before.

A growing number of analysts dealing with global politics and the so-called geo-politics, whose scientific status is still doubtful, have put forward a thesis that along with the growth of China’s power and the increasingly aggressive foreign policy of the Russian Federation, the world order shaped as a result of the Second World War (bi-polar order) and as a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union (unilateral order) is being gradually questioned. China is the main driving force in the process of delegitimizing the existing order; its economic power and military ambitions supported with huge financial expenditure have already caused defensive reactions of the USA. We should remember about the informal alliance of the countries striving to question the hegemonic position of the USA (the so-called BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).

Recently we have observed the growing popularity of the concept of the “**new cold war**”, an alternative to the open military conflict which, in times of strong economization of politics and the expanding network of ties and mutual “dependencies” is no longer profitable to any side of the conflict. Cold war, however, has its rules, and one of its foundations is the creation of a negative image of an opponent or enemy. Therefore, we can assume that the growing tension, especially between the USA and China, in which other large countries are more or less directly involved, may lead to such re-interpretation of world and national (country) history which will present the opponent in a very negative light, intensifying aversion to it in part of the international society.

## **B. The Death of the Last Witnesses and the Global Renaissance of the Memory of the Second World War**

The generation of politicians from the opposing front lines of the Second World War, who had personal experience of that period and for whom war terror was part of their life, left politics at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, giving way – in Europe – to the generation of children and the youth, who were fed up with the war memories of their parents and their incomprehensible traumas. This generation rebellion characterized by pacifistic rhetoric, known as the rebellion of the 1968

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50 B. Góralczyk, *op. cit.*, pp. 287–288.

generation, which in the USA was additionally opposing the war in Vietnam, is responsible for specific aversion to history. History was believed to be the source of tension, suffering, hatred, traumas, etc. To simplify it, the values of “Sex, Drugs and Rock & Roll” were to liberate us from history. The above comment obviously concerns the Western culture circles, but it should be remembered that it was the West that for the most part of modern history has imposed its interpretation of history onto the world. Finally, the events of 1989 – the turning point in the post-war history of the world – prompted a representative of the Western cultural circles – Francis Fukuyama – **to declare the definitive “end of history”**. However, as we can see with our own eyes, history, especially history of the Second World War, is making a comeback. And this is happening at the time **when the last witnesses of the atrocities of that period are passing away**. Various manipulators, who perform some cynical operations on collective memory in order to accomplish their political goals no longer have to take into account the possibility that someone who participated in the past events will openly protest and quote their personal experience. We should also observe that the scale of manipulations based on selective use of particular historical events and facts is becoming inversely proportional to the knowledge and the level of historical education of contemporary Europeans.

### **C. From the Objectivistic to the Constructivist Paradigm**

We can clearly observe a change in the way history is understood and collective memory is built in the Western culture circles. It consists in abandoning the objectivistic paradigm and adopting the constructivist one.

The objectivistic paradigm, as P. Witek notices, “is based on a view derived from the positivistic tradition, claiming that history seems to be the reality existing independently from historical tale and social practice and, more or less truly, objectively and realistically reflecting it. The knowledge of past societies gained in this way is neutral and has the privilege of having a relationship with history, which means that its shape and truthfulness are determined by the past – the past traces to which it refers”<sup>51</sup>.

History, however, is more and more often perceived through the post-positivistic paradigm. It assumes that it is pointless to seek some objectively existing events or processes tied in a cause and effect relation in the past. **The post-modernistic vision of history is characterized by extreme constructivism and relativism**, focusing on examining narrations, individual and group experiences, and resigning from attempts at determining objective facts which in this paradigm constitute an empty set or even an ideologically undesirable category. On its grounds “it is believed that the ontic state and shape of history is determined by social practices

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51 P. Witek, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

and historical tales generated by them, which means that they are simply strategies of constructing historically possible worlds in the cognitive, esthetic and ethical dimensions. The knowledge of past societies gained there is a result of various research practices that celebrate memory. As such, it is the outcome of interpersonal relations and social interactions, and its ideological, ethical and esthetic nature is conducive to the fulfillment of certain interests and needs”<sup>52</sup>.

**This lays the ground for various abuses and manipulations concerning history as science and as collective memory**, which becomes some sort of a set of mutually exclusive narrations of the past, which are not evaluated or verified. This ostensible pluralism of opinions on the past and its influence on, for example, the current shape of the state and the nation on the one hand leads to the actual consent for collective amnesia and negligence of history, on the other hand – the abovementioned attempts at manipulating public opinion and collective memory in order to maximize power.

## Conclusion

History politics has future. There are more and more countries interested in using methods and tools of history politics to pursue their own goals both in internal and foreign politics. History, especially in turbulent times, when turmoil and turbulences on a global scale increasingly affect the life of particular nations, gives us support and hope, or at least the sense of being in a specific place and time, something that cannot be offered by post-modernistic political and non-political narrations that make all reference points relative. There is significant evidence that we are witnessing the end of the social world ordered in accordance with liberal and democratic ideology which, through its representative, F. Fukuyama, declared the end of history at the beginning of the 1990s. For various reasons, which definitely deserve a separate analysis, History refuses to be put to the grave.

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52 *Ibidem*.



Lukáš Vomlela

# The History Politics in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic

## Introduction

The processes of vast political, economic and social changes that took place in Central and Eastern European countries as a result of the collapse of communist regimes in 1989 resulted in major social transformations in these countries. The processes have also included a redefined view of the history, as it tended to be predominantly interpreted in compliance with the Marxist-Leninist ideology after the mid-1940s. The present text aims to expound the discussion and present the main topics related to the decommunization processes that had fundamental impact on the formation of politics of history after 1989. Polish historian Andrzej Paczkowski stated that the processes of decommunization in Central and Eastern European countries are complex and multilayered. Therefore, he specified five main planes that are interrelated and should not be ignored when exploring the phenomena associated with decommunization. These include “1. legislative or judicial procedures - that is, what is often referred to as *transitional justice*, 2. public debate, most often (yet not always) associated with the laws in process, and as such, it takes the form of a public controversy and legal dispute, 3. historiography, 4. change of symbols, 5. attitude of the general public to the past”<sup>1</sup> The present text will provide an analysis trying to encompass the planes referred to above; the main focus is put on a presentation of the major changes in politics of history and the views and requirements of the principal actors regarding the politics of history in the Czech Republic (in Czechoslovakia until 1993), with only marginal references made to the Slovak society. The paper focuses on ideas and formulation of topics and differences in how politics of history is viewed by the most sig-

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1 A. Paczkowski, *Co dělat s komunistickou minulostí. Polská zkušenost*, “Soudobé dějiny” 2002 No. 1, p. 28.

nificant relevant political currents and, accordingly, the relevant political parties. The past thirty years of free competition in the Czech political environment have witnessed a number of political parties and movements that succeeded in entering the Parliament. Accordingly, to a greater extent, it will focus on the political parties we can consider relevant within the party system of the Czech Republic (Czechoslovakia in 1990-1992). Invoking Giovanni Sartori's definition, relevant political parties possess a coalition potential and blackmail potential. Apart from the relevance criterion, another criterion selected is that of the impact made on the politics of history by a political party that was or is still active in the Czech (Czechoslovak) party system. Perhaps the most fundamental changes to the re-definition of politics of history took place in the early 1990s. The Civic Forum (OF) was established and active in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia between 1989<sup>2</sup> and 1991, and relevant political parties within the Czech party system have been active since the early 1990s, including the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD), Christian Democratic Union - Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ČSL) and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM), a successor to the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ). These parties have been present in the Czech system of political parties on the parliamentary level continuously since 1992, with a sole exception.<sup>3</sup> In addition to these political parties, other political parties gained their parliamentary presence too but these are paid rather marginal attention in this text.<sup>4</sup> The principal actors and makers of politics of history are the political parties that are involved in the executive branch or cooperated with it closely<sup>5</sup>, and so the following parts of the text will also cover the political parties presenting the actors with the irreplaceable task of recruiting political elites.<sup>6</sup>

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2 In Slovakia, the other part of the federation, Public Against Violence (VPN) was active between 1989 and 1991, closely cooperating with the Civic Forum.

3 A certain exception in this group of political parties is the Christian Democratic Union - Czechoslovak People's Party, failing to reach the electoral threshold of 5% in the elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic in 2010. Yet then, the party succeeded again in an early election to the Chamber of Deputies. Throughout the period when the party was not represented in the lower house of the Czech parliament, the party had seats in the Senate and in regional councils. Conf. J. Bureš, J. Charvát, P. Just, M. Štefek, *Česká demokracie po roce 1989. Institucionální základy českého politického systému*, Praha 2012, p. 424.

4 The parties present in the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic (called the Czech National Council before 1993) for one or two parliamentary terms have been so far: Movement for Autonomous Democracy - Party for Moravia and Silesia (HSD-SMS), Christian Democratic Party (KSD), merging with the Civic Democratic Party in 1992, Liberal Social Union, Rally for the Republic - Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR-RSČ), Freedom Union (US) known later as Freedom Union - Democratic Union (US-DEU), Green Party, TOP 09, Public Affairs (VV), Tomio Okamura's Dawn of Direct Democracy. In 2017, the new parliament entrants were Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), Czech Pirate Party, and since 2013, ANO 2011 has been present in the parliament as the strongest party currently.

5 K. Kačka, *Polityka historyczna: kreatorzy, narzędzia, mechanizmy działania – przykład Polski*, [in:] K. Kačka, J. Piechowiak-Lamparska, A. Ratke-Majewska (ed.), *Narracje pamięci: między polityką a historią*, Toruń 2015, p. 69.

6 P. Fiala, M. Strmiska, *Téorie politických stran*, Brno 2009, p. 67.

Unlike non-democratic societies whose circle of makers of politics of history is often confined to the executive power, with the principal form of its enforcement implemented exclusively through government agencies,<sup>7</sup> Czechoslovakia (much like other Central and Eastern European countries) experienced a pluralization of the society as a result of the democratic changes after 1989, with new political parties established alongside groups of new actors (often diverse), leading to a gradually rising number of historical policymakers. Bernhard Kosselbeck takes notice of these actors and refers to them as “7 Ps”. In his concept, these are professors, politicians, priests, educators, artists, publicists and opinion makers (PR).<sup>8</sup> Regional and local actors can also exert fundamental influence, in particular in highly decentralized nations. In democratic societies, certain options to implement their own politics of history are also available to local authorities, whose visions (in particular in trans-border areas) may differ from the intentions of central (national) agencies in that respect. Other actors of distinct politics of history can be international organizations, with the crucial role played here by the European Union and churches.<sup>9</sup> The text is based on the definition of politics of history by Beatrix Bouvier and Michael Schneider, who consider politics of history to be “conscious support of memory about specific events, processes and historical figures, with political intent and with political goals”.<sup>10</sup> Thus, politics of history is characterized by a deliberate intention of its creators, and its research “serves not only to organize chaotic scraps of individual knowledge and ideas about the past in a meaningful whole but at the same time, it also constitutes a significant tool to establish the identity of the community and boost its cohesion”,<sup>11</sup> and it is characterized with a legitimizing function.<sup>12</sup> Parallel to the concept of politics of history, the concept of politics of memory is also used. As stated by Katarzyna Kačka, the term is assumed by proponents of the concept of the politics of memory, methodologically easier to grasp than history or the objectivity of its interpretation, to be less controversial as it employs events and phenomena that are part of either collective or individual memory, regardless of the impartiality of their assessment; by contrast, impartiality is of great importance to those authors who invoke politics of history.<sup>13</sup> The issue of politics of history consists in the negative connotations associated with it.<sup>14</sup> Besides, both terms, politics of history and politics of memory, fail to be accepted uniformly by all social scientists. While

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7 R. Chwedoruk, *Polityka historyczna*, Warszawa 2018, p. 191.

8 *Ibidem*.

9 K. Kačka, *Polityka historyczna: kreatorzy, narzędzia... op. cit.*, p. 69.

10 *Ibidem*, p. 64.

11 E. Maur, *Památná místa: místa paměti ve vlastním (tj. topografickém) smyslu slova*, [in:] N. Maslowski, J. Šubr et al., *Kolektivní paměť. K teoretickým otázkám*, Praha 2015, p. 143.

12 *Ibidem*.

13 K. Kačka, *Polityka historyczna: kreatorzy, narzędzia... op. cit.*, pp. 62-66.

14 Conf. J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Nędza polityki historycznej*, [in:] P. Kosiewski (ed.), *Pamięć jako przedmiot władzy*, Warszawa 2008, p. 28.; K. Kačka, *Polityka historyczna: kreatorzy, narzędzia... op. cit.*, p. 62.

political scientists lean towards the term “politics of history”, sociologists prefer the term “politics of memory”.<sup>15</sup> In addition, certain language communities also employ terms such as “politics of history, politics of past, discourse of past, war over history, battle of history, mnemopolitical discourse”.<sup>16</sup>

## 1. Politics of History in Czechoslovakia and the Role of Ideology

The topic of politics of history has been part of the Czech discourse only recently. Historiography in 1948–1989 was given the task of legitimizing the power of the Communist Party, who vested considerable interest into historical interpretation, often in search of historical personalities who could be found to share ideas similar to principles of communism.<sup>17</sup> The interpretation of history was confined to the strict rules of Marxism-Leninism. Historians were expected to “interpret the socialist revolution and subsequent communist rule as the paramount and most progressive degree of historical development”.<sup>18</sup> In many countries of Central and Eastern Europe before 1989, the need to redefine the interpretation of history, especially modern history, was limited to a small segment of the society, represented by the political opposition whose influence was only marginal in a number of these countries.<sup>19</sup> Czechoslovakia was characterized by a fairly rigid communist regime under which the opposition activity was rather low-key, compared to other communist countries, yet in 1984, Charter 77 published “*The Right to History*”,<sup>20</sup> a paper containing criticism of the then practice of the ruling Communist regarding the interpretation of the Czech history. The document pointed to the manipulated interpretation of history, traditions and myths since the days of the National Revival heavily focusing on economic and politic topics,<sup>21</sup> with some traditions downplayed for a long time. In particular, this was applicable to the traditions of the Roman Catholic church and the Habsburg monarchy.<sup>22</sup> It was the later political development after 1989 solely that allowed to establish and activate actors such as political parties, non-profit organizations, cultural establishment and similar, who rede-

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15 K. Kačka, *Polityka historyczna: kreatorzy, narzędzia...*, op. cit., p. 62.

16 R. Chwedoruk, *Polityka historyczna*, op. cit., p. 186.

17 *Idem*, *Polityka historyczna w Europie – periodyzacja i wiodące dyskursy*, “Studia Politologiczne” 2015 No. 35, p. 56.

18 M. Kopeček, *In Search of “National Memory”: The Politics of History, Nostalgia and the Historiography of Communism in the Czech Republic and East Central Europe*, [in:] M. Kopeček (ed.), *Past in the Making. Historical Revisionism in Central Europe after 1989*, Budapest – New York 2008, p. 75.

19 L. Holý, *The little Czech and great Czech Nation. National identity and the post-communist transformation of society*, Cambridge 1996, p. 4.

20 *Právo na dějiny. Dokument Charty 77 No. 11/84* [online]. Praha: ÚSD. [cit. 1 July 2020], [http://www.disent.usd.cas.cz/wp-content/uploads/Pravo\\_na\\_dejiny\\_infoch\\_1984\\_05\\_ocr.pdf](http://www.disent.usd.cas.cz/wp-content/uploads/Pravo_na_dejiny_infoch_1984_05_ocr.pdf).

21 *Ibidem*. This paper deals with the state of Czech historiography, refraining from any evaluation of Slovak historiography. See *Ibidem*.

22 J. Dobeš, *Vzdálená vzpomínka nebo stále živý zdroj inspirace? Střední Evropa v českých diskusích po druhé světové válce*, [in:] A. Doležalová et al., *Střední Evropa na cestě od minulosti k budoucnosti*, Praha 2014, p. 112.

fined the view of history.<sup>23</sup> The changes after 1989 have also marked the development of a range of sciences and the expansion of research activities (especially in the fields of political science, history, sociology and cultural anthropology). Thus, social scientists could also deal with topics and issues that were taboo previously.<sup>24</sup>

These processes in Central and Eastern European countries have also been affected by European integration. In Western Europe, at the same time, the processes associated with Europeanization and the formation of the European identity took place, involving discussions concerning the problematic past of the European continent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and attempts to tackle the past and settle its negative legacy.<sup>25</sup> Over the past decades, Europe has also witnessed an increase in extreme nationalism that permeates the political discourse. Another major factor affecting collective memory and politics of history is world globalization.<sup>26</sup> In addition to these factors, collective memory and politics of history are currently facing “the growth of individualism, the ideal of multiculturalism, the postmodern requirement about plurality and today’s profound transformations of the methodology of sciences, including historical science”.<sup>27</sup> All these factors affected the urgent need for important actors, established after 1989, to undertake reconstruction of historic events and interpretation free of the interest and need of the communist parties who had been in power just before then.<sup>28</sup> According to Jacques Rupnik, the Czech Republic differed from the other Central and Eastern European countries due to two principal reasons. According to him, the decommunization itself was quite extensive compared to other countries of the region, while the Communist Party was preserved in the system of party politics, not disowning its past before 1989. Also, “nowhere in the region has historiography been subjected to such thorough purges during the two decades that preceded the fall of the regime”.<sup>29</sup> Until a few years ago, the Czech Republic had represented an environment in which there was a lack of wider discussion “about the specific place of communism in current Czech history and politics”.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, in the field of contemporary history, we can observe a number activities in research, publishing and popularization. Michal Kopeček states that the Czech environment was marked in the past by the fact that “the legitimacy of the new democratic establishment was based on a total rejection of the Communist past”.<sup>31</sup>

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23 N. Maslowski, *Politika paměti jako nástroj manipulace a morálky*. [in:] N. Maslowski, J. Šubrt et al., *Kolektivní paměť. K teoretickým otázkám*, Praha 2015, p. 75.

24 M. Kopeček, *In Search of “National Memory”...*, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

25 R. Chwedoruk, *Polityka historyczna w Europie...*, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

26 E. Maur, *Památná místa: místa paměti...*, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

27 *Ibidem*.

28 M. Kopeček, *In Search of “National Memory”...*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

29 J. Rupnik, *Politika vyrovnávání s komunistickou minulostí. Česká zkušenost*, „Soudobé dějiny” 2002 No. 1, p. 10.

30 *Ibidem*.

31 M. Kopeček, *In Search of “National Memory”...*, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

Jacques Rupnik also listed the main factors that affected Czech society during the first transition years and their troublesome relationship with the pre-1989 past. According to him, Czech society failed to undergo a deeper reflection of the past, and there were several explanations for this situation. The first one is the very nature of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia, especially during the period of normalization, which was characterized by severe selective repression of the opposition and fairly strong ideological control over the society. The normalization regime also fundamentally rejected Gorbachev's reforms in the 1980s. Another reason is the very nature of Czechoslovakia's transition to democracy. The opposition played a vital role in the transition process.<sup>32</sup> In addition to Charter 77, which represented the most important opposition grouping<sup>33</sup> until 1989, a number of different opposition groups and opinion streams allied to form the *Civic Forum* in the Czech part of the federation and *Public against Violence (VPN)* in Slovakia. The political elites of the time were forced to give way to pressure from the grassroots, and thus, they had limited means of negotiating the transition mode, as compared to Hungary and Poland where the then political elites initiated negotiations with the opposition leaders that determined the subsequent liberalization and democratization mode. Communist actors in these countries were better able to enforce the rules of political competition that allowed them to retain a certain influence in the changing environment. The third factor is the social "resistance" to the communist regime throughout its duration. Compared to Poland and Hungary, the Czech (or Czechoslovak) society was characterized by rather low support for the opposition advocating human rights.<sup>34</sup> The Czechoslovak opposition before 1989 can be considered very weak.<sup>35</sup>

## 2. Topics of Politics of History After 1989

Much like in other Central and Eastern European countries, in the early years immediately after the collapse of communism, the political competition in Czecho-

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32 Exogenous factors were of paramount importance for the transition of Czechoslovakia, amplified according to L. Cabada and J. Vodička by the impact of the demotivation crisis. Conf. L. Cabada, J. Vodička, *Politický systém České republiky*, Praha 2007, pp. 122–123. What showed in Czechoslovakia was an avalanche effect as events in other Central and Eastern European countries intensified the crisis of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia, supporting the pro-democracy effort. Conf. S. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Brno 2008, pp. 103–108.

33 A couple of other opposition groups came into existence during the normalization period, such as the Movement of Revolutionary Youth, whose member was Petr Uhl, a post-1989 politician, and the Socialist Movement of Czechoslovak Communists, comprising groups of communist reformers from the period of the Prague Spring. However, these groupings fell short of the importance of Charter 77, which many of their members joined. Other opposition groupings such as the Czech-Polish Solidarity and the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Prosecuted failed to reach the prominence of Charter 77. Yet until 1989, Charter 77 was rather an isolated initiative. Conf. L. Kopeček, *Éra nevinnosti. Česká politika 1989–1997*, Brno 2010, p. 14.

34 J. Rupnik, *Politika vyrovnávání s komunistickou minulostí...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 11–13.

35 L. Kopeček, *Éra nevinnosti...*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

slovakia was marked by the opposition of the “old” and “new” political regime<sup>36</sup>, represented mainly by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the former opposition, respectively.<sup>37</sup> Particularly in terms of the politics of history, the newly established right-wing currents, political parties and movements showed a strong tendency to perceive history along the dividing line between the regime and the civic society.<sup>38</sup> Particular importance was credited to the historic events in 1948, 1968, 1977 and 1989, some of which being presented as symbols of the resistance against communism.<sup>39</sup> Throughout the early 1990s, particular focus was placed on the Prague Spring and other events of 1968, the Soviet occupation and the “normalization” period. A number of historians, politicians and journalists even found “the interpretation of the Prague Spring crucial for the future development of the nation and the method of the post-communist transformation”<sup>40</sup>; the disputes of the then discussions often resemble a generation clash. The interpretation of old historians was under attack and regarded as “distorted interpretation that aims to prove the sense of the reform and attribute its collapse to external factors, i. e. the Soviet intervention”.<sup>41</sup> The issue of the Prague Spring was also linked to the need to reinterpret the presence of Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak events of November 1989 forced the then prime minister, Ladislav Adamec of the Communist Party, to take this step, abandoning the previous narrative of the normalization communists about the Soviet “brotherly help” to eliminate counter-revolution in 1968.<sup>42</sup> The topic resonated in Czech historiography, politics and culture not only in the early 1990s; it has been part of the collective memory since. It can be divided into three separate topics: the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Warsaw Treaty Organization in 1968; the Soviet military presence in Czechoslovakia lasting over 20 years; and the Soviet withdrawal from Czechoslovakia in 1990–1991.<sup>43</sup> The prevalent topics of the history of memory in the Czech Republic are still the contradictions on the timeline between “totalitarianism”, embodied mainly by the communist regime, and “freedom”, embodied by both the First Republic and the post-1989 Czechoslovakia and Czech Republic.<sup>44</sup>

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36 T. Blichta, *Struktura organizacyjna partii politycznych w Polsce po 1989 roku*, Lublin 2010, p. 59.

37 P. Hušek, J. Smolík, *Politický systém a politické strany České republiky*, Brno 2019, p. 64.

38 R. Chwedoruk, *Polityka historyczna w Europie...*, *op. cit.*, p. 56. In this regard, the active forces were, in particular, the Civic Forum, Christian Democratic Party, later the Civic Democratic Party, Civic Democratic Alliance and the Christian and Democratic Union - Czechoslovak People's Party.

39 *Ibidem*.

40 M. Kopeček, *Hledání „paměti národa“*. *Politika dějin, nostalgie a české dějepisectví komunismu*, „Soudobé dějiny“ 2007 No. 1, p. 11.

41 *Ibidem*.

42 M. Černá, *Okupace, přátelská pomoc, devastace. Sovětská armáda 1968–1991 v paměti české společnosti*, „Soudobé dějiny“ 2015 No. 3–4, p. 451.

43 *Ibidem*, p. 442.

44 J. Bureš, J. Charvát, P. Just, M. Štefek, *Česká demokracie po roce 1989...*, *op. cit.*, p. 462.

### 3. The Process of Decommunization and Actors of Politics of History

Since the early 1990s, the crucial point has been the suspected cooperation of certain party officials with the State Security (StB). Such cases were a frequent topic in debates of the Federal Assembly and became part of political campaigns; in particular, they influenced the elections in 1990 and 1992.<sup>45</sup> The debates that took place on the parliamentary floor were part of attempts at decommunization and legitimization of the political changes. The most significant tools for the reflection of the past were certain laws, subordinate legal provisions and other acts.<sup>46</sup> In a couple of years following the downfall of the communist regime, a whole range of essential tools were accepted for the policy of decommunization and legitimization of the political changes, such as the amnesty declared by president Václav Havel in 1990,<sup>47</sup> and certain laws, in particular law on rehabilitation of political prisoners in 1990<sup>48</sup> and the lustration law in 1991.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps the most fundamental step was the enactment of Act No. 198/1993 Coll. on the illegality of the communist regime and the resistance against it, which was significant for several reasons.<sup>50</sup> Most of all, adoption of this law cancelled provisions of the Act on the limitation of political crimes committed between 1948 and 1989.<sup>51</sup> The adoption of this law, was preceded by the establishment of several institutions whose activities were related to the communist past in Czechoslovakia. In October 1992 the Coordination Centre for the Investigation of Violence against the Czech Nation in the period from 8 May 1945 to 31 December 1989 was established within the General Prosecutor's Office. It later changed its name to the Centre for Documenting the Illegality of the Communist Regime, which was now part of the Ministry of Justice. At about the same time, the Office for Documentation and Investigation of the State Security activities was established which was part of the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>52</sup> This office, headed by Václav Benda<sup>53</sup>, was then entrusted, on the basis of the aforementioned law, "not only with the task of

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45 In the early 1990s, certain prominent members of parliament were announced, including Josef Bartončík from the Czechoslovak People's Party (a forerunner of the later Christian and Democratic Union - Czechoslovak People's Party), Boleslav Bárta from the Movement for Autonomous Democracy - Party for Moravia and Silesia, Jan Kavan from the Civic Forum (later joining the Czech Social Democratic Party), and Vojtěch Filip. (Conf. L. Kopeček, *Éra nevinnosti...*, *op. cit.*, p. 117).

46 M. Kopeček, *In Search of "National Memory"...*, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

47 *Ibidem*.

48 *Zákon č. 119/1990 Sb., o soudní rehabilitaci (Act No. 119/1990 Coll., on judicial rehabilitation)* [online], [cit. 1 August 2020], available from: <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/sbirka.sqw?cz=119&r=1990>.

49 *Zákon č. 451/1991 Sb., kterým se stanoví některé další předpoklady pro výkon některých funkcí ve státních orgánech a organizacích České a Slovenské Federativní Republiky, České republiky a Slovenské republiky*.

50 *Zákon č. 198/1993 Sb., o protiprávnosti komunistického režimu a o odporu proti němu*, [https://www.psp.cz/sqw/sbirka.sqw?cz=198&r=1993\\_](https://www.psp.cz/sqw/sbirka.sqw?cz=198&r=1993_)

51 J. Rupnik, *Politika vyrovnávání s komunistickou minulostí...*, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

52 P. Ulkielski, *Czeskie rozliczenia z komunizmem po 1989 roku. Rozwiązania prawne i instytucjonalne*, „Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej” 2020 No. 1, p. 150.

53 Václav Benda patřil mezi signatáře Charty 77, stal se členem OF a později ODS.

documenting crimes committed by the communist regime, but also received the power to investigate them and possibly file criminal proceedings.<sup>54</sup> In 1994, the two mentioned offices were merged before 1 January 1995, into the Office for Documentation and Investigation of the Communism Crime (ÚDV), which is part of the Czech Republic's Police. In addition to investigating and possibly prosecuting crimes between 1948 and 1989<sup>55</sup>, its tasks also include cooperation with scientific institutions and the media.<sup>56</sup> In particular, the requirement for the enactment of the lustration law gained much attention. The process involved numerous discussions on the floor of the Federal Assembly concerning particular drafts, with a gradual formation of three principal trains of thought. The first of them were “hawks” from the right-wing parties (Civic Democratic Party, Christian Democratic Party, Civic Democratic Alliance); the “moderate” train of thought was represented by the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, the Civic Movement and, partly, the Movement for Autonomous Democracy – Party for Moravia and Silesia. The last train of thought consisted of the communists alone who opposed any form of lustration law to be enacted.<sup>57</sup> Disputes between the hawks and moderates mainly concerned “the delimitation of the range of persons whom the law was meant to apply to, as well as the method of evidence presentation in lustration processes”.<sup>58</sup> Parallel to the ongoing discussions within the parliament, changes were applied to the public space: certain streets, parks and public buildings were renamed, some statues were removed, etc.<sup>59</sup> This process was also influenced by the Communist Party itself, whose development was significantly different from the ruling parties in Poland and Hungary, where moderate reformist wings took over to implement changes in organization and agenda, successfully turning both parties into social democratic parties.<sup>60</sup> Regarding Czechoslovak communists, there was a strained relationship between the Czech and Slovak part of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Communist Party of Slovakia, the latter being led by a reformer, Peter Weiss, as early as late 1989. In 1990, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia was formed, whose orientation and program failed to show any significant changes. The party distanced itself partly from its past at the party congress in Olomouc in Octo-

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54 J. Rupnik, *Politika vyrovnávání s komunistickou minulostí...*, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

55 By February 2015, the ÚDV had initiated criminal proceedings in 121 cases, which involved prosecuting 219 different persons. ÚDV filed 119 motions for indictments to the Public Prosecutor's Office, which concerned 118 persons. In the following court proceedings 47 persons were convicted. See: P. Ulkielski, *Czeskie rozliczenia z komunizmem...*, *op. cit.*, s. 150.

56 *Ibidem*.

57 J. Bureš, J. Charvát, P. Just, M. Štefek, *Česká demokracie po roce 1989...*, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

58 L. Kopeček, *Éra nevinnosti...*, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

59 M. Kopeček, *In Search of “National Memory”...*, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

60 L. Kopeček, *Comparison of the Left Parties in Central Europe. Some Causes of Different Successfulness*, [in:] L. Kopeček (ed.), *Trajectories of the Left. Social Democratic and (Ex-) Communist Parties in Contemporary Europe: Between Past and Future*, Brno 2005, pp. 109–112.

ber 1990, providing a new program that incorporated values of democratic socialism. However, these changes were merely superficial as the party accepted them as a result of the democratization changes. A crucial event was the ideological clash of the reformists who were represented by Jiří Svoboda who failed to be supported by members of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia in his quest for a reformist course.<sup>61</sup> Rhetorically, top officials of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia as well as certain communist programs tended to defend certain traditional stances. It carried on with its rhetorics against the “traditional enemies” whom the party defined as the Sudeten Germans, Czech nobility and the Roman Catholic church. It also opposes the Czech Republic’s membership in NATO vigorously and views the European Union skeptically.<sup>62</sup> These attitudes set the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia apart from other relevant parliament parties. The Czech Social Democratic Party is marked with a strong pro-European stance. Regarding NATO, the Czech Social Democratic Party has adopted an ambiguous position, with visible split across the party top and grassroots concerning the issue.<sup>63</sup> The Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People’s Party held a similar stance on the EU membership, but also advocated the Czech accession to NATO.<sup>64</sup> These two parties also advocated the development of relations with Central and Eastern European countries, primarily with the states of the Visegrad Group. In terms of politics of history, the Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People’s Party maintains a course aligned with the Roman Catholic church. The Civic Democratic Party showed a stronger scepticism regarding NATO, the EU and the Central European cooperation; in many aspects, the party holds a more reserved stance, declaring the promotion of Czech interests in a number of its programme documents.<sup>65</sup>

#### 4. Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes

Institutes of National Memory, established in various Central and Eastern European countries in the past, play the key role in terms of politics of history. In the Czech Republic, this kind of institution is the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, established after protracted discussions in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. The advocates of the Institute pointed to the experience of such establishments in neighbouring countries that were also coming to terms with their communist past.<sup>66</sup> In the Czech Republic, the

61 M. Migalski, *Czeski i polski system partyjny. Analiza porównawcza*, Warszawa 2008, p. 68.

62 S. Hanley, *The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia*, [in:] A. Bozóki, J. T. Ishiyama, John (ed.), *The Communist Successor Parties of Central and Eastern Europe*, New York 2002, p. 151.

63 M. Migalski, *Czeski i polski system...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-102.

64 *Ibidem*, p. 111. Similar views were held also by another former parliament party, Freedom Union – Democratic Union. *Ibidem*, p. 108.

65 *Ibidem*, pp. 117-125.

66 Germany established the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former Ger-

main level of political debate was the need to interpret its past<sup>67</sup>, and much like in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, the establishment of these institutes was marked with a fierce political battle. In the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia, these institutions also deal with the period of World War II, originally not included in the Czech environment.<sup>68</sup> The law allowing the establishment of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes was supported by the deputies from the Civic Democratic Party, Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People’s Party, the Green Party and several independent deputies. The establishment of this institution was initially supported by the Czech Social Democratic Party, who later felt increasingly worried about the “demonization of the left”.<sup>69</sup> The enforcement of this law is attributed to the Civic Democratic Party in particular, who has displayed fierce anti-communism throughout its existence.<sup>70</sup> The activities of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes are defined by law no. 181/2007 Coll. (Act on the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes and on the Archives of Security Forces and on the amendment of certain laws), under which the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes focuses on the research of the Nazi and Communist regimes.<sup>71</sup> Its task is to analyze the causes behind the elimination of the democratic regime and to document the crimes of communism and Nazism.<sup>72</sup> Despite a number of successes, some problems persist throughout the operation of this actor of politics of history. Most acute problems include a number of internal disputes and the fact that the research activities of the Institute are “often influenced and predetermined by current political interests”.<sup>73</sup>

## 5. Selected Topics of Politics of History and Relations with Slovakia

Beyond doubt, the most significant topics of politics of history include the perception of the period under the communist regime, a divisive issue between the Czech

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man Democratic Republic (BSTU) in 1990; Poland established the Institute of National Memory (IPN) in 1999; Slovakia established the Institute of National Memory (ÚPN) in 2003. Conf. M. Kopeček, *Hledání „paměti národa“... op. cit.*, pp. 21-26; *Instytut Pamięci Narodowej* [online]. Warszawa: IPN, [cit. 30 September 2020], available from: <https://ipn.gov.pl/>; *Institute of National Memory* [online]. Bratislava: ÚPN, [cit. 30 September 2020], available from: <https://www.upn.gov.sk/>.

67 M. Kopeček, *Hledání „paměti národa“... op. cit.*, p. 18

68 *Ibidem*, p. 21.

69 J. Bureš, J. Charvát, P. Just, M. Štefek, *Česká demokracie po roce 1989... op. cit.*, p. 463.

70 M. Kraus, *Ke vzniku a činnosti české instituce paměti*, “Paměť a dějiny” 2013, No. 2, p. 129.

71 In terms of time, the research covers the period of 1938-1945 and 1948-1989. § 2 zákona č. 181/2007 Sb., o Ústavu pro studium totalitních režimů a o Archivu bezpečnostních složek a o změně některých zákonů [online]. [cit. 15 September 2020], Prague: Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, available from: <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/sbirka.sqw?cz=181&r=2007>.

72 § 4 zákona č. 181/2007 Sb., o Ústavu pro studium totalitních režimů a o Archivu bezpečnostních složek a o změně některých zákonů [online]. [cit. 15 September 2020], Prague: Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, available from: <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/sbirka.sqw?cz=181&r=2007>.

73 J. Bureš, J. Charvát, P. Just, M. Štefek, *Česká demokracie po roce 1989... op. cit.*, p. 462.

and Slovak political class in the context of decommunization, as both communities took a different stance. While the Civic Forum and later the Civic Democratic Party advocated a radical policy of decommunization, the Slovak Public against Violence and later the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) were highly cautious in that respect.<sup>74</sup> The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia itself, together with the Slovak National Party, a party advocating Slovak national values, voted against the lustration law mentioned above.<sup>75</sup> These differences were due to several factors. The Czech part of the country felt to be more affected by the normalization period. Another reason was the economic development that occurred in Slovakia after the late 1940s.<sup>76</sup> The opinions prevailing in Slovakia were that the communist regime in Czechoslovakia was primarily introduced by Czech political elites.<sup>77</sup> In both parts of the federation, the prevailing opinions differed greatly in terms of the historical perception and interpretation of history. These differences were pointed out as early as in the 1970s by A. Brown and J. Gray, following an opinion survey taken in Czechoslovakia in October 1968. While most respondents in the Czech part indicated the First Republic to be the prime era of development, in Slovakia, other periods tended to be rated higher, such as the 1940s and the period after January 1968, the latter linked to the federalization of the then Czechoslovakia.<sup>78</sup> These differences became apparent after 1989 and together with differing attitudes towards decommunization, they contributed significantly to deteriorated relations between the Czechs and Slovaks.<sup>79</sup> Differences between both parts of the federation persisted, in particular concerning the First Republic, i. e. Czechoslovakia between 1918 and 1938. In the Czech Republic, the period is still remembered and perceived in positive terms, while in Slovakia, a highly critical perspective prevails.<sup>80</sup> Similar differences were shown by other surveys conducted in 1990-1992, yet the idea to split Czechoslovakia failed to receive strong support among the Czechs. The Institute for Public Opinion Research conducted several surveys in the first half of 1992 showing that the break-up of the federation supported mere 5% of respondents; their share rose to 11% in March and 13% in June.<sup>81</sup> Many of the polls also reported that the main disputes resulted from economic differences between the two parts of the federa-

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74 J. Rupnik, *Politika vyrovnávání s komunistickou minulostí...*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

75 *Ibidem*.

76 J. Mlynářík, *História Česko-Slovenských vztahov*, [in:] K. Vodička (ed.), *Dělení Československa. Deset let poté...*, Praha 2003, p. 27.

77 P. Příhoda, *Asynchronie českých a slovenských dějin*, [in:] K. Vodička (ed.), *Dělení Československa. Deset let poté...*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

78 J. Bureš, J. Charvát, P. Just, M. Štefek, *Česká demokracie po roce 1989...*, *op. cit.*, p. 448. (acc. to A. Brown a J. Gray, *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States*, London 1977).

79 J. Rupnik, *Politika vyrovnávání s komunistickou minulostí...*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

80 P. Příhoda, *Asynchronie českých...*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

81 L. Kopeček, *Éra nevinnosti...*, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

tion.<sup>82</sup> According to Petr Příhoda, for the Slovaks, Czechoslovakia had never become “an environment where approximation of opinions and motives on part of both ethnic communities and their elites would take place, rather the contrary. Certainly, there were groups that had a consensual counterpart on the other side, but within each such pair, the Slovak partner was a less significant minority on their home ground. This is true of Slovak Protestants, liberals, social democrats and communists. There was no case where the Slovak majority had a consensus minority on the Czech side as a partner.”<sup>83</sup> Although all these differences contributed to the split of Czechoslovakia, improvement in mutual relations can be witnessed in 1993.<sup>84</sup>

## 6. Politics of History and Relationship to Germans

The Czech society had largely a critical view of neighbouring Germany and the Czech-German relations, affected in the modern history by the difficult acceptance of the First Republic by the Sudeten Germans, the Munich Agreement, World War II, and the post-war resettlement of the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia. Yet these contentious issues do not play as important a role in current politics of history in the Czech Republic as they had done earlier.<sup>85</sup> Roughly around the time after the accession of the Czech Republic to the European Union, “the previously homogeneous development of the Czech historical consciousness started to break up. This was especially reflected in the young generation in terms of their more diverse perspective of Sudeten Germans.”<sup>86</sup> The signing of the Czech-German Declaration<sup>87</sup> in 1997 led to an improvement in mutual relations and a change in the politics of history towards Germany. The goal of the joint declaration was to fulfill the effort of both parties to settle the previously strained relations. An interesting phenomenon is that “political agreement to settle past issues was not such a fundamental need for the Czech Republic as it was for the other party”<sup>88</sup>, and the German party felt a certain need to settle mutual relations.<sup>89</sup> The improvement was greatly aided by the process of European integration and the increasingly in-depth Czech-German dialogue. Gradually there were changes in historical memory, es-

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82 *Ibidem* in more detail.

83 P. Příhoda, *Asynchronie českých...*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

84 L. Cabada, J. Vodička, *Politický systém...*, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

85 L. Novotný, *Dekrety, odsun sudetských Němců v historické paměti Čechů. Výsledky reprezentativního dotazníkového šetření*, „Naše společnost“ 2012 No. 2, p. 30.

86 *Ibidem*, p. 32.

87 Česko-německá deklarace o vzájemných vztazích a jejich budoucím rozvoji [online]. Praha: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [cit. 10 September 2020], available from: [https://www.mzv.cz/public/4/10/ce/198497\\_14930\\_Microsoft\\_Word\\_\\_CeskoNemeckaDeklarace.pdf](https://www.mzv.cz/public/4/10/ce/198497_14930_Microsoft_Word__CeskoNemeckaDeklarace.pdf).

88 V. Handl, *Česká republika a Německo, jak se vnímají?*, [in:] P. Drulák, V. Handl et al., *Hledání českých zámů. Vnitřní rozmanitost a vnější akceschopnost*, Praha 2010, p. 164.

89 *Ibidem*.

pecially relating to the period of World War II, a critical view of the Beneš Decrees and the attitude to Sudeten Germans. This was aided by part of the cultural elites, in particular in Czech cinematography<sup>90</sup>, as it produced films dealing with topics previously treated as marginal, starting discussions about a number of troublesome historical moments. The films *Alois Nebel* and *Habermann's Mill* dealt with the “Sudeten trauma”.<sup>91</sup> The destinies of Czech soldiers who fought actively against Nazi Germany in a number of countries are shown in films such as *Tóbruk* and *Dark Blue World*, showing also the destinies of Czechoslovak pilots after their return to Czechoslovakia after WWII.<sup>92</sup>

## 7. Metamorphoses of politics of History and Zaolzie

After 1989, major changes occurred in the Czech-Polish relations that were highly difficult in the interwar period (in particular in 1918–1920 and in 1938), and again in 1968 and in 1980–1981. In particular, territorial disputes over the historic province of Těšín Silesia were the major issue in the earliest period. Tense relations between Czechoslovakia and Poland were exacerbated by the Seven-Day War in January 1919, with subsequent shifts of the demarcation line between Czechoslovakia and Poland.<sup>93</sup> A number of Czech and Polish guerillas also operated in the disputed territory at that time, leading to the overall increase in tension. The partition of the disputed territory between the two nations, as declared by the ambassador board on 28 July 1920<sup>94</sup>, failed to bring about a total resolution of the persistent disputes; Czech-Polish tensions were rife in particular in the area known in Polish as “*Zaolzie*”.<sup>95</sup> The conflict escalated again in 1938. In October 1938, Czechoslovakia was forced to cede the disputed territory to Poland; upon the end of WWII, the territory returned to Czechoslovakia again.<sup>96</sup> Other events adversely affecting the Czech-Polish relations are the conflict in 1945–1947, the invasion of certain member states of the Warsaw Treaty Organization in 1968, and the period of 1980–1981. After 1989, the Czech-Polish relations improved significantly, which, in particular, was facilitated by similar experience of both nations under communism; the essential reason was also the need to coordinate policies towards the disintegrating

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90 L. Novotný, *Dekrety, odsun..., op. cit.*, p. 33.

91 V. Smyčka, *Vzpomínáme na vzpomínku: Kultura vzpomínání jako překlad a trvání*, [in:] N. Masłowski, J. Šubrt et al., *Kolektivní paměť. K teoretickým otázkám*, Praha 2015, pp. 163–165.

92 A number of these films were created with the support of the Czech Ministry of Culture through the State Fund of Cinema. Refer to *Státní fond kinematografie* [online]. Praha: Ministry of Culture, [cit. 30 September 2020], available from: <https://www.mkcr.cz/statni-fond-kinematografie-542.html>.

93 No omission should be allowed for combat groups that operated in the disputed territory.

94 I. Baran, *Těšínsko v proměnách Československo-polských vztahů 1918–1938*, [in:] R. Jež, D. Pindur (ed.), *Těšínsko v proměnách staletí. Sborník přednášek z let 2008–2009 k dějinám Těšínského Slezska*, Český Těšín 2010, pp. 149–152.

95 It is a territory in the modern Czech part of Těšín Silesia that features an ethnic Polish minority.

96 *Ibidem*, p. 158.

Eastern bloc and the accession to the European Union. Mutual contacts of the new political leaders also greatly contributed to this process.<sup>97</sup> Even though after 1989, improvement is visible in the Czech–Polish relations, in particular in those parts of both nations that “were affected by no resentments rooted in a different historical memory”<sup>98</sup>, tensions remain in Zaolzie. According to Grzegorz Gąsior, there is even a lack of historical discourse, and “a thorough knowledge of the regional history is absent not only in Poland and the Czech Republic generally, but even among the residents of Těšín Silesia itself”.<sup>99</sup> Apart from political parties and political elites, we may also partially include central, regional and local establishments among the actors of historical memory. Euroregion Těšín Silesia is of primary importance in terms of gradual settlement of Czech–Polish relations in the region. Its activity is ensured through long-term cooperation between a wide range of actors on both sides of the border.

## Conclusion

The processes of changes occurring after 1989 were multi-layered, resulting in vast transformations of the societies in Central and Eastern European countries. An integral part of these processes was also a redefined perception of history and changes in politics of history, as this was fully aligned with the need of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia between 1948 and 1989. Although fundamental changes in historical interpretation were made possible in full after 1989, Charter 77 pointed out the poor situation and major shortcomings in the Czech historiography as early as 1984. These shortcomings were seen by the Charter 77 members principally in the absence and suppression of a number of Czech traditions and values in the presentation of Czech history. In particular, this was applicable to the traditions of the Roman Catholic church and the Habsburg monarchy. The developments after 1989 allowed to establish new actors of politics of history, to establish social sciences, and to extend the research into matters that had previously been a taboo. Considerable attention was paid by researchers to the major historical events after WWII, in 1948, 1968, 1977 and 1989. At the same time, some of these events were presented as symbols of resistance to the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. The fundamental part of the process of redefinition of historical policy is aligned with the very process of decommunization, which included a number of legal acts adopted in order to legitimize the historical changes, such as the 1990 amnesty declared by president Václav Havel. The most significant laws were the law on rehabilitation

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97 J. Friedl, T. Jurek, M. Řezník, M. Wihoda, *Dějiny Polska*, Praha 2017, p. 614; M. Migalski, *Czeski i polski system partyjny. Analiza Porównawcza...*, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

98 M. Krycki, R. Zenderowski, *Public diplomacy w miastach podzielonych granicą państwową. Przykład Cieszyzna i Czeskiego Cieszyzna (Český Těšín)*, „Pogranicze. Polish Borderlands Studies” 2014, No. 2, p. 222.

99 G. Gąsior, *Zaolzie. Polsko-český spor o Těšínské Slezsko 1918–2008*, Warszawa 2008, p. 2.

of political prisoners in 1990, the lustration law, and, in particular, law 198/1993 on the lawlessness of the communist regime.<sup>100</sup> All these steps were accompanied by numerous discussions and disagreements of the main actors of politics of history who were, first of all, political parties. In the initial period between 1989 and 1991, it was mainly the disputes between the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, later the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (who underwent only minor changes in terms of the historical perception), with the previous opposition, largely represented in 1989–1991 by the Civic Forum in particular. Anti-communism is still the obvious especially in the Civic Democratic Party and the Christian Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People’s Party. The change in the overall geopolitical constellation in Europe and the world have also contributed to major changes in politics of history and memory politics during the period of transformation. In particular, the processes of European integration have influenced a number of actors in these policies. The Czech Republic sought membership in NATO and the European Union. In Western Europe, at the same time, the processes associated with Europeanization and the formation of the European identity took place, involving discussions concerning the problematic past of the European continent in the 20th century and attempts to tackle the past. These processes also affected Czech society and were most significantly reflected in the attitude towards Germany. The most significant step was the signing of the Czech–German Declaration in 1997 intended to calm the previously tense relations. There are Euroregions operating within the EU, with a potential to support long-term cross-border cooperation, applicable to all border areas of the Czech Republic. Over the past decades, in spite of these positive impulses, Europe has also witnessed an increase in extreme nationalism that permeates the political discourse.

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100 *Zákon č. 198/1993 Sb., o protiprávnosti komunistického režimu a o odporu proti němu* [online], [cit. 1 August 2020], available from: <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/sbirka.sqw?cz=198&r=1993>.

Krzysztof Cebul

## The History Politics in Poland

### Introduction

The aim of this article is to analyze the ways of conceptualizing and systemizing history politics in Poland (or, in fact, various kinds of such politics), as well as to attempt at reconstructing conditions determining its/their shapes. Due to its length, the article does not constitute a complete presentation of the subject and should be treated as a review of the above topic.

Our analysis begins with 1989 – the onset of constitutional and social transformation – the consequence of the inefficiencies of the communist system and the breakdown of the geopolitical system to which Poland belonged after the Second World War as a result of the agreement between superpowers<sup>1</sup>. The collapse of the Eastern bloc provided us with opportunities of conducting historical research in the areas that had been closed to scientific research before. Moreover, the new situation meant that independent Poland faced an issue of new identity and history constituted a key element of new, collective identification<sup>2</sup>. However, a new obstacle emerged on this ground, as the country did not know how it should perform its educational function<sup>3</sup>. It should also be noted that at that time the change paradigm did not mean the necessity to confront what had been before, but the necessity to confront the reality of that time. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic of Poland emerged from the transformations of the reality of the Polish People's Republic and this, therefore, somehow burdened the considerations over the present and the past.

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1 More on this topic: B. Cywiński, *Doświadczenie polskie*, Paryż 1984, p. 17.

2 R. Chwedoruk, *Polityka historyczna w Europie – periodyzacja i wiodące dyskursy*, „Studia Politologiczne” 2015 No. 35, p. 59.

3 This block had its origin in negative associations with actions for rebuilding the society performed in the communist state. More on this subject: M. Brodała, A. Lisiecka, T. Ruzikowski, *Przebudować człowieka. Komunistyczne wysiłki zmiany mentalności*, Warszawa 2001.

It should also be emphasized that in the case of history politics in Poland after 1989, in spite of many common elements, it is difficult to claim that there has been one type of politics. This is so, firstly, due to the fact that we do not have a well-established state entity. On the contrary, we can observe a series of complicated interdependencies which result from the influence of internal and external factors of varied strength – shaping, but also disintegrating the transforming state. In fact, this process has not lost its dynamics and complexity and is still continuing. Finally, this is so because the state is not the only keeper of history politics, though there is no doubt that those who gain power as a result of election rivalry are, in this aspect, in quite a privileged position.

## 1. History Politics – an Attempt at Conceptualization

For the need of this article we will assume that history politics is a set of specific actions taken within a certain found awareness situation of a society, aiming at oriented organization and management of collective memory in order to achieve particular effects. History politics is thus an intentional action, whereas the function of history politics is to influence (cause particular consequences – create). If we adopt this way of understanding history politics, we will be able to analyze it in discourse categories, admitting at the same time that collective identities are built in discourses and through discourses<sup>4</sup>.

The starting point for the above definition is an assumption that discourse has a driving force and that the social world is socially constructed. By adopting this assumption we acknowledge that all aspects related to creating history politics can be described as a certain central dialectic axis, determined by the following categories: origin, consolidation, reproduction and transformation of social phenomena within its range of influence. Therefore, the essence of history politics understood in this way is the dialectic relation between the meaning that is accumulated in their complexity: culture, interpretation, subjectivism and action – and materiality<sup>5</sup>. Thus, through discourse attempts, history politics aims at achieving some sort of materialized form in its ultimate stage.

From this perspective it seems vital to seek some terms explaining the shapes of history politics. In order to consider the issue of determinants of history politics (which both form it and allow us, to some extent, to present and explain the mechanisms of its functional dimension), we should begin with adopting an assumption according to which the whole political sphere is permeated and determined by planned and organized efforts to gain and maintain power<sup>6</sup>. In such perspective we

4 P. Sériot, *Ethnos i demos: dyskursywne konstruowanie zbiorowej tożsamości*, translated by A. Dutka, „Teksty Drugie” 1994 No. 1, p. 141.

5 Compare: N. Fairclough, A. Duszak, *Wstęp. Krytyczna analiza dyskursu – nowy obszar badawczy dla lingwistyki i nauk społecznych*, [in:] A. Duszak, N. Fairclough (ed.), *Krytyczna analiza dyskursu. Interdyscyplinarne podejście do komunikacji społecznej*, Kraków 2008, p. 8.

6 F. Ryszka, *Nauka o polityce. Rozważania metodologiczne*, Warszawa 1984, p. 18.

are inclined to acknowledge in the first place that history politics as such – seems to be quite a useful tool to accomplish the goal of holding power, gaining domination and advantage over others. This is especially true when we realize that history has always been and still remains a place of political fight<sup>7</sup>. And although everybody involved in politics focuses on the present and shaping the future, modification or consolidation of a particular image of the past significantly broadens the possibilities of taking action and accomplishing goals<sup>8</sup>.

We must remember that by adopting the above assumption we do not make history politics and political propaganda, which is a cynical and instrumental treatment of history for current political goals<sup>9</sup> equal, as those in power, like everybody else, are limited in their decisions by various determinants of social, cultural, religious and political nature<sup>10</sup>. It seems justifiable to treat history politics as a pragmatic and idealistic concept rather than a simple tool from the social engineering arsenal.

Another issue is that history politics has an official nature and cannot have any other nature. This predictable statement draws our attention to a significant problem. It should be noticed that the concept of ‘official’ contains a certain inclination to reduce complexity, in this case – aspects co-shaping memory, and replacing them with quite coherent images. That is why history politics, especially implemented within foreign politics, is frequently treated in categories of reason of state<sup>11</sup>. This official history politics, due to its special creational potential as the requirements of political practice – effectiveness, purports to be a dominant discourse.

There is no doubt that on the one hand, we cannot neglect the essential fact that in every place where social life is more or less organized we observe some sort of power and numerous interdependencies related to it and generated by it. Power permeates social life, constituting in fact, a multi-entity social relation. Therefore, to put it differently, the essence or the consequence of this relation is specific collective identity, largely shaped by this power<sup>12</sup>. One cannot fail to notice that the state is not the people, but “a small team of people occupying high positions above the people”<sup>13</sup> who execute this power. Therefore, power, which in “material” sense belongs to the state, does not belong to the people. And thus, the greater the power of the state, the less power there is in the hand of the people<sup>14</sup>.

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7 Compare: R. Chwedoruk, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

8 Compare: A. Smolar, *Władza i geografia pamięci*, [in:] P. Kosiewski (ed.), *Pamięć jako przedmiot władzy*, Warszawa 2008, p. 49.

9 Compare: A. Dudek, *Historia i polityka w Polsce po 1989 roku*, [in:] P. Skibiński, T. Wiścicki, M. Wysocki (ed.), *Historycy i politycy. Polityka pamięci III RP*, Warszawa 2011, p. 35.

10 J. Krasuski, *Wyznaczniki biegu historii*, Wrocław 2008, p. 31.

11 Compare: E. Ponczek, *Polityka wobec pamięci versus polityka historyczna: aspekty semantyczny, aksjologiczny i merytoryczny w narracji polskiej*, „Przegląd Politologiczny” 2013 No. 2, pp. 12-13.

12 K. Murawski, *Filozofia polityki. Wybrane zagadnienia prakseologiczne*, Warszawa 1993, pp. 34-35.

13 G. Sartori, *Téoria demokracji*, translated by P. Amsterdamski, D. Grinberg, Warszawa 1998, p. 527.

14 *Ibidem*, p. 528.

On the other hand, along with the development of liberal democracy countries, we can observe a tendency manifested in the progressing weakening of the state as the most important institution of social life and an organizer of social imagination<sup>15</sup>. Thus perceiving a self-limitation trait of the state, typical of liberal democracy, expressed, inter alia, in narrowing the political sphere (which may have a positive dimension, contributing, for example to minimizing conflict situations within the public sphere)<sup>16</sup>; we cannot lose sight of the requirement of maintaining the functionality of the system, in which, inter alia, history politics may be helpful (assuming that the derivative of its influence is, for example, lack of indifference to public matters). Ultimately, each social order must adopt even the most subtle form of peaceful pressure as “conscious interests of millions of people are rarely or even never convergent”<sup>17</sup>. Assuming that power exists for the purpose of maintaining the political community<sup>18</sup>, the key dilemma is how the state should conduct history politics and what picture of history it should promote<sup>19</sup>. We need to take into account the fact that a nation is an autotelic community through its culture and that its nature as a community is determined by this – as it distinguishes it from an instrumental society. However, in reality, as Antonina Kłoskowska observes, this community is not “complete, homogeneous and sustained”<sup>20</sup>. The practice of community life shows that it seems to be “an individualized, pluralistic community, of maximum capacity, containing various identities and various value systems”, and this is a community “of internally varied historical awareness and internally varied culture”<sup>21</sup>.

## 2. The Context of History Politics in Poland After 1989

1989 marked the beginning of constitutional and social transformation. It undoubtedly heralded the new order, though the future was not very clear at that time<sup>22</sup>. The gradual liquidation of the communist party monopoly was progressing, but facing the growing social and economic problems, the new eclectic formula was far from convincing as it was often misunderstood and full of contradictions. These contradictions constituted the costs of the top-down revolution that took place at the Round Table, while the evaluations of this breakthrough moment mostly determined the discourse concerning history politics in Poland.

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15 A. Rzegocki, *Racja stanu w polskiej tradycji politycznej*, [in:] A. Krzynówek-Arndt (ed.), *Kryterium etyczne w koncepcji racji stanu*, Kraków 2013, p. 41.

16 Compare: K. Cebul, *The crisis of liberal democracy and the nationalist counter-project. The problem of the relationality between an individual, the society and the authority*, „Online Journal Modelling the New Europe” 2019 No. 30, p. 58.

17 Compare: G. Tinder, *Myslenie polityczne*, translated by A. Dziurdzik, Warszawa 2003, p. 175.

18 M. Król, *Manipulacje władzy*, [in:] P. Kosiewski (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 23.

19 *Ibidem*, pp. 24–25.

20 Compare: A. Kłoskowska, *Skąd i po co naród?*, „Znak” 1997 No. 3, s. 73.

21 A. Walicki, *Czy możliwy jest nacjonalizm liberalny?*, „Znak” 1997 No. 3, p. 45.

22 More on this topic: *Rok 1989: szanse wykorzystane, szanse utracone*, discussion, edited by T. Wiścicki, „Więź” 1999 No. 5.

These contradictions concerning the evaluation of the transformation period generated three narrations on the significance of the Round Table. The first, positive narration claimed that it was a huge success, “proof of prudence and political wisdom”, as thanks to the negotiations “by means of an agreement and avoiding revolution or civil war” it was possible to “implement constitutional, political and economic changes in a peaceful way”<sup>23</sup>. Moreover, this narration possessed some “inclusion” properties, making post-communists “rightful participants of the myth”<sup>24</sup>. The Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (Democratic Left Alliance since 1999) consistently fought all attempts at de-communizing and vetting<sup>25</sup>. And as time passed, it turned out that settlements with the past were becoming more and more troublesome. On the other hand, the second narration was negative. It relied on a thesis that the Round Table was “a large-scale operation prepared by the communists in the Kremlin and then conducted in Poland with key involvement of secret services” following the inefficiency of the economic system and the collapse of the communist system, whose aim was most of all “to preserve the dominant position”<sup>26</sup>. The third narration follows the middle path, claiming that although the Round Table was a “rotten compromise”, it was simultaneously “a necessary compromise at that time, which acted as a catalyst for further changes”<sup>27</sup>. It must be emphasized that we do not venture to determine which narration is right, but in the context of our topic particular attention should be paid to the second type of narration, described as a negative one – due to its anti-system potential. It contains accumulated power which gradually grows. By questioning the road that Poland has followed, it becomes a source of de-construction. For some, it constitutes an element destroying the order that has been achieved so painstakingly, for others – it marks the beginning of the proper direction of changes. The latter claim that the moment for the right opening is occurring now or it is yet to come.

There is no doubt that the increasingly clear contradictions of the transformation were the consequence of, inter alia, assuming the continuity of the law order from the communist state, which practically meant that although the axiology on which the system was based was rejected, the law was recognized as valid and changes were implemented in accordance with the existing law<sup>28</sup>. The agreement reached between the communist elite and the solidarity counter-elite at the Round Table determined the evolutionary nature of the transformation. Solidarity’s consent for the top-down revolution in fact meant the recognition of the legitimacy of

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23 A. Rzegocki, *Pamięć i narracje Okrągłego Stołu*, [in:] R. Kostro, K. Wóycicki, M. Wysocki (ed.), *Historia Polski od-nowa. Nowe narracje historii i muzealne reprezentacje przeszłości*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 312–313.

24 *Ibidem*, p. 311.

25 Compare: A. Dudek, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

26 A. Rzegocki, *Pamięć i narracje...*, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

27 *Ibidem*, p. 315.

28 Compare: P. Tuleja, *Normatywna treść praw jednostki w ustawach konstytucyjnych RP*, Warszawa 1997, p. 31.

the communist state, which, paradoxically, on its deathbed obtained some sort of legalization from its political opponents<sup>29</sup>.

This legalization also enabled the existing executive staff<sup>30</sup>, the product of specific practices in the People's Republic of Poland, described as nomenclature staff policy, to preserve some sort of continuity. Moreover, we should point at tensions resulting from unemployment growth, which was the consequence of adjusting the economy to free market conditions<sup>31</sup>, and the gradual establishment of "enclaves of »licensed capitalism«, also known as »political capitalism«, originating from governing elites, connected with state and self-government administration and taking advantage of the law it was creating"<sup>32</sup>, which contributed to the growing inequalities as well as the growing number of people who were permanently excluded and marginalized. This led to a deep social division<sup>33</sup>.

Simultaneously, the rationality gap between the governing elites and the rest of the society widened. The most important thing for the elites was that they operated within a new structure, whereas the masses perceived the participation of the people from the old system in power as the continuation of the old system. The elites who thought in categories of institutions which they co-created noticed the change, even if representatives of the old nomenclature took advantage of the new institutions, because they believed the most important thing was to ensure their operation of the new, non-communist structure. However, the masses, observing this passively, evaluated this situation most of all in status categories, therefore the old system people's participation in power was perceived as continuation<sup>34</sup>.

At the end of the 1990s, Witold Morawski pointed at the arrangements of the Round Table, the partly free election in 1989, the top-down economic reform and the ruling of the leftist coalition as stages on the road to "political capitalism" and formulated a diagnosis that they deprive "significant layers of the society of equal opportunities in pursuing wealth, power and prestige". He also observed that such convictions were common enough to eclipse the great achievements in our history after 1989, and that the society transformed from "the admired subject – a hero" into "an object – concern" for the elites in the 1990s, though paradoxically this was happening in the democratic environment. This contributed to the gap between the society and the government. In these conditions, the "us-them" opposition began to gain significance<sup>35</sup>. One could have an impression that influenced by specific

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29 Compare: J. Staniszkis, *Czy rewolucja odgórna jest możliwa?*, [in:] W. Jakóbiak (ed.), *Kontynuacja czy przełom? Dylematy transformacji ustrojowej*, Warszawa 1994, pp. 90-91.

30 Compare also *Ibidem*: p. 91.

31 J. Kofman, W. Roszkowski, *Transformacja i postkomunizm*, Warszawa 1999, p. 58.

32 *Ibidem*, pp. 132-133.

33 M. Jarosz, M. W. Kozak, *Poza systemem. Instytucje i społeczeństwo*, Warszawa 2016, p. 17.

34 J. Staniszkis, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

35 Compare: W. Morawski, *Zmiana instytucjonalna. Społeczeństwo. Gospodarka. Polityka*, Warszawa 1998, p. 159.

“logic of »transformation«, politics and economy were surrounded by moral meanings. The best and the wisest were to rule, the most intelligent and the least “sovietized.were to get rich, whereas “political opponents and those who remained poor, would have to gain quite opposite features” And this category of the excluded soon turned out to be broad<sup>36</sup>. This situation, as Zdzisław Krasnodębski evaluated, proved that “we have not reached an agreement concerning ourselves, (...) We have not provided a full answer to the question of what traditions we want to continue, what is allowed and what is not – now and in the future – as well as what was allowed in the past and what was not”<sup>37</sup>. On the other hand, it should be noticed that the success of the post-communists could paradoxically be connected, inter alia, with the “narrative threat brought by the rhetoric of the right”. The victory of the right, who “glorified the resistance traditions and neglected the sphere of daily life” would mean, as observed by Przemysław Czapliński, that “normal life, lived by millions in the socialist Poland would have been pointless”<sup>38</sup>.

Disappointment with the activities of new institutions and the new power must undoubtedly lead to serious social and political consequences<sup>39</sup>. When current events and mechanisms of political life become incomprehensible, then pluralism, multitude, heterogeneity, the values desired by the developing democratic society, when we feel danger, risk and uncertainty, become a source of tension<sup>40</sup>, and the growing impatience is accompanied by the demand for immediacy<sup>41</sup>.

It also turned out that in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic of Poland history has been permanently mingled with politics, and most political disputes have been accompanied by discussions related to the evaluation of the communist past<sup>42</sup>. It is in this past that we can find the tools enabling us to explain the present, set directions and take decisions. It is a reference point both for politicians, journalists and citizens, since “proper” interpretation of facts, being a justification for political decisions, is also a foundation on which “an agreement can be reached with potential voters”<sup>43</sup>. The

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36 Z. Krasnodębski, *Pełzająca rehabilitacja PRL*, „Rzeczpospolita” 28–29. 06. 1997, p. 16.

37 *Ibidem*, p. 17.

38 P. Czapliński, *Wojny pamięci*. [w:] R. Kostro, K. Wóycicki, M. Wysocki (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 250. A similar problem was perceived by Jerzy Szacki during the presidential election in 1995. He wrote, inter alia, that a large part of the right seem to perceive the society as a community that is “sovietized and not patriotic enough”. From this perspective this group of politicians seem to believe that the society “is not divided into people with different points of view and believing in various things, but into people who possess the truth and those who are ruled by falsehood”. J. Szacki, *Komentarz na marginesie wyborów prezydenckich*, „Przegląd Społeczny” 1996 No. 1–2, p. 2.

39 M. Jarosz, M. W. Kozak, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

40 E. Tarkowska, *Kultura i niepewność*, [in:] E. Tarkowska (ed.), *Powroty i kontynuacje. Zygmuntowi Baumanowi w darze*, Warszawa 1995, p. 152.

41 E. Tarkowska, *Temporalny wymiar przemian zachodzących w Polsce*, [in:] A. Jawłowska, M. Kempny, E. Tarkowska (ed.), *Kulturowy wymiar przemian społecznych*, Warszawa 1993, pp. 97–98.

42 Compare: A. Dudek, *op. cit.*, p. 34. On the other hand the reference to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic of Poland made by some parties did not cause any wider social resonance. *Ibidem*.

43 Compare: A. Rzeżoński, *Pamięć i narracje...*, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

breakthrough period thus, has not been closed. therefore, the whole period of the People's Republic of Poland also remains open. What is more, it is impossible to close it. It still constitutes a dispute between people who are somehow involved. through their choices and decisions, into quite recent past and presence. This is the presence in which the past becomes symbolically and materially topical.

In this context it is worth to mention the division into "Solidarity Poland" and "Liberal Poland" introduced to the public discourse around 2005 by Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice). This dichotomy boiled down to the problem of evaluating the direction of changes initiated in 1989 and their consequences. Since that moment, the gap between Law and Justice and Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform) has been growing<sup>44</sup>.

This dichotomy perception of reality was also maintained in the next years. Paradoxically, it was also done by Civic Platform, who formed a coalition government with Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish People's Party) for two consecutive terms of office, and did not seem to notice the passage of time, concentrating on criticizing the rule of PiS in 2005–2007, instead of counteracting the crisis in the stratified society<sup>45</sup>. This, inter alia, led to the victory of Law and Justice in 2015, after 8 years of the PO–PSL coalition. This was influenced, as Maria Jarosz and Marek W. Kozak point out, by "anti-liberal program", "500+" allowance, but also by emphasizing the "feeling of national community" and "patriotism built on historical memory"<sup>46</sup>. It turned out that apart from economy, historical values and symbols are also of certain significance<sup>47</sup>. It should be observed, however, that the "patriotic vision of the society" shaped by Law and Justice does not diminish the above-mentioned stratification<sup>48</sup>. In 2019 Law and Justice won the election once again...

### 3. The Categorizations of History Politics in Poland

The above description constitutes merely an attempt at outlining the existing situation and the author is aware of all deficits and shortcomings of this attempt. It should be emphasized that history politics is an element of some broader interdependencies. It is one of multi-faceted and permeating dimensions of the state reality. Nevertheless, only after capturing the processes described above can we try to systematize and consider ways of presenting history politics in Poland.

The main reference point that organizes ways of systemizing history politics in Poland, as observed by researchers specializing in this area, consists in the reevaluation of its function as well as the contents comprised in it. Some scientists point

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44 Compare also *Ibidem*, p. 307.

45 Compare: M. Jarosz, M. W. Kozak, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

46 *Ibidem*, pp. 23–24.

47 Compare: *Ibidem*, p. 18.

48 Compare: *Ibidem*, p. 24.

at the establishment of the Institute of National Remembrance in 2000, others – at the opening of the Warsaw Uprising Museum in 2004 as the starting point of the above reevaluation<sup>49</sup>. However, most researchers claim the process started in 2005, when Law and Justice won the election with its manifesto of building “the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic of Poland”, and Lech Kaczyński was elected President of Poland. Antoni Dudek suggests that this change should be described by distinguishing between liberal and conservative history politics<sup>50</sup>. Liberal history politics generally stands for “official neutrality of the state” in the area of shaping historical awareness<sup>51</sup>. The conservative model, on the other hand, can be summarized in three points: firstly, its essence lies in building a positive education message by the state and thus strengthening national community. Secondly, history politics is a major tool of foreign policy. Finally, as indicated mostly by opponents of this concept, it is an effective tool of motivating its supporters<sup>52</sup>. Thus, the concept of conservative history politics comprises: increased involvement of the state in promoting history, orientation on particular preferences while making the message clearer. This aspect was observed by Władysław Masiarz, who classified history politics of Law and Justice as “right, national and conservative trend”<sup>53</sup> and accused this party of “pushing through the necessity of the state involvement in promoting official patriotism”<sup>54</sup>, reflecting “the aspirations of one political option to monopolize history and its interests in interpreting history”<sup>55</sup>. To put it slightly differently, it is worth noticing that in the conservative model there might be certain problems connected with taking actions aimed at “reducing the level of pluralism in the evaluation and analysis of the past”<sup>56</sup>. Admittedly, this approach may bring some tangible effects in foreign policy, but not necessarily in domestic one. In the conservative model, as Edward Olszewski observes, there are instruments enabling us to “defend history politics against the pressure exerted by other states”<sup>57</sup>.

Another explanation of the reevaluation that occurred in 2005 was proposed by Leszek Koczanowicz. He used the concept of “post-communism” to claim that the place of the division between inheritors of Solidarity and post-communists was taken over by cultural and ideological divisions, in which the criterion of authentic-

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49 Compare: A. Dudek, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

50 *Ibidem*, p. 35.

51 *Ibidem*, p. 36.

52 *Ibidem*, p. 40.

53 Rafał Chwedoruk describes this change more pointedly – as the return of “radical anticommunism”. R. Chwedoruk, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

54 W. Masiarz, *Wybrane elementy polityki historycznej w Polsce w latach 1989-2008*, „Państwo i Społeczeństwo” 2008 No. 2, pp. 1-7-108.

55 *Ibidem*, p. 113.

56 E. Olszewski, *Pamięć społeczna i polityka historyczna w programach polskich partii politycznych*, „Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne” 2013 No. 2, p. 68.

57 *Ibidem*.

ity plays a vital role as a result of the increasingly widespread dichotomy perception of reality”<sup>58</sup>. L. Koczanowicz observes that the division between “Liberal Poland” and “Solidarity Poland”, or “Home Army Poland” and Post-communist Poland”, so visible in the narration proposed by Law and Justice, ultimately boils down to the opposition between “True Poland” and “Untrue or Unauthentic Poland”. The scientist claims that faced with these two opposing categories, “it is politically necessary” to prove that Poland’s development was of “dependent” nature, therefore “the only true division is made between those who accepted and internalized this dependence and those who are able to return to the neglected but still revivable »true life of the nation«”<sup>59</sup>. Przemysław Czapliński seems to perceive the problem in a similar way. He believes that Poland did not experience the conservative turnabout, but “memory was included in the antagonistic establishment of the current order”. As a consequence, “our narrations on history” have become “tools in the fight for participation in shaping the reality”<sup>60</sup>.

On the other hand, in his analysis of the change that occurred in 2005, Arkady Rzegocki points at the accelerating dispute between Law and Justice and Civic Platform. This dichotomy, called the post-solidarity division by him, replaced the previous post-communist division. A. Rzegocki observes that within the post-solidarity division “once again we can see two main blocs and two leading narrations” which are dominated by “proper interpretation of »Solidarity« achievements, activities of anti-communist opposition, and especially the attitude to the Round Table”<sup>61</sup>. He claims that since that moment Civic Platform has transformed from “a party of deep system change” to “a party that preserves the Round Table order”, whereas Law and Justice has become increasingly critical of the Round Table<sup>62</sup>.

## Conclusions

As we can see, generally, there are two competitive visions of history politics in Poland and two ways of perceiving history. These opposing constructions are based, as I have indicated, on different evaluations of the transformation initiated in Poland in 1989. One of these directions emphasizes achievements, continuity and integrity of the transformation process. The other concentrates mainly on system dysfunctions of the transformation times, generally questioning, to some significant extent, the direction and scope of transformations and simultaneously postulates the necessity to rebuild the state. It must be stressed that this gap in its essence – that is in the functional dimension (different ways of understanding history politics) and in

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58 Compare: L. Koczanowicz, *Post-postkomunizm a kulturowe wojny*, „Teksty Drugie” 2010 No. 5, pp. 10–11.

59 Compare: *Ibidem*, p. 11.

60 P. Czapliński, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

61 Compare: A. Rzegocki, *Pamięć i narracje...*, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

62 Compare: *Ibidem*, p. 319.

the evaluation layer (opposing evaluation criteria) has a broader scope of influence, but also significant possibilities of maintaining the topicality conditioned by its ties with the political (power) sphere. In this way it goes beyond the events related to the period of the transformation and adopts a holistic dimension. A specific example of the clash between these two visions is the dispute held in 2008–2017 over the concept of the Second World War Museum in Gdańsk<sup>63</sup>.

We should pay attention to the fact that the strength and topicality of the above-described gap indicate that Polish politics is still identity politics. It seems that its foundation is still being built or deconstructed. Facing internal frictions of fundamental and constitutive significance – the sphere of practice is naturally neglected and even paralyzed<sup>64</sup>.

In order to capture the complexity and changeability of history politics in Poland it is worth taking into consideration some other differentiating criteria. Apart from undoubtedly significant changes in the configuration of political forces in power in Poland (and, consequently, also changes in the way power is executed); we should also pay attention to the multitude of entities participating in the discourse and capable of shaping it, as well as relations between them. One could list here such interesting tensions as: state authority *versus* local communities<sup>65</sup>, as well as attempts at shaping relations between Poland and other state and non-state entities on the international stage based on history politics<sup>66</sup>. Moreover, another significant element is relatively wide variety observed in the catalogue of available means and forms of affecting history politics, as well as changing preferences and possibilities that recipients and senders of communication have. Finally, the passage of time is of crucial importance as it brings generation changes.

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63 See also on this topic: R. Wnuk, *Wojna o wojnę. Spór o wystawę główną Muzeum II Wojny Światowej*, „Res Historica” 2018, No. 46, pp. 335–350.

64 Compare: L. Koczanowicz, D. Kołodziejczyk, *Naród, tożsamość, transformacja. W jakim sensie żyjemy w świecie ‘post’?*, [in:] J. Miklaszewska (ed.), *Demokracja w Europie Środkowej, 1989–1999. Studia historyczne i porównawcze*, Kraków 2001, p. 311.

65 More on this topic: M. Waldoch, *Meandry polityki historycznej w jednostkach samorządu terytorialnego III RP*, „Studia Gdańskie. Wize i Rzeczywistość” 2017 Volume XIV, pp. 49–67.

66 Andrzej Nowak claims that the main problem Poland faces on the international stage is that it clashes with ignorance and arrogance. A. Nowak, *Jak powinna wyglądać prawidłowo prowadzona polityka w zakresie publikacji naukowych i popularnonaukowych na rynkach zagranicznych?*, [in:] Z. Kurtyka, D. Bębnowski (ed.), *Polska polityka historyczna w międzynarodowym wymiarze. W poszukiwaniu źródła sukcesu. Zapis konferencji inauguracyjnej działalności Fundacji im. Janusza Kurtyki. Belweder, 17 października 2016 roku*, Warszawa 2017, p. 31. It is also worth quoting here the opinion of Tomasz Stryjek, who notices that politics, being “the art of achieving the impossible”, in a situation when it is based on “unilaterally adopted criteria” can be effective “only when there is a huge advantage of the potential”. T. Stryjek, *Hipertrofia polityki pamięci w III RP i jej konsekwencje od roku 2015*, „Zoon Politikon” 2017 No. 8, p. 88.



Rudolf Žáček

## The Czecho(slovak)-Polish Relations Until 1945

### Introduction

The history of Czech–Polish relations stretches deep into the past. Geographical proximity, ethnic affinity, and common borders created an environment in which relations and ties, whether neutral, allied, or even hostile, intertwined. The common border became not only a place of mutual contact, but also of clashes and conflicts. No wonder, then, that the history of relations between Czechs and Poles has become a long-term interest of historians.<sup>1</sup>

Capturing, even in a brief overview, the entire course of the millennium of relations between Czechs and Poles would be unrealistic within the scope of this contribution. We will therefore only view the whole complex mosaic full of events of greater and lesser importance to draw attention to several episodes which, in our opinion, have perhaps played the greatest part in shaping the mutual opinions of

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1 The issue of the history of Czecho(slovak)–Polish relations is dealt with in a plethora of literature. Its very enumeration would exceed this contribution's spatial scope. In view of the fact that references to Polish works on Czecho-slovak–Polish relations will undoubtedly be provided in contributions from Polish authors in a sufficient extent, we will confine ourselves here to only a brief reminder of some items, especially Czech ones. The most voluminous Czech synthesis dedicated to the subject under view is a two-part collective work under the title *Češi a Poláci v minulosti* published in 1964 and 1967 by the publishing house Academia in Prague. Also in 1967, a two-volume collection of scientific works entitled *Tisíc let česko-polské vzájemnosti*, Opava 1967, consisting of contributions to a conference organized by the Silesian Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Opava. The works of Czech authors also build on the two-part *Česko-polský sborník vědeckých prací* published in Praha under the editorial office of M. Kudělka in 1955. A brief summary of the problems of Czech–Polish relations appears under the entry Czech–Polish Relations published on pages 341–374 in the second volume of *Akademická encyklopedie českých dějin* published in Praha in 2011. Polish historians attempted a synthetic work dedicated to Czech–Polish relations immediately after the Second World War in the monograph *Polska-Czechy. Dziesięć wieków sąsiedstwa* published in Katowice and Wrocław in 1947. Czechoslovak–Polish relations in the 20th century are dealt with, for example, in the anthology published under the editorial office of Ewa Orlof, *Polacy, Czesi Słowacy w XX wieku*, Rzeszów 1999. The last attempt at a comprehensive overview of the history of Czech–Polish relations was offered by the authorial team Jiří Friedl, Miloš Řezník and Martin Wihoda under the title *Tisíciletý příběh jednoho nelehkého sousedství* as the final chapter of the monograph *Dějiny Polska*, Praha 2017, pp. 588–618.

Czechs on Poles and Poles on Czechs. Their reflection, often distorted from one side or another – even on purpose – can be encountered to a greater or lesser extent in recent past or even today. Such a selection cannot claim to be entirely objective, as cannot the evaluation and interpretation of these events which is further influenced by the natural difference of view from the Czech or Polish side and often also by different degree of importance in national history.

## 1. Origins of Relationships and Contacts

Our list of events begins with the process of acceptance of Christianity in Poland associated with the marriage of the first historically documented Piast prince Mieszko I with the daughter of the Czech Prince Boleslaus I, Doubravka of Bohemia.<sup>2</sup> The initial marriage–confirmed alliance is soon replaced by a merciless rivalry. The interpretation of these events is inevitably different in the Polish and Czech narratives. The great figure of Boleslaus the Brave who was the first Polish monarch to decorate himself with a royal diadem and for a short time even combined the Přemyslid and Piast domains into one whole,<sup>3</sup> is naturally perceived less favourably on the Czech side than on the Polish side. The situation with the figure of the Czech prince Bretislaus I is similar, although in the reversed direction, as he took advantage of the temporary weakening of the Piast state by a pagan uprising and at the end of the 1030s invaded Poland, conquering and ransacking Gniezno and brought the remains of St. Adalbert (Vojtěch) to Prague.<sup>4</sup>

The Bishop of Prague, a saint of Czech origin, a Slavnikid, a scholar of truly European stature, perceived in Poland and Bohemia today as one of the country patrons, was highly spoken of at the Imperial Court, as well as by the Polish Duke Boleslaus the Brave, but at the same time marginalized by the ruling Přemyslids in Bohemia. St. Adalbert neither did, nor could become keystone connecting the Czechs and Poles. This was only achieved almost 1,000 years after his death. On the contrary, the forced removal (or rather burglary) of his remains from Gniezno to Prague became just another event to not bind, but divide Czechs and Poles in the Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup>

The process of creating and forming the first state units was tumultuous and filled with rises and falls. During these turbulent years, in addition to a number of conflicts, there were been cases of actual or formal union between Bohemia and

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2 G. Labuda, *Mieszko I*, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków 2005, pp. 88–117.

3 J. Strzelczyk, *Bolesław Chrobry*, Poznań 1999.

4 B. Krzemińska, *Břetislav I. Čechy a střední Evropa v 1. polovině XI. století*, Praha 1999.

5 Polish tradition refers to a report in the Dluhoš Chronicle claiming that St. Adalbert's remains were hidden and instead, Bretislaus I took the remains of Adalbert's brother, St. Radim (Gaudentius) from Gniezno. The whole history is very complicated, as is the case with many of other saints' remains. An interesting analysis of this is provided by E. Dąbrowska, *Pierwotne miejsce pochowania i recepcja relikwii św. Wojciecha we wczesnym średniowieczu*, [in:] Z. Kurnatowska (ed.), *Trópami świętego Wojciecha*, Poznań 1999, pp. 147–158.

Poland under one ruler.<sup>6</sup> Many of the conflicts took place in the border area between the two countries, Silesia, through which important trade communication was taking place, connecting the west with the east of Europe. It is Silesia, geographically the upper and central Odra river basin, a territory that we will have to devote much more attention to in connection with the formation of Czech-Polish relations.

## 2. The Struggle for Silesia

The first, relatively long epoch in which Silesia played an extremely important role in Czech-Polish relations belongs to the period of the formation of the Bohemian and Polish states. During his reign, the Bohemian Prince Boleslaus I exerted power deep into Silesia and Lesser Poland and as far as Red Ruthenia; after that, the Silesian territory fell under Piast rule shortly. Silesia was recaptured by Bretislaus I towards the end of the 1030s. After the consolidation of internal relations in Poland under Casimir the Restorer, the Poles occupied Silesia militarily, paying a fee of 500 silver and 30 gold bars to Bohemia until the late 1130s. Once again, Bohemian interest in Silesia came to the fore during the period of the last rulers of the house of Přemyslids, and the effort to acquire it was concluded during the reign of Luxembourgs, John of Luxembourg, Charles IV and his son Wenceslaus. Originally part of Piast Poland, Silesia came under the rule of Bohemian kings and became an integral part of the Lands of the Bohemian Crown.

The precondition for this development was created by the de facto disintegration of Poland into individual principalities after the death of Boleslaus the Wrymouth in 1138. The constant conflicts between the Piast princes led to a significant decline in central power. For Silesian princes, located in direct contact with Bohemian rulers who could leverage the wealth of Kutná Hora silver mines, the prosperous Bohemian state was becoming an attractive option for the future of their lands. Some of them were bound by blood ties with the Přemyslids and preferred closer cooperation with the Prague court over the Krakow court.<sup>7</sup>

The rapprochement was interrupted for some time by the death of Ottokar II (Přemysl Otakar II.) in the 1278 Battle of the Marchfeld. Soon, however, contacts were restored, reaching their peak at the turn of the 14th century with the marriage of Wenceslaus II to the daughter of the last Polish king Przemysł II, Elizabeth Ri-

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6 For the first time, as a result of Boleslaus the Brave's seizing of Bohemia in 1003-1004. Another time in 1085, when the Bohemian Prince Vratislaus accepted both the Bohemian and Polish royal crowns from the Emperor, although it was probably just a symbol. The historians' views of Vratislaus' Polish crown vary to a great extent. V. Vaníček, *Vratislav II. (I.). První český král. Čechy v době evropského kulturního obratu v II. století*, Praha 2004; last on the subject by M. Wihoda, *První česká království*, Praha 2015.

7 A. Barciak, *Czechy a ziemię południowej Polski w XIII oraz w początkach XIV wieku. Polityczno-ideologiczne problemy ekspansji czeskiej na ziemię południowej Polski*, Katowice 1992; J. Baszkiewicz, *Odnowienie Królestwa Polskiego 1295-1320*, Poznań 2008.

cheza, and the coronation of Wenceslaus II with the Polish royal crown in Gniezno.<sup>8</sup> This personal union of Bohemia and Poland was short-lived. Instead of a long period of mutual cooperation, another long epoch of rivalry ensued after the death of the ill Wenceslaus II and the murder of his son and successor Wenceslaus III, suspicious of which was by “cui prodest” probably not entirely unjustifiably the Polish pretender on the Piast throne, Ladislaus the Short.<sup>9</sup>

After temporary episodes of the weak and short reigns of Henry of Bohemia (known as Henry of Carinthia) and Rudolf I of Habsburg nicknamed King Porridge, another Bohemian monarch, John of Luxembourg, like Wenceslaus II once did, used the internal divisions in Poland skilfully to achieve his long-term goals. As the successor to Wenceslaus II, John used the title of King of Poland.<sup>10</sup> First, he and his son Charles focused on tying the Silesian duchies to the Bohemian monarch. In 1327, after most Silesian dukes recognized the feudal sovereignty of John of Luxembourg, he negotiated with the Poles in Trenčín to achieve recognition of this fact. At a meeting in Visegrad, Hungary, in 1335, the Trenčín Agreement on the Withdrawal of Silesia was confirmed in favour of the Bohemian Kingdom. The Luxembourgs had to wait until 1339 for its ratification by Casimir the Great. But even that was not quite the end. Another Bohemian–Polish dispute erupted directly in Silesia in 1345.<sup>11</sup> In 1348, Charles IV granted a privilege in his authority of the Roman–German King, incorporating most of Silesia, together with other countries, into the union of the Lands of the Bohemian Crown and re-establishing his incorporation after the achievement of the imperial title of Holy Roman Emperor in 1355. However, the last of the principalities of Silesia, Jawor–Świdnica, did not fall into Bohemian hands until 1392.<sup>12</sup>

Poland has never fully accepted the loss of Silesia. Attempts to recover it in whole or at least in some of its parts were to be repeated in the centuries to come.<sup>13</sup>

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8 R. Antonín, *Zahraniční politika krále Václava II. v letech 1283–1300*, Brno 2009; L. Jan, *Václav II. Král na stříbrném trůnu 1283–1305*, Praha 2015, pp. 225–289.

9 K. Maráz, *Václav III. (1289–1306). Poslední Přemyslovec na českém trůně*, České Budějovice 2007.

10 Plentiful information on this subject is provided mainly by biographical works: J. Spěváček, *Král diplomat (Jan Lucemburský 1294–1346)*, Praha 1982; J. Spěváček, *Václav IV. 1361–1419. K předpokladům husitské revoluce*, Praha 1986.

11 Casimir III who in 1343 freed his hands by means of truce with the Teutonic Order and perhaps tried to prevent further consolidation of Bohemian influence in Silesia in connection with the promotion of Prague Bishopric to an archbishopric and with the resulting tendency to subordinate bishopric of Breslau to the Prague Archbishopric. The capture of Charles IV in Kalisz, Poland, on his return from the Crusade to Lithuania triggered a brief Polish–Bohemian war in which John of Luxembourg failed to conquer Świdnica but successfully pushed Polish troops out of Racibórz area and penetrated all the way to Krakow and burned its suburbs. The conflict ended in a truce. Last on the subject cf. L. Bobková, *Jan Lucemburský. Otec slavného syna*, Praha 2018, pp. 206–218; J. Spěváček, *Král diplomat... op. cit.*; J. Spěváček, *Karel IV. Život a dílo (1316–1378)*, Praha 1979; J. Spěváček, *Václav IV. .... op. cit.*; J. Wyrozumski, *Kazimierz Wielki*, Wrocław 1986.

12 The Duke of Jawor–Świdnica, Bolko II the Small, established that the inheritance would go to Wenceslaus IV as the son of the Bohemian Queen Anne of Świdnica, but only after the death of Agnes of Habsburg, Bolko's wife, who administered the duchy after his death.

13 Already Casimir III the Great himself tried to withdraw his original consent, asking the Pope to waive his oath he

However, the acquisition of Silesia did not mean the end of Luxembourg's interest in Poland as such. Fate seemed to be preparing to open a path to the Polish throne for a new dynasty. King Casimir III the Great of Poland had no male heir and bequeathed his throne to the Hungarian king Louis of Anjou. However, he did not have a male successor and the Polish and Hungarian thrones were to go to the husbands of Princesses Mary and Hedvika. Another of Charles IV's sons, Sigismund, was to become ruler of Poland as a result of his marriage to Princess Mary. However, after the death of King Louis of Anjou, Poles decided to sever ties with Hungary and tie their future to Lithuania whose territory at that time took up a wide area of present-day Belarus and Ukraine. Polish aristocracy offered the hand of Louis' second daughter, Princess Hedvika, to Lithuanian Grand Prince Vladislaus Jagello in 1385, subject to the acceptance of Christianity.

The union of Poland and Lithuania, whose territory extended as far as the Black Sea, has not only contributed to the increase in the common state's prestige and power, but mainly turned Poland's interest eastward of the recently lost Silesia. Putting the Polish-Lithuanian state among Europe's leading powers, this huge territorial expansion did in fact constitute a substantial shift of Polish interests from Central to Middle Eastern or Eastern Europe, which affected both Polish history and the development of Polish political thinking deeply.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. Hussite Reformation

Another important event affecting Bohemian-Polish relations was the Hussite Reformation and the circumstances it created. During the disorderly reign of Wenceslaus IV, the Polish monarch had long used the services of Bohemian mercenaries (many of whom later became leading Hussite fighters) for the conflict Poland had with the Teutonic Order. Taking part in the decisive Battle of Grunwald was reportedly among other fighters from Bohemia and Moravia also Jan Žižka of Trocnov. After the Hussite Revolution was unleashed, Polish policy took a cautious but rather neutral stance towards Bohemia. Poland was undoubtedly sympathetic to the Hussite's hostility to the Teutonic Order. Hussites usually did not relate to the Poles with hostility, gradually gaining a number of sympathizers among them. When Hussite messengers offered the Bohemian Crown to the king of Poland at the end

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took to confirm the renunciation of "countries belonging to the Kingdom of Poland since time immemorial". The fate of Casimir's petition in Avignon is unknown. F. Kavka, *Vláda Karla IV. za jeho císařství (1355–1378). Díl II. (1365–1378)*, Praha 1993, p. 14. Jagiellons were successful in their effort to obtain part of the principalities of Silesia (in the Post-Hussite period, Poland acquired the duchies of Auschwitz, Zator and Siewierz). In May 1462, the Bohemian King George of Poděbrady forfeited the Bohemian Crown's claims to these principalities in an allied treaty with Casimir Jagiellon concluded in Głogów. *Slezsko v dějinách českého státu I. Od pravěku do roku 1490*, Praha 2012, p. 389. Acquisition of Silesia was also an interest of the Polish kings of the Saxon dynasty of Wettins.

14 H. Lowmiański, *Polityka Jagiellonów*, Poznań 1999. Sigismund of Luxembourg eventually forced his marriage to Princess Mary and became king not of Poland, but of Hungary.

of 1420 and were inevitably rejected. The second in line was the Grand Prince of Lithuania, Vytautas the Great. In 1422, in an attempt to complicate the situation for King Sigismund of Hungary<sup>15</sup>, Vytautas issued to Bohemia an army led by his cousin Sigismund Korybut who for some time served as the provincial administrator, participating alongside the Hussites in several battles against the Crusaders and trying unsuccessfully to gain the Bohemian royal crown as well. One of the other highlights of the cooperation between Poland and the Bohemian Hussites was the negotiation of a treaty on the Hussite campaign led by Jan Čapek of Sány (Jan Čapek ze Sán) against the Teutonic Order in 1433, which led the Bohemian Hussites up to the Baltic coast.<sup>16</sup>

Bohemian-Polish contacts also continued after the death of Sigismund of Luxembourg when Polish king Casimir Jagiellon unsuccessfully strived for the Bohemian royal crown. Relatively positive relations also existed during the reign of George of Poděbrady. In 1462, a treaty was concluded between the two rulers in Głogów. Jiří of Poděbrady resigned east Silesian territories annexed by Poland (Duchy of Auschwitz, Duchy of Zator). In the final period of his reign, Bohemian-Polish occasional purposeful cooperation came back to life in full force.<sup>17</sup> The Bohemian monarch realized that it was not in his power to establish a new royal dynasty and that for the ongoing conflict with the exceptionally capable Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus, it would be necessary to elect a king who in the uneven Bohemian conditions would be able to rely on significant military force. This, it seemed, could have been provided by neighbouring Poland. In 1471, the 15-year-old son of Casimir, Vladislaus, was elected King of Bohemia. Although no personal union between the Bohemian and Polish states was created, close cooperation on a dynastic basis was established, at least initially. The first priority was a joint, albeit not very successful, fight against the Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus. The result was de facto division of Czech lands between Vladislaus and Matthias in 1478. Bohemia passed to Vladislaus and Moravia, Silesia and both Lusatias, while both of them were to use the title of the King of Bohemia. Czech lands only reunited after Corvinus' death and Vladislaus' election as King of Hungary. The Jagiellons thus took over the entire Central European area until 1526.<sup>18</sup>

Closer dynastic cooperation between Jagiellons was primarily hindered by the increasingly diverging political interests of Bohemian and Polish rulers. After all,

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15 Both the Polish king and Vytautas hinted at possible cooperation with the Hussites primarily as part of a diplomatic war waged against king Sigismund of Hungary. W. Baum, *Císař Zikmund*, Praha 1996, p. 195.

16 J. Kejíř, *Husité*, Praha 1984, p. 137.

17 The period of George of Poděbrady's reign has been dealt with in most detail by R. Urbánek, *Věk poděbradský I-III.*, Praha 1915-1930.

18 The Jagiellon age of Bohemian history is described in the most detailed manner by J. Macek, *Žagellonský věk v českých zemích (1471-1526)*, I - IV, Praha 1999. On the politics of Vladislaus' father Casimir M. Bogucka, *Kazimierz Jagiellończyk i jego czasy*, Warszawa 1981; H. Łowmiański, *Polityka... op. cit.*

relations between Vladislaus and his Polish relatives were not exactly excellent. As far back as 1490, the Crown Prince and future King of Poland, John Albrecht, was supported by his father Casimir when he clashed with Vladislaus in a struggle for the Hungarian Crown.

Vladislaus II, Habsburg on his mother's side, gradually became closer to his Habsburg relatives. This process culminated in the conclusion of the Vienna Wedding Conventions in 1515. They foresaw the marriage of Vladislaus' son Louis to Mary of Habsburg, and the marriage of Charles or Ferdinand of Habsburg to Anna Jagiellon. The early death of the childless Louis Jagiellon thus opened the way for the Habsburgs to ascend to the Bohemian and Hungarian thrones.

It seems, however, that the Polish Jagiellons did not exert any extraordinary effort to gain succession after their Czech relatives. After the unexpected early death of Louis in the Battle of Mohács in 1526, the King of Poland, Sigismund I the Old, did attempt to gain succession due to pressure from his wife Bona, however, his approach was dilatory and his letter to the Czech Estates only arrived in Prague after Ferdinand I of Habsburg had already been elected king.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. In Various Directions

The accession of the Habsburgs to the Bohemian throne marked a gradual increase in the differences in the political development of Poland and the Bohemian Kingdom. In Bohemia, after the exceptionally weak rule of both Jagiellons, the election of Ferdinand I of Habsburg brought to life a system of government aimed at promoting sovereign absolutism. The authorities of the Estates were gradually losing their position to the Court Authorities, subordinated immediately to the monarch. The Habsburgs' policy, especially after the transition of the imperial rank from the hands of the Spanish Habsburgs to the Habsburgs of Central Europe, was governed by the political interests of the dynasty, causing the Bohemian state to gradually lose its status as a separate entity in the field of foreign policy. Along with this, the interest of Czech Estates as a whole in the shaping the monarchy's foreign policy slowly faded, with some exceptions, but their efforts to maintain friendly relations with Poland were of a lasting nature. Religious issues remained dominant for a long time, as Czech nobility had to take a defensive position against the Counter-Reformation activities of their Catholic rulers. In connection with this process, observable development of Bohemian-Polish relations is gradually weakening to the mere reflection of development of relations between Poland and the Habsburg monarchy, or relations and contacts of individual personalities or interest groups.

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19 Perhaps the reason for his hesitation was the fear of conflict with the Habsburgs, which the Polish court preferred to avoid due to their possible alliance with Moscow Russia. J. Janáček, *České dějiny. Doba předbělohorská*, Praha 1971, pp. 36–37.

At about the same time, Poland took the path of significantly increasing the influence of the aristocratic estate on the management of the state.<sup>20</sup> The situation and political thinking of the Bohemian and Polish nobility gradually began to drift apart diametrically, towards the unequivocal disadvantaged political positions of Bohemian nobility. However, relations between the Habsburgs and Poles had been rather positive and fairly friendly in the long run. This is evidenced by a number of treaties in which both parties undertake, among other things, to help against the internal enemy, to deal with trade and customs issues, etc. The contacts with Poland before the outbreak of the Bohemian Revolt were especially maintained by the Catholic members of the Bohemian and Moravian Estates, i. e. William of Rosenberg, Vratislaus of Pernstein Wroclaw of Pernštejn and Ladislaus II Popel of Lobkowitz, and representing the Moravian Estates, bishop Stanislaus Pavlovsky of Olomouc. It was them who since 1572, after the death of Sigismund II. Augustus, the last Polish monarch of the Jagiellon family, headed delegations negotiating in Poland with the Polish aristocrats to have a Habsburg candidate elected to the Polish throne. Their activities did not achieve a positive result, although part of the Polish nobility even offered candidacy to the Polish throne to William of Rosenberg. In a repeated attempt to win the Polish throne, messengers led by Stanislaus Pavlovsky succeeded in reaching a minority vote for the Archduke Maximilian as the King of Poland. His subsequent campaign to Poland to win the royal crown against the more successful Sigismund III. Vasa ended in defeat at the Battle of Byčina in January 1588 and his subsequent captivity.

Even these turbulent moments did not mean any significant weakening or deterioration of relations between the two countries and both ruling dynasties. This is evidenced, for example, by a number of marriages between Polish monarchs and female members of the Habsburg family. The Habsburg's politics was driven by an effort to maintain positive relations with Poland as a potential ally against a possible Swedish-French anti-Habsburg coalition and against the Turkish expansion. The Polish-Habsburg alliance culminated in a treaty of 1613 binding both sides, among other things, to assistance in against rebellious subjects. Poland tried to maintain neutrality in the conflict between the Habsburgs and the Bohemian estates but the personal sympathy of king Sigismund III. Vasa was clearly on the side of the

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20 After the extinction of the Jagiellon dynasty in 1572, the full electoral character of the monarchy was enforced and in Poland, the path to the Nobles' Democracy began. The British author of Polish history, Norman Davies, characterizes this aptly in a popular form: " ... after the death of Sigismund II. Augustus in 1572, the kings were to be elected *viritim*, i. e. by the assembly of all the aristocracy. Moreover, they were not to be crowned until they vowed to abide by a comprehensive treaty guaranteeing the principle of tolerance, the free election of the king, the regular convening of the Council, the supervision of sixteen senators on royal politics, the personal privileges of the magnates and their right to approve taxes, declarations of war and foreign treaties, as well as the right of the aristocracy to oppose the king. " Davies' characterization that "the King of Poland was in fact more of a 'contract manager' than a ruler with limited authority as kings in England and Sweden" can be easy to agree with. N. Davies, *Polsko. Dějiny národa ve střed.Evropy*, Praha 2003, p. 275.

Habsburgs. The incursion of Polish Cossacks – the Lisowczycy – into Moravia in 1619 and their subsequent raid on northern Slovakia forced the ally of the Bohemian estates, Gabriel Bethlen, to withdraw from the attack on Vienna and leave the Bohemian army under the leadership of Matthias Thurn without support at a crucial moment. Thurn was forced to withdraw, and the Habsburgs gained the time needed to prepare a counter-attack and subsequently destroy the revolt of estates. The Lisowczycy continued to form part of the imperial army and also had a significant impact on the course of the Battle of White Mountain.<sup>21</sup>

The defeat of the Bohemian estates at White Mountain in 1620 foreshadowed the future fates of the Bohemian political nation. The harsh re-Catholicization policy associated with mass property confiscation and forced emigration effectively stripped the Czech lands of much of both small and medium-sized nobility and of the high aristocracy. The nobility involved in the Bohemian Revolt of the estates, like a large part of the burghers, were rid of their property and had no choice but forced emigration. The process of property changes started by the White Mountain defeat and culminated in the confiscation of the huge assets of Albrecht of Wallenstein and his companions completely changed the structure of Bohemian noble society. The property of the Bohemian historical nobility was definitely seized by foreign members of the aristocracy, especially those in military service of the Habsburgs. The remaining representatives of higher aristocracy became, as courtiers, obedient and loose tools of Habsburg politics. Small and medium-sized nobility, which in neighbouring Poland forms the core of the political nation, effectively disappeared from Bohemia as a political force. The Bohemian political nation, or its remnants, which succumbed to re-Catholicization were in their majority pushed out on the periphery of events for a period of almost two centuries.

During the second half of the 17th century, Poland found its role in the relations between Czechs and Poles as providing a haven for many Bohemian non-Catholic exiles. Some of them sided with the Swedes during the Swedish occupation of Poland due to reasons of their confession. Members of the Unity of the Brethren who found refuge in Leszno paid an extraordinary price for their sympathy with the Protestant Swedes. After the Swedes left, they had to flee Leszno and along with other property of the members of the Unity, the manuscript works of their bishop, John Amos Comenius, were destroyed.

At the same time, a number of refugees from Poland sought refuge in the Bohemian lands, especially in Upper Silesia, including king John II Casimir himself. Positive relations with the Poles enabled emperor Leopold I to negotiate the renewal of the old Bohemian-Polish treaties and conclude an extremely important agreement

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21 About 1,500 Polish cavalry men took part in the battle. The decisive force among them were the Lisowczycy under the command of Stanisław Rusinowski. Their intervention in one of the critical moments of the battle contributed significantly to the victory of the joint Imperial and Catholic League army. D. Uhlir, *Bitva na Bílé hoře 8. 11. 1620*, České Budějovice 2018, p. 33, 55, 57.

with John III Sobieski in 1677. The Polish monarch's help in freeing Vienna from the Turkish siege in 1683 marked the beginning of the displacement of Turks from Central Europe and then from the Balkans. The popularity of Poles peaked both in the Czech lands and throughout Christian Europe.

The following period of the 18th century was marked by gradual decline of the power and importance of the Polish Nobles' Commonwealth.<sup>22</sup> The conclusion of the Saxon-Polish personal union in 1697 posed a potential threat to the interests of the Lands of the Bohemian Crown. Saxony, which did not have a common border with Poland, was interested in obtaining a corridor connecting the two countries joined by the person of the monarch. The Wettins, therefore, showed an eminent interest in Silesia, arguing its long-ago affiliation with Poland. At the beginning of the 1740s, Saxony sided with Maria Theresa's enemies in order to acquire the coveted corridor in the War of the Austrian Succession. Silesia, however, fell to the more successful Frederick the Great and became part of Prussia for two centuries.

The tragic fate of Poland came true at the very end of the 18th century in the form of its triple division. Except for individual contacts, immediate Bohemian-Polish relations during the 18th century can be considered rather marginal until Galicia was added to the Habsburg monarchy.<sup>23</sup> Even after the division of Poland, the differences persisting between Czech and Polish society were more than considerable. This was due to the state of the Bohemian and Polish political nations which stemmed from differences in prospective political objectives and different ideas of how to achieve them.

The Polish society continued its recently interrupted state tradition. National pride and Polish statehood continued to be carried by both small and medium-sized nobility, and high aristocracy, interlinked by numerous family ties with European aristocracy. The priority goal of the Poles was to restore an independent Polish state. The issue of Poland was perceived as an international problem, as representatives of Poland's national elites, especially the aristocratic ones, were developing long-term political activities in the environment of Western European countries.

The aims of the Bohemian national movement in the same period were considerably more modest and its potency incomparably weaker. First and foremost was the effort to at least save the Bohemian language and most of the nation from Germanization. Any greater political ambitions had to be preceded by the effort to re-estab-

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22 Detailed account of the Polish "Nobles' Commonwealth" J. A. Gierowski, *Rzeczpospolita w dobie złotej wolności 1648-1763*, Kraków 2001.

23 In 1761, for example, it was the marriage of Andrzej Poniatowski, the brother of the last Polish king, Stanisław Augustus, and a general in Habsburg services, and Maria Theresa Kinsky of Wchinitz and Tettau. Their son, Prince Józef Antoni Poniatowski, later became one of Poland's most celebrated heroes. He first served in the Austrian army, he was also an adjutant to Emperor Joseph II, commander-in-chief of the Polish troops in the war against Russia in 1792, participated in the Kościuszko Uprising, fought on Napoleon Bonaparte's side and died as Marshal of France after the Battle of Leipzig. He is buried in the Cathedral of Wawel in Krakow alongside Józef Piłsudski and Władysław Sikorski.

lish a political nation which was to be aided by the ideological support of glorious national past, in accordance with the spirit of the times. In their efforts, the leaders of the national revival could rely in particular on members of the intelligentsia, the lower clergy and only exceptionally on the nobility whose patriotism was, however, rather provincial than national. The aim of Bohemian politics was to emancipate the Bohemian lands in the Habsburg monarchy and to highlight the importance of Bohemian national activities within the Bohemian lands. The main rival was not a foreign occupier but the Austrian and Bohemian Germans increasingly subject to pan-Germanist ideology.

In the long term, the dominant element in Bohemian political thinking was Palacký's Austro-Slavism. Czech politics focused on the solution of Bohemian-German relations within the Habsburg monarchy and on equality of the Czech language in official conduct, trying also in the spirit of constitutional legal thought to prevent the division of Bohemian lands into Czech and German parts. The matter of Bohemia was understood as an internal matter of the Habsburg monarchy until the final stages of the Great War.

In addition to the national past, whose most famous Hussite period had been almost four centuries remote, the Czech National Revival was forced to draw strength from the ideological sources of Slavism, set into opposition to the aggressive pan-Germanism. At the time of Russian campaigns to Europe at the end of the 18th century, admiration for everything Slavic transferred to admiration for everything Russian. The Tsarist Russia acted as an example of a Slavic power gaining increasingly important positions of power in contemporary Europe, and (it seemed, capable and willing to hedge effectively against Germany's "Drang nach Osten."<sup>24</sup>

While the Czechs and Poles basically agreed on the rejection of pan-Germanism, they diverged completely in the perception of the role of Russia and the issue of the so-called pan-Slavism.<sup>25</sup> Legitimately, the Poles considered Russia as an occupier and fundamentally disagreed with the opinion that Russia should take the lead in Slavic European policy. Difference of opinion between the Czechs and Poles on this matter manifested itself already during the Slavic Congress in Prague, 1848, and repeated attempts to move the Poles to come to terms with the dominant role of Russia failed quite logically.

The attitude of the Czech society to repeated Polish uprising and many other events taking place in the long 19th century became the touchstone to Czech-Pol-

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24 It is noteworthy that already at the end of the 18th century, a voice appeared among Czech aristocrats condemning the state of Russian society and the living conditions of Russian serfs. Count Joachim of Sternberg was the author of a critical work on Russia entitled *Bemerkungen über Russland* (1794) and sharply critical of Russian conditions which, however, found virtually no resonance among Czech intelligence at that time. F. Kutnar, *Obrozenské vlastenectví a nacionalismus: příspěvek k národnímu a společenskému obsahu české doby obrozenské*, Praha 2003; V. Černý, *Vývoj a zločiny panslavismu*, Praha 2003, pp. 170–171, 221.

25 V. Černý, *Vývoj a zločiny...*, *op. cit.*

ish relations.<sup>26</sup> The gradually forming Czech political public sympathized with the Poles at large already during the Kościuszko Uprising of 1794. However, the later bond between the Polish society and Napoleon, put the Poles primarily into the position of supporters of the enemy in the eyes of the conservative public. The Duchy of Warsaw had undeniable influence on this situation as it participated in the defeat of Austria in the war with France in 1809, due to which the Duchy gained western Galicia.

The November Uprising of 1830 confronted the Czech society with the problem of combining sympathy for the Polish struggle for freedom, which had a decidedly anti-Russian accent, with a rather naïve belief of broad social classes in Russia as the patron of all Slavs.

The pro-Polish enthusiasm and idealization of Poles was largely disrupted by the fact that Czech officials employed in Galicia (mostly commoners) were confronted with the extreme poverty of Galician villagers, whether they were Poles or Ukrainians. They realized that the internal situation of the Polish society is much more complicated than it seems from the perspective of the so-called “high politics” and Slavic ideals alone.

The desperate conditions in Galicia were exposed in full nudity by the Kraków Uprising of 1846 when the Polish nobility were preparing to rebel only to be rebelled against by the peasants who murdered several hundred Polish squires.<sup>27</sup> The Galician conditions were also noticed by the then only twenty-five-year-old Karel Havlíček Borovský, originally a keen Polonophile who was forced to stop in Lviv during his journey to Russia. His knowledge of the situation in Galicia and then familiarization with the situation in Russia led him to a critical view on both the Poles and the Russians, as well as on the Slavic idea as such. Havlíček’s awareness of the situation in Galicia, Poland and Russia resulted in his reflections on the Slavic patriotism, published in Prague Newspaper in 1846 and in the article *The Slav and the Bohemian*. In it, Havlíček clearly refused to identify himself with either the Russian or the Polish opinion, anticipating with a high degree of clairvoyance the permanent nature of Polish-Russian antagonism, and the result of his political reasoning was his clear declaration of an Austro-Slavic policy “*The Austrian Monarchy is the best guarantee to maintaining our and the Illyric nationality ...*”<sup>28</sup>

The divergence of goals, then, manifested itself fully in the preparations and during the Slavic Congress in Prague in 1848th Originally projected as a meeting of representatives of the Slavic peoples of the Habsburg monarchy and centred on the idea of Austro-Slavism, the Congress shifted under the influence of representatives

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26 M. Řezník, *Za naši a vaši svobodu. Století polských povstání (1794–1864)*, Praha 2006.

27 For more information about the course of the uprising and one of its major participants in e. g. C. Wycech, *Powstanie chłopskie w roku 1846. Jakub Szela*, Warszawa 1955.

28 K. Havlíček, *Slovan a Čech (Pražské Noviny z roku 1846)*, „Národní listy” 2006 No. 4 [online], <http://narodnilisty.wz.cz/2006/ml4/slovan.html>.

of the Polish–Ruthenian section to more general problems. The only document approved successfully before the Congress was dispersed was the Manifesto for the European Nations, which also condemned the division of Poland and supported the Poles in their struggle to regain Polish independence.<sup>29</sup>

Other vicissitudes of the Czech–Polish relations at the political level took place mainly in the parliament of the Habsburg monarchy. Even there, however, divergence of interests and positions of national representations were often palpable. At the time of the Kroměříž Assembly, Czechs and Poles were particularly divided by their relations to the Hungarians.<sup>30</sup>

## 5. From Absolutism to Dualism

The collapse of revolution of the years 1848/9 meant suppression of political life for an extended period of time. The fall of absolutism in Austria and moderate policy of Tsar Alexander II in Russia somewhat relaxed the space for political activity which the Poles in Russia took advantage of in order to prepare another one of their rebellions. Its premature eruption in January 1863 may have caused the insurgents many difficulties, nevertheless, the uprising held on until spring 1864.

The January uprising left Czech politics in a similar situation as the November Uprising in 1830, as it made necessary the somewhat traumatic choice between two Slavic nations. Part of the public took a rather Polonophilic stance, efforts were made to support the rebellion financially, even organization of volunteers occurred. Leading representatives of Czech politics, especially Palacky and Rieger, considered the insurrection which was destined to fail as an unfortunate event of no benefit to either Slavs in general, or especially to the Poles themselves. However, the divergence of opinions on the January uprising did contribute to further differentiation within Czech politics, which after some years led to the split between the Old Czech Party and the Young Czech Party.<sup>31</sup>

Austria's defeat in the war against Prussia led to the subsequent internal political crisis which the Austrian government decided to solve by a reform, resulting in the transformation of Austria into a dualist state of Austria–Hungary. In it, power was divided between Austrian Germans and Hungarians, without any regard for

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29 The Congress also marked the first manifestation of increased activity of the Polish representatives from the Cieszyn region who (though the Cieszyn region was part of the Lands of the Czech Crown) made speeches as part of the Polish–Ruthenian section. Seeming basically negligible at the time of the Slavic Congress, this problem would stand in the way of Czech–Polish rapprochement only several decades later after gaining state sovereignty.

30 O. Urban, *Kroměřížský sněm 1848–1849*, Praha 1998; *Kroměřížský sněm 1848–1849 a tradice parlamentarismu ve střední Evropě*, Kroměříž 1998.

31 In essence, the attitudes towards the Polish uprising started the division of Czech political scene into the conservative part, represented by Palacky and Rieger, and the liberal part, mainly headed by the Grégr brothers. Rieger directly opposed the application of historical rights in case of renewal of Poland. Palacky expressed his hope that “*even the Russian government will succumb shortly to the influence of the Slavic and, therefore, freethinking principles*” quoted by O. Urban, *Česká společnost 1848–1918*, Praha 1982, pp. 180–181.

the rights and opinions of representatives of the Slavic peoples. Even before the announcement of dualism, the leading proponent of Austro-Slavism, František Palacký, warned very realistically in his work "The Idea of the Austrian State" against the pernicious effects of such solutions that would inevitably drive the Slavic nations into the arms of pan-Slavism and might lead to the collapse of the monarchy.<sup>32</sup>

Dualism shifted Czech politics dangerously close to the wide-open arms of Russia. A specific demonstration of rapprochement of Austrian Slavs with Russia can be seen in the so-called "Pilgrimage to Moscow" in May and June 1867. Originally quite an innocent visit of an ethnographic exhibition became a manifestation of an open declaration of the fact that Czechs and other Austrian Slavs (naturally with the exception of the Poles) perceive Russia as their support. This impression, however, was only superficial, albeit with a very strong propagandistic charge. Palacký and Rieger did not want to direct their attention to the east exclusively, counting also on France where they visited before heading to Russia. However, they were not met with understanding there. They realized also the possible negative impacts of travel to Moscow on Polish-Czech affairs and tried to at least explain to the Poles living in French exile - quite vain - that no element of the journey is to sting the Poles in the least.<sup>33</sup>

During their stay in Russia, they did try to encourage the unity of all Slavs, respecting the historically evolved differences, nevertheless, and spoke against Russification, the "benefits" of which were declared by the Russian Slavophiles.<sup>34</sup> Even so, the Poles generally considered the participation of representatives of the Austrian Slavs at the ethnographic exhibition as support for Russian politics and anti-Polish repression.

Contradictions manifested by the respective parliaments of the dualistic Austria-Hungary, which usually betrayed divergence of interests and attitudes, were increasingly at the forefront of the Czech-Polish relations. One of the most striking differences was the attitude towards dualism. While Polish politicians from Galicia, satisfied by the relatively extensive autonomy within Cisleithania, were already willing to cooperate with the government in the 1870's, effectively voicing support of dualism, Czech representatives remained in captivity of passive resistance. Only the return of the Czech delegation to the Imperial Council in late

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32 "The day when dualism is proclaimed shall, by irresistible necessity of its nature, also be the day of the birth of pan-Slavism in its least desirable form, and parents of the former shall be godparents to the latter. What will follow is for each reader to deduce. We, the Slavs, shall face it with sincere pain, but meet it with no fear. We were there before Austria, we will be there after Austria." Quoted by O. Urban, *Česká společnost...., op. cit.*, p. 189.

33 M. Šesták, *Pouť Čechů do Moskvy v roce 1867*, Praha 1986, p. 20.

34 "Perhaps it seems to many that it would be better if we could merge into a single whole, physical and mental. ... "a thousand years of history cannot be undone ... If you, gentlemen here, did cast all the bells, all of your Kolokols into a single Kolokol greater than Ivan the Great is, its voice would be mighty, but it would surely not make for the nice impression you achieve through harmony when the all proclaim the resurrection at the same time. ." M. Šesták, *Pouť Čechů do Moskvy ...., op. cit.*, p. 32.

1870s gave Czech deputies the possibility of a more flexible political manoeuvre. Nevertheless, old antagonisms continued to persist. The problem of the Ukrainian population of Galicia also proved to be still topical. Czech journalism was trying to defend conciliatory positions and became the subject of attacks from both of the warring parties. Czech sympathy towards the Ukrainians associated with resistance to Polish nobility were met with strong negative response on the Polish side. Czech deputies' inquiry into the oppression of Ukrainians in Galicia headed by Tomas Garrigue Masaryk raised fierce opposition on the Polish side.

The intricate twists of parliamentary politics put Czech and Polish representatives into alternating positions of cooperating and opposing parties. The problem was the different position of the Czechs and Poles in Cisleithania, as Polish aristocracy was regularly represented in governmental structures while Czech political representation had to cope with the constant struggle against Czech and Austrian Germans. A mere listing of all of these political activities and an illustration of momentary attitudes of Czechs and Poles, as reflected onto and intermingling with domestic political conditions in the so-called "high" politics, would require space far exceeding the scope of this paper. Some of the Czech-Polish internal political conflicts outlasted the existence of Austria-Hungary and complicated the Czech-Polish relations after the establishment of independent states.

Marginal by size, Cieszyn Silesia was increasingly becoming an important arena where Czech-Polish rivalry played out and the Czech-Polish cooperation based on defence against German pressure was on the wane, surfacing elements of mutual rivalry. The development of national struggle between Czechs, Germans and Poles was contributed to by a significant influx of Polish miners and workers from Galicia on the one hand, and by a large number of ethnically indeterminate indigenous-population, who claimed the regional identity of the Silesians (Ślůnski) whose allegiance was sought in an increasingly fiercer struggle.

In connection with the growth of aggressive pan-Germanism, the significantly pro-Russian direction of Czech policy grew considerably since the end of the 19th century, championed mainly by its leading representative of Young Czech Party and promoter of neo-Slavism, Karel Kramář. In 1908, Kramář organized another Slavic Congress in Prague. The Poles remained the majority party again. One exception was the National Democrat and member of the Russian Duma, Roman Dmowski, whose participation, as he later admitted, had little to do with the neo-Slavic ideas.<sup>35</sup>

In the years before the outbreak of the First World War, more and more importance was gained by foreign policy aspects which were creating preconditions for

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35 Edvard Beneš recorded his talk with Dmowski as follows: "And once on a walk along the banks of the Seine, I talked to him about Slavic politics and asked about his participation in the Slavic Congress in Prague in 1908, he replied. Do you think I went to Prague to do Slavic politics for the Slavs' sake? I went there to do Polish politics and to see what could be done for the Poles as part of the matter. That was my Slavic politics." E. Beneš, *Světová válka a naše revoluce, díl. II.*, Praha 1927, p. 98.

the roles assumed in the expected conflict, in addition to the existing disagreements between the Czechs and Poles. The Galician Poles were preparing primarily for confrontation with Russia, while certain parts of the Czech politicians were flirting with the decisive victory of Russia and even further, with the existence of the Czech state as its autonomous part.<sup>36</sup>

## 6. The Years of the Great War

The outbreak of the First World War put Czech and Polish political representation before an entirely new situation. From the Polish point of view, it was critical that powers who had once divided Poland between themselves found themselves for fighting against each other in opposing groupings the first time. For tactical reasons, both warring parties also declared their willingness to create a Polish state. A faction of Polish politicians, represented especially by the member of the Russian Duma, Roman Dmowski, who developed activity on the territory of Russia and its allies, France and the United Kingdom, viewed Germany as the main enemy.<sup>37</sup> The other faction, whose leading figure was Józef Piłsudski, wanted to rely on the powers of the Triple Alliance, operating under the assumption that it was first necessary to defeat Russia in cooperation with Germany, and then use all the forces to defeat Germany. He considered cooperation with Austria-Hungary, in whose territory he began developing his Legions, as a mere matter of tactics.<sup>38</sup> The aim of both was to create an independent Poland, differing only on the means to achieve this goal, and on ideas about what the new state should look like.

Poles in Galicia, generally, satisfied with life and extensive autonomy within the monarchy, represented a side stream of Polish politics. They toyed with the idea that the outcome of the war in which Russia would be defeated could mean the connection of annexation in Russia (Congress Poland) with Galicia, potentially leading to triad arrangement of the Hapsburg monarchy, which would, however, *de facto* mean neutralization of the South Slavic nations (Croats and Slovenes), Hungarian Slovaks and leaving the Czechs aside as well.<sup>39</sup>

Even Czech political representation was divided. The part led by Karel Kramář and trusting in the near Russian victory indulged in unrealistic ideas about the free

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36 Kramář even created the project of the Slavic empire which expected that Russia would gradually seize the whole of Central Europe and the Czech state (kingdom) will become its autonomous part, headed by one of the members of the House of Romanov. He also counted on Poland to become part of the Russian Tzarist Empire, a totally unacceptable outcome for Polish politics. The text of Kramář's work is published in: J. Galandauer, *Vznik Československé republiky 1918. Programy, projekty, předpoklady*, Praha 1988, pp. 243–250.

37 Dmowski himself stated in his memoirs that, "...defeating the German Power was the goal worth joining the ranks of its enemies..." R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, I, Warszawa 1989, p. 177.

38 W. Suleja, *Józef Piłsudski*, Wrocław - Warszawa - Kraków 2004; cf. also P. S. Wandycz, *Střední Evropa v dějinách od středověku do současnosti*, Praha 2004, p. 187.

39 H. Batowski, *Rozpad Austro-Węgier 1914–1918*, Kraków 1982, pp. 114–115.

life of the Czech nation in the arms of the Slavic power, while the much smaller but well-organized part headed by T. G. Masaryk gradually worked their way to the idea of a future independent republic whose basis would be the Czech Lands and the so-called Upper Hungary, later Slovakia. The problem was that in order to meet their expectations, the defeat of the Central Powers alone would not suffice, making necessary the complete dismantling of the Austro-Hungarian Empire - an act that was definitely not part of the war aims of the Allied powers.

However, vast majority of Czech politicians realized very long into the war that Austria-Hungary did provide safeguard, albeit weak, from domination of the Central European area by Germany. The variants appearing were a federalization of Austria-Hungary, connecting the Czech lands as an autonomous unit to the winning Russia, or the existence of the Czech lands as a satellite state under Russian patronage. Establishment of an independent republic based on cooperation between Russia and the West appeared to be a very unlikely possibility. The most desirable option seemed to be the transformation of Austria-Hungary into a federation with representation (or rather predominance) of Slavic nations.

The attitude of the western Allied powers toward the future fate of Czechs and Poles consisted of little specific opinion in the early stages of the war. Despite declaring resumption of Polish statehood, Britain and France were focused primarily on the conflict with Germany and showed little special interest in the future organization of Central Europe. It was considered the Russian region of interest and the aim of both was ultimately not to allow excessive expansion of Russian power there.<sup>40</sup>

The opinion of the West on Czech political aspirations was formed during the war and in direct relation to its development. Neither France, nor England envisaged break-up and liquidation of Austria-Hungary in any case and they certainly were not inclined to supporting a significant expansion of Russia into the Central European space. The project to create an independent state with western orientation seemed unrealistic to them for a long time. Another problem lay in the fact that the future republic's area was to be determined by a combination of historic rights for the Czech lands and the right to self-determination for the northern part of

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40 In a memorandum entitled "The Peace Settlement in Europe" of October, 1916, the then Foreign Minister, Lord Balfour expressed foundations of British political approach in that matter in perhaps the most remarkable terms. He stated in it that the creation of an independent Poland between Germany and Russia is not in the interests of Britain or Western Europe. He feared that the new Poland would suffer similar problems as the old Poland, and would not be strong enough against one of the neighbouring powers or the other. In addition, the Germans could direct all their forces to meet their ambitions in the West if they would be rid of immediate contact with Russia. Russia could then concentrate more on the east and south-east, thereby threatening the interests of the British Empire. According to Balfour, the starting point was the formation of autonomous Poland within the Russian Empire, which would include, apart from Congress Poland, the annexations from Austria-Hungarian and perhaps also some annexations from Prussian. J. Ciecchanowski, *Polityka brytyjska wobec Polski w okresie konferencji pokojowej w Wersalu*, [in:] C. Bloch, Z. Zieliński (ed.), *Powrót Polski na mapę Europy. Sesja naukowa poświęcona 70. rocznicy Traktatu Wersalskiego*, Lublin 1995, pp. 41-42.

Hungary, whose population was (in a quite utilitarian manner) claimed to be part of the Czechoslovak (or perhaps Czech-Slovak) nation.<sup>41</sup>

The waves of nationalism that helped drive the European nations into the trenches of the “Great War” did not disperse with the war’s end. To the contrary, they rose even stronger, supported initially by the ideologies of social revolutions of the communist, fascist and later Nazi origin. They were strengthened significantly after the initial international Bolshevism had transitioned from the ideas of world revolution through effort to build a new society in one country into the Russian-Soviet type of nationalism. Nationalism was offered a great opportunity within the space of the dismantled Tsarist Russia, the defeated defenceless Germany torn by revolutions, and the ruined multinational Austrian-Hungarian Empire. International developments led to consequences few expected in the early stages of the war. New organization of Central Europe grew out of the ruins of the once Tsarist Russia, Wilhelmine Germany and Austria-Hungary. The new “victorious” countries, especially Poland and Czechoslovakia, were to play a dominant role in this process.

## 7. Between the Two Wars

New young states were created based on nationalist ideas and in order to secure the most advantageous position for their further independent existence, they not only whittled without hesitation from the territory of those who were among the losers, but they also conflicted other “winners”. In the post-war fermentation, the main rule was “snatch what you can in the limits of your strength” and the principle of “fait accompli” applied. based on the opinion that there will always be enough arguments found after the fact to eventually persuade the great powers at the peace conference whose representatives were not well versed in the relations in Middle and Eastern Europe. Therefore, it was not exceptional to see one country’s arguments as to why this or that area should belong to a particular country or another expressed in ethnic terms at one time, but historic, strategic, transporting or economic terms at other times. Naturally, position of advantage was gained by those (if not among the losers) who held actual power over the territory negotiated.

In the short and very simplified form, all this was also true for the shaping of the borders of Czechoslovakia and Poland. For the Czech lands, the right of historical borders was applied regardless of the ethnic composition of the population; for Upper Hungary (Slovakia), borders were claimed on the basis of the principle of national self-determination, while their southern border was to be determined with regard to strategic reasons. Carpathian Ruthenia was attached by the initiative of American Rusyns. Poland wanted to base their eastern border on the border prior

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41 Moreover, Masaryk himself claimed in his 1915 memorandum for the British Foreign Secretary Gray, entitled “Independent Bohemia”, that Slovaks are actually Czechs “*despite using their dialect as their literary language*”. K. Pichlík, *Bez legend. Zahraniční odboj 1914–1918. (Zápas o československý program)*, Praha 1991, p. 109.

to the first division, also regardless of the ethnic composition of the population, their western border was then decidedly claimed by right to self-determination, and in the north, access to the sea was requested. Using the best combination of the so-called Piast Poland (western area) and Jagiellon Poland (eastern area) led ultimately to the creation of a Central European power which would, in cooperation with smaller partners between the Baltic and the Black Sea under its control, be able to withstand the pressure of Russia and Germany.

The greatest problem in determining the border between Czechoslovakia and Poland was the Cieszyn Silesia and parts of Orava and Spiš. From the Czech point of view, Cieszyn Silesia represented a part of the Lands of the Czech Crown which had belonged to them from the beginning of the 14th century at the latest. From the Polish point of view, it was a territory populated largely by people declaring Polish nationality and having the right to self-determination by which they should be connected to Poland. The opinion of the Ślůnskis, nationally indifferent and politically inclining to Germanness, or of the Germans and Jews were not taken into account. The Czech position was also advanced by the arguments concerning the need to retain the Ostrava–Karviná coal district within the new country to ensure functional operation of metallurgical and chemical businesses and to maintain its control over the only fully functioning connection between the Czech lands and eastern Slovakia by the Košice–Bohumín railway.

The issue of Cieszyn Silesia was negotiated by representatives of the Poles and Czechs already in the final stages of the war. It was generally assumed that there is an agreement on the peaceful settlement of the matter, however, each party had a different idea of an amicable solution in a spirit of fulfilment of their respective wishes.<sup>42</sup> The situation was complicated by local authorities' agreement on the division of administration according to which most of Cieszyn Silesia, including greater part of the Ostrava–Karvina coal district and part of the railway line Bohumín–Košice was to be managed by the Polish National Council of the Duchy of Cieszyn (*Rada Narodowa Księstwa Cieszyńskiego*) and the rest by the Provincial National Committee for Silesia (*Zemský národní výbor pro Slezsko*).<sup>43</sup> Although it was expressly provided already in the preamble to the agreement that it in no way prejudged the final demarcation, leaving it to be decided by the governments in Prague and Warsaw, the Polish side considered the agreement as definitive determination of borders along the lines of the ethnicity principle. The Czechoslovak government, leaning inter alia on the promise of Western powers to respect the historical borders of the Czech lands, the division as stated above was unacceptable

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42 J. Valenta, *Otázka československo-polské spolupráce v období rozpadu Rakousko-Uherska*, "Slezský sborník" 1965 No. 63, pp. 312–329.

43 The conflict over Cieszyn Silesia has so far been described in most detail by J. Valenta, *Česko-polské vztahy v letech 1918–1920 a Těšínské Slezsko*, Ostrava 1961.

mainly for economic and transportation reasons. French promise of respecting the historic Czech border was one of the reasons for the unwillingness of Kramář and his government to engage in direct negotiations with the still fragile and forming Polish government representation. The Polish party to the agreement of regional authorities, who accepted it without reservation, was trying to exercise of governmental authority over this still disputed territory in spite of Czech protests (e. g. by recruitment of men into military service, etc.). The ultimate step was the announcement of election to the Sejm which was to take place on the disputed territory. Its implementation would in the form of “fait accompli” mean recognizing Poland as having jurisdiction over the territory.

Viewing the situation as critical, the Czechoslovak government decided for a military intervention. In that moment, Czechoslovak units had significant advantage in the area of Cieszyn Silesia and by the end of January 1919, they advanced up to the Vistula River line within a few days.<sup>44</sup> After that, military operations were stopped by the intervention of the Entente and the parties agreed on an armistice.

Subsequent events associated with the preparation of the plebiscite, the terrorist actions of the so-called combat groups accompanied by intensified manifestations of nationalism on both sides, created deep distrust in the minds of local residents. Apart from Cieszyn Silesia, Czech and Polish ideas of territory also collided in northern Slovakia where the Poles declared lack of interest to gain territory to the detriment of the Hungarian state, but no sooner it became clear that Upper Hungary will become part of Czechoslovakia than claim was postulated to part of the North of Slovakia, especially in the area of Orava and Spiš. The reports of ethnic Polishness of the local “Gorals” proved to be rather fabricated by Kraków intellectuals, however, this made no significant difference.

The conflict over Cieszyn Silesia was decided (along with Polish claims on the territory of northern Slovakia) by arbitration conference of ambassadors in Belgium at the Spa Conference of 1920. The decision met the Czechoslovak minimum requirements, particularly control over the Košice-Bohumín railway line, however, both parties were left feeling sour for decades to come.

Nevertheless, the border conflict was not the only nor the most important barrier separating the Czechs and Poles after the Great War. It was the competition for the position of Czechoslovakia and Poland in Central Europe and the resulting difference in the overall design, intentions and objectives of foreign policy throughout the inter-war period.

Poland aspired to the position of Central European superpower capable, in cooperation with smaller allies, to form an effective barrier against Russia and Ger-

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<sup>44</sup> Both Czechs and Poles had a crucial part of their troops engaged elsewhere. At that time, the Polish were fighting the Ukrainians in Galicia and the Germans in Poznań. Best quality Czechoslovak units - legions in Russia - were fighting the Bolsheviks and held the Trans-Siberian railway.

many, which was a notion supported by historical tradition, geographical extent, population numbers and the feeling of military might growing out of successful outcomes of the fight against Bolshevik Russia. Primarily, Poland sought to rely on their own strength. From the Polish point of view, Hungary was a traditional partner with whom Poland was tied by a multitude of positive mutual bonds and could serve as a linking element in the considered concept of Central European federation, the so-called Intermarium, which under Polish leadership would form a dam between the two super-powers. Józef Piłsudski regarded Czechoslovakia as a “seasonal” state, a kind of a shrunk copy of Austria-Hungary that would sooner or later succumb to internal ethnic dissension, and due to its diverging interests it could not be a desirable ally to Poland.<sup>45</sup>

Czechoslovakia, the most economically developed part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, tried to build a security system in Central Europe directed against the efforts of the Habsburgs to return and against Hungarian revisionism. The basis of this system was the so-called Little Entente formed in 1920-1922, an alliance of Czechoslovakia Romania and Yugoslavia tied with France. This allied system was to be used by Czechoslovakia to promote their interests in the Central European area, especially in an effort to recover the markets lost due to the collapse of the Danube monarchy, without which it would hardly be able to fully exploit its economic potential. French attempts to connect Poland to Little Entente failed. Czechoslovakia opposed this, fearing possible consequences of the Hungarophilic mentality of the Poles and their desire for a common Hungarian-Polish border to the cohesion of the Little Entente, directed primarily against Hungarian revisionism. Additionally, closer connection with Poland, threatened both by Germany and Russia, seemed too risky to Czechoslovakia, reluctant to become drawn either into any conflict with the Russians who were perceived as a potential ally against Germany, or even with the Germans who, as Edvard Beneš somewhat naively thought, had no unsolved problem.

However, one cannot say that in either the Polish or the Czechoslovak society, forces that realized the need for mutual cooperation, especially in the international arena, would be totally absent. Thanks to them, negotiations to conclude a political agreement that would open the way to further mutually beneficial cooperation began relatively soon after the conflict of Cieszyn Silesia, in 1921. On the Polish side, this initiative was tied with the name of the then minister Konstanty Skirmunt. The text of the treaty was signed by the two foreign ministers in Prague already at the beginning of November 1921. Soon after that, text of a trade agreement was signed in Warsaw and optimistic assumptions of further development led to the consideration of the possibility of negotiations to conclude a military convention.

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45 By the end of 1928, Piłsudski told the then Deputy Foreign Minister Alfred Wysocki: “Czechoslovakia is an artificial creation ... It is not worth dealing with or building our own program of action on it.” Cit. according to K. Badziak, G. Matwiejew, P. Samuś, *„Powstanie” na Żaolziu w 1938 r. Polska akcja specjalna w świetle dokumentów oddziału II Sztabu Głównego WP*, Warszawa 1997, p. 7.

However, everything became complicated quickly under the pressure of pointed anti-Czechoslovak propaganda campaign organized by members of the Sejm from Cieszyn and Kraków which caused that the Polish government feared to present the convention in the Sejm for ratification. Long-term nationalist or even chauvinist journalismstrived to paint an “enemy image” and conditioned the improvement of any potential contacts by accommodating gestures of the other party which of course would have to take the form equatable to Walk to Canossa, which in itself created a difficult hurdle to surmount. Then, an essentially marginal dispute over the delineation of the territory of the eastern village of Javorina turned into a key bone of contention. Especially the Polish side stressed their demand that Czechoslovakia surrendered the village as compensation for the loss of the Polish part of Cieszyn.

It was this harsh media campaign that created conditions under which the ratification of concluded Czechoslovak-Polish agreements became basically obsolete. Gradually, the situation seemed so precarious that the Czechoslovak army circles felt obligated to prepare a dislocation plan in case of an armed conflict with Poland, consisting in case of defence of preparing the protection of the Ostrava territory and of the eastern territories, especially along the main railway route. It was not until the end of the dispute by resolution of the Council of the League of Nations and the signing of the border protocol in 1924 that the road to possible further attempts to rectify the turbulent situation opened.<sup>46</sup>

Success of Stresemann’s government of Germany leading to improvement of Germany’s international position and preparation of conference in Locarno which, as it turned out, led to the launch of decisive changes in the security structures in Europe, was one of a series of impulses that prompted both governments to further reflect on the benefits of normalization of mutual relations. The strengthening position of the British-supported Germany made an especially disturbing impression in Poland. Voices echoing in favour of reconciliation with Czechoslovakia were also supported by the French who were also keen to initiate the conclusion of the Czechoslovak-Polish military convention that would complement the treaties of both states with France. However, this soon proved completely impassable. Obstacles were, as usual, Czechoslovak reluctance to get involved in a conflict with the Soviets in order to maintain the Polish eastern border by the Treaty of Riga, and Polish reluctance to get involved in any way in opposition to Hungary, perceived then by Czechoslovakia as the main security risk.

Negotiations resulted in the preparation and subsequent signing of several treaties between Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1925. The peak of positive mutual contacts took the form of mutual visits of the foreign ministers Beneš and Skry accounted for in 1925 and 1926 mutual visits of foreign ministers, Benes and Skrzyński,

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46 Further on this in most detail, P. Jelínek, *Zahraničně-politické vztahy Československa a Polska 1918–1924*, Opava 2009, pp. 184–192 etc.

in Warsaw and Prague, respectively. The promising emerging chances for further improvement of bilateral contacts (there were even proposals to close political and economic customs union) did not last too long.<sup>47</sup>

The May coup in Poland in 1926 which resulted in the installation of Józef Piłsudski to the country's leadership, quite naturally met with little positive response from the Czechoslovak public opinion.<sup>48</sup> A number of prominent representatives of the Polish opposition found temporary refuge in Czechoslovakia, including for example Władysław Sikorski, Wincenty Witos and others. The Czechoslovak-Polish relations which had been relatively fair before then (Czechoslovakia supported the unsuccessful Polish efforts to gain a permanent seat in the Council of the League of Nations) began to deteriorate rapidly. The quite timid attempts of Czechoslovak military officials to establish closer military cooperation met with no positive response on the Polish side.<sup>49</sup> Apart from the traditional differences in the direction of foreign policy, one of the main reasons for the deterioration of relations was the fundamentally negative stance of Józef Piłsudski in relation to Czechoslovakia and any possible cooperation with Czechoslovakia.

Especially after the Rhineland Pact and France's decision to build the Maginot Line, Poland focused on concluding bilateral treaties with potential rivals. Czechoslovakia remained devoted to preserving the principles of collective security. Time has shown that, for whatever reasons, neither of these concepts were sufficient obstacle to the ambitious aggressors.

Mutual relations gradually escalated, especially after Poland concluded a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union in 1932 and a declaration on no use of force with Germany in 1934 and felt significantly strengthened in its international position. Czechoslovak-Polish contacts were also disadvantaged by the appointment of col. Beck as the foreign minister. Beck's main task was to fulfil Piłsudski's concept of Polish foreign policy. The four outstanding goals included revindication of Cieszyn Silesia and Polish policies towards Czechoslovakia were to be subordinated to this intention.

An impetus for the significant deterioration of relations came in the form of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty of Alliance of 1935, despite its attachment to France. Remediationist government circles depicted Czechoslovakia in reference to this treaty as an agency of Moscow in Central Europe. The apparent credibility of this argument was supported by strong position of the legally operating Communist

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47 The Polish Agrarian Jan Dąbski even brought forth a project of economic or customs union between the two countries. In the Czechoslovak environment, it was especially Milan Hodža who took liking in the project. P. Wandycz, *Trzy próby poprawy stosunków polsko-czechosłowackich 1921-1926-1933*, [in:] Z. Wójcik (ed.), *Ź dziejów polityki i dyplomacji Polskiej. Studia poświęcone pamięci Edwarda hr. Raczyńskiego Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej na wschodźstwie*, Warszawa 1994, pp. 227-229.

48 J. Gruchała, *Czeskie środowiska polityczne wobec spraw polskich 1920-1938*, Katowice 2002, pp. 82-85.

49 Žáček V. et al., *Češi a Poláci v minulosti. Sv. 2. Období kapitalismu a imperialismu*, Praha 1967, pp. 526-530.

Party of Czechoslovakia and the fact that the Republic provided political asylum to many left-wing opponents of Nazism on its soil.

As usual in periods of deteriorating relations, the issue of Cieszyn Silesia began to be emphasized and reference was made to anti-Polish politics of the Czechoslovak government and local bodies of self-government. They were accused of attempting a “Czechization” of the region and a variety of injustices, alleged and real, inflicted on the Polish minority. All this in a situation where the Czechoslovak minority policies were of the most liberal in the then Central Europe, as indeed confirmed by the number of Polish political parties, associations, schools, organizations, etc.<sup>50</sup>

The anti-Czech campaign inspired by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs started basically in connection to the Polish-German declaration on non-use of force in 1934. Polish government and military authorities decided to use minority issues as a destabilizing element, starting to build an underground irredentist network of locals of the Polish nationality which would, if necessary, launch terrorist actions and create a sense of universal rebellion.<sup>51</sup> There is a striking similarity between German and Polish policy of encouraging “their” minorities in Czechoslovakia to engage in anti-state activities. The interrelation of Polish and German policies in minority affairs was openly declared in asserting that Poland shall demand equal rights for the Polish minority in Cieszyn Silesia as those granted to the German minority in the Czech Lands.

The Polish government used the crisis in the Czech-German relations and at the latest by mid-September 1938, it launched specific preparations for possible military occupation Cieszyn Silesia. On September 17, illegal groups in preparation since 1934 were alerted and they received order to initiate sabotages on September 22. The next day, it was decided that Army Group “Śląsk” will be formed under the command of gen. Bortnowski and local residents were formed into the so-called. Zaolziański Legion.<sup>52</sup> Gen. Bortnowski received orders to prepare for the start of

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50 Although there no doubt were some Czechization activities on the part of governmental bodies and, particularly, some organizations and active individuals which in the inter-war period undoubtedly did not contribute to good Czech-Polish co-existence, though they occurred often mainly in response to a priori anti-Czechoslovak attitudes of members of the Polish minority, it is necessary for the comparison with later Polish policies towards the Czechs in the occupied territory of Cieszyn Silesia in 1938 to recall what the Polish minority in Cieszyn Silesia could make use of until 1938. There were 90 primary schools, 11 burgher schools, 72 kindergartens, a grammar school, a teachers' college and an institute for training kindergarten teachers. In municipalities, 75 Polish public libraries were available and 60 other libraries belonged to the association *Macierz Szkolna*. There was a developed network of economic, credit and consumer Polish associations. There were several Polish legally operating political parties. As apparent from the above-mentioned, the situation of the Polish minority in Czechoslovakia was clearly better than in some other countries, and incomparable to the position of the Ukrainian minority in Poland, for example. D. Gawrecki, *Těšínsko v období mezi světovými válkami (1918-1938)*, [in:] D. Gawrecki, M. Borák (ed.), *Nástín dějin Těšínska*, Ostrava – Praha 1992, pp. 95–96. Polish view on the issue is brought by G. Gašior, *Polityka narodowościowa państwa na czechosłowackim Śląsku Cieszyńskim w latach 1920-1938*, Warszawa 2020.

51 K. Badziak, G. Matwiejew, P. Samuś, „Powstanie” na Zaolziu..., *op. cit.*, pp. 16–17. Cf. also E. Długajczyk, *Tajny front na granicy Cieszyńskiej. Wywiad i dywersja w latach 1919-1939*, Katowice 1993.

52 It was organized by volunteers from the districts of Rybnik, Pszczyna, Bielsko and Cieszyn and by refugees from

military operations against Czechoslovakia on October 1, 1938.<sup>53</sup>

Czechoslovak army command did not in principle calculate with a clash with Poland and put pressure on the government to ensure at least neutrality with the Poles in the expected conflict with Germany. Probing of the Czechoslovak army command circles about possible cooperation, which were performed by the military attaché in Romania, were strictly denied at the governmental level in Poland. Similar reaction was encountered in further cautious attempts on the Czechoslovak side.<sup>54</sup> The desperate situation and pressure of the army commanders to provide at least for the neutrality of Poland in the expected war against Germany forced President Beneš to send a letter to the Polish President, Mościcki, with an offer for negotiations on the surrender of territory. The Polish government, offended by the fact that it was not invited to the Munich conference, decided to resolve the situation through its own ultimatum demand for the surrender of a part of Cieszyn Silesia. Czechoslovakia, which had meanwhile accepted the dictate of superpowers, did surrender the requested territory to Poland as well in this case.<sup>55</sup>

The tragic events of the autumn of 1938, which meant a de facto liquidation of Czechoslovak defence capabilities, were completed in March 1939 by occupation of the Czech Lands, creation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia as an autonomous part of Nazi Germany and the establishment of an independent Slovakia under Hitler's patronage. For Polish foreign policy and Polish public opinion, those were days of seeming triumph. Poland gained part of Cieszyn Silesia along with its significant industrial potential, thus eliminating the injustice inflicted on the Polish population in this territory through a legation arbitration. The autonomy of Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia foreshadowed their further fate. Especially the autonomous Carpathian Ruthenia was perceived by Polish politicians as a risk factor, since this basically imperceptible territorial unit could become a magnet for the Polish areas of Central and Eastern Galicia populated by Ukrainians. It was not until the final annexation of Carpathian Ruthenia by Hungary that Poland gained the coveted common Polish-Hungarian border.

However, few of the Polish public, loudly celebrating these "successes", noted that the annexation of the territories of northern Slovakia, quite clearly against the

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Czechoslovak Cieszyn Silesia. The company commanders were usually military officers, the rest of the officer corps consisted of active officers and some reserve officers from among the volunteers. As of September 30, the Legion had 14 companies totalling 1,700 men of the 1st brigade and a reserve of another 2800 volunteers. The task was to provoke a rebellion in the Czechoslovak Cieszyn Silesia and carry out guerrilla operations. Due to the peaceful resolution of the conflict, the companies of the Legion only participated in a few military parades and the Legion was disbanded in mid-October. K. Badziak, G. Matwiejew, P. Samuś, „Powstanie” na Żaolziu..., *op. cit.*, pp. 131-139. Cf. also E. Długajczyk, *Tajny front...*, *op. cit.*

53 M. P. Deszczyński, *Ostatni egzamin. Wojsko Polskie wobec kryzysu czechosłowackiego 1938-1939*, Warszawa 2003, p. 139.

54 J. Kupliński, *Polsko-Czechosłowackie kontakty wojskowe od wiosny 1938 do jesieni 1939 roku*, Gdańsk 1977, pp. 3-51.

55 About the role of Cieszyn Silesia in the Czechoslovak-Polish relations in detail by O. Káňa, R. Pavelka (pseudonym, real author is S. Stanisławska), *Těšínsko v polsko-československých vztazích 1918-1939*, Ostrava 1970.

will of the local population, basically rid the hitherto relatively strong Polonophilic circles of influence on Slovak politics and put Slovakia in line with Nazi Germany.<sup>56</sup> Perhaps only Polish military leaders realized that with the southern border exposed, the strategic situation of Poland in case of war with Germany has deteriorated considerably. Munich and related events like the Anschluss of Austria opened the way for further German territorial gains and this time also to the outbreak of World War II.

Even after the mutilation of Czechoslovakia, the very bad Czech-Polish relations did not change much. Especially guilty of this situation, the short-sighted, persecutory and sharp anti-Czech politics of the Polish government bodies in the occupied territory of Cieszyn Silesia. Czech population had no minority rights, Czech schools were closed immediately, Czech associations and organizations were dissolved and confiscation of the property of and expulsion of the Czech population ensued.<sup>57</sup> All of this caused the Czech side to set up resistance and clashes of combat groups were on the rise, reminiscent of the plebiscite period in the early 1920s. Activities of the Czech combat groups of the so-called "Silesian Resistance", which the Prague government who had no interest in worsening the situation tried to prevent unsuccessfully, led to further mass expulsion of the Czechs and the spiral of violence was increasingly gaining inertia.<sup>58</sup> Gradual improvement of the situation came only in

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56 M. Majeriková, *Vojna o Spiš. Spiš v politike Poľska v medzivojnovom období v kontexte česko-slovensko-poľských vzťahov*, Kraków 2007; M. Borák, R. Záček, *Ukradené vesnice. Musí Češi platit za 8 slovenských obcí?*, Český Těšín 1993. Interesting confrontation of the Slovak and Polish opinions on the event more than half a century ago is introduced by essays by M. Andráš, E. Orlof et J. M. Roszkowski et J. Kowalczyk in a joint Slovak-Polish publication called *Terra Scepusiensis*, prepared by the Slovak-Polish commission of humanities. Content of these articles and, especially, the accompanying discussion demonstrate that a diversity of views, opinions and reviews still largely persists. M. Andráš, *Severný Spiš v politických, vojenských a diplomatických aktivitách medzi rokmi 1918-1947*, [in:] R. Gladkiewicz, M. Homza, M. Pulaski, M. Slivka (ed.), *Terra Scepusiensis. Stav bádania o dejinách Spiša*, Wrocław - Levoča 2003, pp. 853-892; E. Orlof, J. M. Roszkowski, *Regulacje granicy państwowej na Spiszu w okresie międzywojennym (1920-1938)*, *ibidem*, pp. 893-904; J. Kowalczyk, *Spisz po czas drugiej wojny światowej i w pierwszych latach powojennych*, *ibidem*, pp. 905-926.

57 According to the command of the vice-Voivode L. Malhomme, former Polish consul in Ostrava and delegate of the Silesian Voivode to the commander of the independent Śląsk operation group, all Czech associations and organizations were dissolved in October 1938, their assets were confiscated in favour of the Polish State, Polish was introduced as the only official language, also becoming the language of instruction in schools, including kindergartens. Local self-governing authorities were dissolved and government commissioners were appointed to head individual municipalities. Residents of Czech nationality were issued culverts by police authorities in municipalities that allowed them to emigrate under the condition that they leave Cieszyn Silesia by November 1, 1938. O. Káňa, R. Pavelka (pseudonym, real author is S. Stanislawka), *Těšínsko v polsko-československých...*, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

58 In reaction to Polish measures against the Czech population in the occupied territories, anti-Polish militias were formed whose members were recruited from people expelled from Cieszyn Silesia where they were often forced to leave all of their property. They found support of the local population and of some military commanders, as well as members of the Police in the Ostrava region. In total, they carried out about 60 sabotages which were repaid by the Polish authorities by expulsions of further inhabitants of Czech nationality. Also, Polish militias took to retaliatory action on some occasions. The Czechoslovak government had an interest in peace in Cieszyn Silesia and sent a mission to the territory headed by gen. Hrabčík with the task of preventing incidents which only became successful towards the end of 1938. J. Bílek, *Kyselá těšínská jablička. Československo-poľské konflikty o Těšínsko 1919, 1938, 1945*, Praha 2018, pp. 185-186. Cf. also M. Borák, *Česká diverze na Těšínsku v letech 1938-1939*, „Slezský sborník” 1995

early 1939 when it was becoming clear that Poland is the estimated victim of the next German attack. In this context, it was natural that Poland became a country where refugees from the Second Republic and later from the Protectorate resorted to flee. The most significant immigration were the organized departee troops, especially military specialists (pilots, artillery, etc.) who understood that the outbreak of war is near and created Czechoslovak military units in exile. The Polish government, albeit in a difficult position because they did not want to give Hitler's Germany an excuse to attack, decided to tolerate this state of affairs, allowing headquarters of the future Czechoslovak military unit to form around the Kraków consulate. It was to be led by the Polonophilic, anti-Beneš-leaning general Prchala.<sup>59</sup> Although the unit was formed, it was unable to intervene into the fights due to the rapid development of events.

## 8. The War and Occupation

World War II. marked a new stage in bilateral relations. An initial sad episode took the form of the participation of Slovak army in an attack on Poland which was to become a sort of "retaliation" for the recent Polish annexation of the territory of northern Slovakia in order to regain it. After the quick defeat of the bravely defending Polish Army, the Polish government resorted to the Romanian territory and under pressure from Western allies, the Polish president appointed a new government with the participation of anti-remediationist opposition headed by Władysław Sikorski. Polish exile representation was initially in a much better position than the Czech one. Exchange of government officials, associated with the removal of representatives of the rehabilitation regime from power and the appointment of gen. Władysław Sikorski as Prime Minister of the commander-in-chief of the armed forces apparently removed some neuralgic points of Polish-Czech relations. The obstacle of unequal position of both political representations remained. Poles were recognized legal allied government with military units at their disposal. The Czechoslovaks had to first earn recognition gradually. The very fact that it was headed by Edvard Beneš, at that time a very unpopular politician not only with the Poles, but, paradoxically, especially with the French, and also with the British, both associated with the conclusion of the Munich Agreement, opened space for opposition represented by the aforementioned general Prchala and the Slovak politicians, the Paris ambassador Osuský and the former Prime Minister Hodža to force their way.

The Poles, who showed minimum sympathy to Beneš indeed, tried to use this anti-Beneš opposition, especially in Slovakia. The skilful Beneš, who had valuable contacts with home and a well-functioning intelligence service led by Colonel Moravec,

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No. 1, pp. 45–53.

59 J. Kupliński, *Polsko-Czechosłowackie kontakty...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 3–5.

managed to eliminate opposition from the equation and dominate the Czechoslovak exile leadership. The road to full political recognition would still prove long. The Czechoslovak National Committee was first recognized as political representation in 1939 and it took basically a full year before the “interim” government of Czechoslovakia managed to get recognition after the defeat of France which in turn weakened the position Osuski in July 1940. Beneš skillfully took advantage of the popularity of various federalization concepts of the next arrangement of Central Europe, supported notably by Winston Churchill, refusing to negotiate about them despite British pressure with reference to the unequal status of both political representations.

The Poles attempted to foil recognition of the Czechoslovak government by the British without success,<sup>60</sup> and were left with no other choice than to recognize it as well. Why there was minimum willingness to take this step follows quite illustratively from the discussions at the meeting of the Polish Government on June 12, 1940.<sup>61</sup> The a priori distrust of the Poles towards Beneš and the Czechoslovak representation in London along with their flirting with anti-Beneš opposition and playing the so-called “Slovak card” gave little hope for successful negotiations on the future of coexistence which alone could not be reached without compromise on both sides.

In spite of that, however, progress in the Czechoslovak-Polish relations manifested itself quite quickly after recognition of the Czechoslovak government. The highlight was a joint Czech-Polish Declaration on preparing a *sui generis* confederation. However, talks about the preparation of the confederacy were not easy, as each of the parties had their own idea of the bond, somewhat different from that of the other.<sup>62</sup> While the Poles preferred a rather closer political-military alliance, ad-

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60 From the record of interview with Secretary of State William Strang on the interview with J. Ciechanowski from July 12, 7. 1940: “Mr Ciechanowski told me this afternoon that the Polish government takes issues with our intention to recognize the Czechoslovak government. In the opinion of the Polish Government, it would not be adequate that Beneš and his colleagues received the same recognition as the Polish government had. The Polish government is a legitimate government with the President and the entire state apparatus. They are the only Polish government, as there is no Polish administration in the occupied territories. The position of Mr. Beneš is different because there was a Czech president, government and parliament in Bohemia, so that Beneš and his colleagues cannot be considered the sole legal Czech government.” Cit. by J. Němeček, *Od spojení k roztržce. Vztahy československé a polské exilové reprezentace 1939–1945*, Praha 2003, pp. 68–69.

61 It was acknowledged that the government will have to be recognized, but it was to be done “with all the reservations so as not to close the door on the support of Slovak requirements. Restitution ‘in integrum’ is not thinkable, as our best interests are at risk here, primarily the issue of Silesia .... the autonomy of Slovakia is a minimal autonomy postulate of the Slovaks, and therefore ours.” cit. according to R. Žáček, *Projekt československo-polské konfederace v letech 1939–1943*, Opava 2001, p. 56.

62 On the confederation R. Žáček, *Projekt československo-polské konfederace...., op. cit.*; J. Němeček, *Od spojení k roztržce...., op. cit.*; T. Kisielewski, *Federacja Środkowo-Europejska. Pertraktacje polsko-czechosłowackie 1939–1943*, Warszawa 1991; P. S. Wandycz, *Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation and the Great Powers 1940–1943*, Bloomington 1956. Documents from the meetings of the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation are published in the edition: I. Štovíček, J. Valenta, *Czechoslovak-Polish Negotiations of the Establishment of the Confederation and Alliance 1939–1944*, Praha 1995.

vocating to call it a federation, the Czech party was primarily focused on economic contacts with looser interrelations. It is quite clear that both sides were trying to exploit the areas in they would gain a stronger position.

These talks basically never reached beyond the level of political declarations. In attempts to further preparatory steps, they encountered a number of practical problems. Czechoslovak representatives proceeded from the data of the pre-Munich situation. The Poles insisted on basing the talks on the situation from September 1, 1939. While the issue of Cieszyn Silesia would probably sooner or later have resolved itself, the greater problem, after Germany invaded the Soviet Union, was the issue of Polish-Soviet border. Stalin became too desirable an ally to the British. Especially the defeat of the German army at Moscow in the winter of 1941 and subsequently at Stalingrad a year later showed clearly that the model which the Poles implemented successfully during the First World War, i. e. first the defeat of Russia by Germany, then the defeat of Germany by western allies, would probably not repeat this time. The Soviet opinion was to be taken into account and it became clear quite early on that the project of the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation is not something the Soviet Union would intend to either encourage, or even tolerate.<sup>63</sup> Although not an enthusiastic friend of such an intimate connection with Poland, Beneš was still trying to salvage at least something, but his attempts to reach a trilateral agreement were unsuccessful. All of the attempts were ended abruptly by the Polish-Soviet conflict over the murdered Polish officers in Katyn and other camps where a number of formerly Czechoslovak citizens of Polish nationality from the occupied part of Cieszyn Silesia were murdered as well.<sup>64</sup> Although everything pointed at the fact that this was a crime carried out by Soviet security bodies, the interests of the Allies to keep the Soviet Union in the war against the Germans pushed everything aside. The situation was further exploited by the Soviets in that they used the request of the Polish government in London to have the matter investigated by bodies of the International Red Cross, to break all communication with them.

The Czechoslovak President Beneš, whom Stalin somewhat “pampered with condemnation of the Munich Agreement and recognition of the pre-Munich Czechoslovak border, quite pragmatically respected the given state of affairs and took the opportunity to conclude the Treaty of Alliance with the Soviet Union in December 1943. It was his idea that this would create conditions for Czechoslovakia to be able to maintain independence in case of occupation of Central Europe by the Soviet army. Beneš was even as forthcoming towards Stalin in order to gain mutual border

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63 Soviet diplomatic representative for the Czechoslovak government in London, Bogomolov, visited Jan Masaryk on July 15, 1942 to inform him of the opinion of his government: “*The Soviet Government is of the opinion that the Polish-Czechoslovak confederation is not likely to advance peace in Europe and the Soviet government is officially against any confederational act at this time.*” Quoted according to R. Záček, *Projekt československo-polské konfederace...*, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

64 In detail by M. Borák, *Ofiary Zbrodni Katyńskiej z obszaru byłej Czechosłowacji*, Opava 2011.

with the USSR as to offer the resignation of Carpathian Ruthenia, thus essentially *de facto* recognizing the Soviet annexation of Polish territory in September of 1939.

Czechoslovak and Polish governments, then, found themselves in completely opposite positions in relation to their eastern neighbour. The whole affair was further confirmed by recognizing the so-called Lublin Government which the Soviets forced on the Czechoslovak government by gross duress, mediated with extraordinary willingness by the Czechoslovak ambassador and later prime minister Zdeněk Fierlinger. It came as severe disappointment to Beneš and all of the Czechoslovak political representation that not even the “Lublin” government was willing to recognize the Czechoslovak pre-Munich borders in Cieszyn Silesia, with the Soviets who basically exercised agency over this government apparently not forcing the adjustment, which would bring nothing good for the post-war development.<sup>65</sup> It seemed increasingly clearer that the Soviet Union was going to use this contentious issues between Czechoslovakia and Poland alternately to put pressure on both sides. The end of the greatest armed conflict in human history to date was about to go from hot war to the Cold War, this time fought among the former allies. Czechoslovakia and Poland found themselves within the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, with no means of escape at that time.

## Conclusion

If we were to briefly summarize the mutual relations between the Czechs and Poles at the end of a period of nearly a thousand years, we would have to state that they are not significantly different from neighbourly relations of other countries and peoples. There have been periods when they were close and friendly indeed, as well as periods of rattling weapons with hateful threats and condemnations from both warring sides. Yet, we find in the course of their common history several factors so specific that they cannot be ignored. First, it is the awareness of a kind of close tribal affiliation with the western Slavic language circle which facilitated mutual interpersonal communication even without any knowledge of the neighbour's language. Therefore, in some cases, we repeatedly encounter ideas of a “natural alliance” of sorts, especially actuated in times of imminent threat, primarily from the Germans. Not even this feeling prevented vicious clashes and conflicts which in the Middle Ages mainly occurred as part of struggle for territory separating the Czech Lands and Poland, i. e. Silesia. Bohemian rulers managed to obtain it in the 14th century but its loss was felt in Poland for quite some time. The resentments of contention over Silesia were only pushed aside once Polish policy turned towards the East. Relatively long period of relatively friendly relations ensued under the Jagiellon rule

65 R. Žáček, *K diplomatickému pozadí sporu o Těšínsko ve vztazích československé a polské tzv. „lublinské“ vlády*, „Studia Śląskie“ 2001 Volume 60, pp. 225–240.

and even at the time when the Czech Lands were ruled by the Habsburgs. Over the course of these periods, the fates of the Czech and Polish political nations diverged. Polish nobility gained dominance in their country, while Czech nobility was decimated after the Bohemian Revolt and during the Thirty Years War. Since the end of the 18th century, the Poles struggled to restore an independent Poland and Czechs to rescue the very existence of the nation. The stumbling block in relations between the leaders of both nations was the vastly different relationship to another Slavic country, Russia. Especially in the period of the National Revival, the Czechs, who had no direct experience of the Tsarist regime, with few exceptions looked up to the Russians in uncritical admiration as to potential providers of patronage against the predatory pan-Germanism. The Poles, who in turn did have direct experience with Russia, were naturally not able to understand or willing to accept the uncritical Czech Russophilism.

During the period of renewed existence of independent states of the inter-war era, their relationship was clouded primarily by the conflict over the Cieszyn Silesia territory and the Czechoslovak-Polish War of 1919. However, the more substantial battle was fought for dominance in Central Europe. The Czechoslovak government did not want to be drawn into the expected Polish-German and Polish-Soviet conflict, Poland did not intend to support Czechoslovakia against Hungarian revisionism. In an effort to reach their prospective goals, which included the dismantling of Czechoslovakia and the achievement of a common Polish-Hungarian border, the representatives of the Polish government did not even shy away from *de facto* collaboration with Nazi Germany during the break-up of Czechoslovakia. Despite all the recent resentments, Poland became a major centre for Czechoslovak emigrants to assemble and its territory was also the site of formation of the first Czechoslovak military unit abroad.

Attempts to achieve closer cooperation between the exiled Polish and Czech governments, resulting among other things from the lessons of the causes of defeat in the conflict with Germany, encountered a number of problems, including the *a priori* mutual distaste of a number of political leaders and the differing attitudes to the events of 1938 and 1939. The Polish government insisted on the validity of the resignation of Cieszyn Silesia and insisted on the restoration of the borders as determined on September 1, 9. 1939, while the Czechoslovak government demanded “withdrawal of recognition” of the Munich Agreement and all it had brought, including the annexation of Cieszyn Silesia by the Poles. Czechoslovak-Polish negotiations were ultimately doomed to failure due to the Soviet veto. During World War II, Czech society perceived the Soviet Union as a power that is not involved in the breaking up of Czechoslovakia, the Czechs admired the Soviets as the only country that was not only able to resist German aggression, but also to counter-attack successfully. Polish society perceived the Soviet Union as the aggressor and rightfully

deeply distrusted their intentions. The conclusion of World War II found Czechoslovakia and Poland in the iron grip of Soviet power.

Many of the problems occurring in their mutual relations in the 19th and 20th century had their roots in a different development of the Czech and Polish history and of the status of the Czechs and Poles in Central Europe.

Their mutual relations were marked by a series of historically conditioned differences, especially in the period since the creation and formation of modern nations. The Poles entered into this process as a nation who had lost their independence by division among three super-powers relatively recently. Their political elite and ideas of statehood had not lost momentum and the status of Poland as a Central European power was a living memory. They were used to being the ruling nation who controlled a number of other nationalities.

In the process of national revival, Czechs were only creating their national and political elites, in the absence of the noble part of the political nation and basing on intellectuals, priests, and part of the middle class. In a land they considered their own, they had to compete with culturally, politically and economically more advanced Germans and a ruling dynasty whose feeling was rather German.

A substantial obstacle to closer cooperation was their difference of objectives and methods of achieving them, as well as awareness of their own strength and possibilities arising from it.

This has become particularly evident in the differences between Czech and Polish political thought. Despite great losses, the Polish political nation represented primarily by the aristocracy and the middle and minor nobility never ceased to exist completely. The Czech political nation as an independent entity, represented initially by essentially the same population groups, disappeared almost entirely in the process of White Mountain persecution and gradual acceptance of Habsburg rule. It was replaced by a nation consisting primarily of plebeian classes. Differences in thinking and behaviour of members of both political nations seemed to imitate the old Bohemian knights' titles - *the noble and brave* and the burghers' titles - *the wise and cautious*. With the above characteristics, it is quite clear that there could hardly be any more permanent and closer cooperation internally accepted by the majority of members of both nations, even despite the fact that Czechs had quite widely spread admiration for Polish bravery and willingness to sacrifice, even though these romantic notions were substantially foreign to them to the extent that they did not quite understand them. The Poles in turn acknowledged Czech abilities in other fields, particularly in economy, however, the Czech political attitudes were not fully comprehensible to them and they generally regarded their reluctance to engage in fights often lost in advance as lack of courage and national sentiment.

Bartłomiej Dźwigala

## The Polish-Czech Relations (in the 10<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries) in Historical Reflections of Oskar Halecki

### Introduction

Professor Oskar Halecki (born in 1891, died in 1973) is one of the best-known and most frequently quoted Polish historians<sup>1</sup>. He owes his popularity to his intense activities at many universities in the United States. The Third Reich attack on Poland on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939 found him in Switzerland, from which he moved to France and then to the USA, where he lived until his death. Before the Second World War Oskar Halecki was a professor at the University of Warsaw; he had graduated from the Jagiellonian University. In his scientific research he took up a number of topics, however, the central place in his work is occupied by reflections on the history of Central Europe, especially in the period of Polish-Lithuanian monarchy of the Jagiellonian dynasty<sup>2</sup>. As a witness of two world wars and the changing fortunes of Central European nations in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he perceived the history of Poland as the borderland of the Latin civilization and he believed in the idea of federalism – understood as an opposition to incorporation, thus being voluntary cooperation of sovereign nations – as the way to establish relations between states<sup>3</sup>. In post-war Poland he and his academic achievements were mostly neglected and

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1 There is no comprehensive biography of this Polish scientist. Information on the life and works of Oskar Halecki can be found in recently published J. Cisek, *Oskar Halecki. Historyk – szermierz wolności*, Warszawa 2009, which contains a short biography of the Professor and a selection of his shorter and less-known texts, together with his full bibliography. See also a collection of papers devoted to Halecki: M. Dąbrowska (ed.), *Oskar Halecki i jego wizja Europy*, volumes 1-3, Warszawa-Lódź 2012-2015.

2 See the most important of Halecki's studies, published at the beginning of his career and at the beginning of reborn Poland: O. Halecki, *Dzieje Unii Jagiellońskiej, Volumes 1-2*, Kraków 1919-1920.

3 See his visionary manifestos published in the crucial moment of the Second World War in American scientific journals: Same author, *East Central Europe in Postwar Organization*, "The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science", 1943 No. 228, pp. 52-59; Same author, *The Historical Role of Central-Eastern Europe*, "The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science" 1944 No. 232, pp. 9-18.

he was occasionally attacked as a scientist remaining “in contact with pro-fascist bourgeoisie historiography of Western Europe”<sup>4</sup>. After 1945 Halecki’s books were published only abroad.

In this article I will try to show how Oskar Halecki perceived the Polish-Czech relations and what role, in his opinion, the neighborhood with the Czech Kingdom played in Central-European geopolitics. Though Halecki did not conduct any in-depth analyses of the history of the Bohemian Kingdom, it constituted an element of his reflection on the history of Poland and Europe. He perceived these relations through the idea of cooperation between Central European nations and this was the key to building the historical narration on the history of Poland and its neighboring nations<sup>5</sup>.

## 1. The Origins of Poland

In his reflections on the origins of Poland, Halecki presents his vision of the shape of relations between states and regional cooperation in Central Europe. Writing about Mieszko I, he perceives the situation of the first historic ruler of the Piast country in the context of the threats posed by Germany. According to Halecki, Mieszko made two crucial diplomatic moves: he established friendly relations with the empire and thus had his rule acknowledged, and he formed an alliance with Bohemia, which, thanks to his marriage to princess Dobrava, allowed him to adopt Christianity through its neighbor Slavic nation, not as subordination to the stronger Ottonian dynasty. Thanks to this, the Catholic faith quickly grew in the souls of Poles, as it was not a tool used by the powers of those times to increase their influence and to build an advantage over the Piast state<sup>6</sup>. Bohemia, as a Slavic nation which had overtaken Poland on the road to the Latin civilization, could pass the teachings of the Catholic Church and provide access to the European heritage not on terms of dependence, but partnership, manifested in the marriage alliance of Dobrava and Mieszko<sup>7</sup>. In Halecki’s reflection, duchess Dobrava plays a similar

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4 See, *inter alia*, the paper published in the Stalinist period: J. Tazbir, *Falsz historyczny i zdrada narodu w pracach O. Haleckiego*, „Kwartalnik Historyczny” 1953 No. 60/3, pp. 172–195, (the quoted fragment on p. 187). Tazbir accuses Halecki, *inter alia*, of “positive attitude to fascist and racist tendencies” (p. 186).

5 My main source material will be Oskar Halecki’s *A History of Poland*, translated by M. M. Gardner, M. Corbridge-Patkaniowska, New York 1943), which is probably one of the most popular syntheses of the history of Poland in the world. It also constitutes a summary of Oskar Halecki’s vision of history. Another important book, which is still waiting for the publication in Polish is: Same author, *The Borderlands of Western Civilization. A History of East Central Europe*, New York 1952; and his last major scientific work issued during his life: Same author, *The Limits and Divisions of European History*, Notre Dame 1962. More on the concept of Central Europe in medieval times: N. Berend, P. Urbańczyk, P. Wiszewski, *Central Europe in the High Middle Ages. Bohemia, Hungary and Poland c. 900–c. 1300*, New York 2013, pp. 1–39 (it also contains updated bibliography of the topic).

6 See N. Berend, P. Urbańczyk, P. Wiszewski, *Central Europe in the High Middle Ages, op. cit.*, p. 124, where one can find comments on high dynamics of the Christianization of Poland process.

7 See Halecki’s speech delivered in Rome to mark the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Baptism of Poland: O. Halecki, *Pierwsze tysiąclecie katolickiej Polski*, Rzym 1966, pp. 5–8.

role to that of Jadwiga of Anjou. Expressing her consent to marry a pagan ruler, she leads to the baptism of the ruler and his court, which is the first key step allowing the neighboring political community to join the group of Catholic monarchies<sup>8</sup>. In the case of Bohemian Dobrava and Mieszko, the alliance between the countries did not survive, however, it became a certain model for future generations – Halecki seems to imply that this first important lesson in our history shows how much Poles can benefit from regional cooperation.

The pilgrimage of Emperor Otto III to the tomb of saint Adalbert in Gniezno in 1000 was another important lesson for Oskar Halecki<sup>9</sup>. The meeting of the Christian ruler and the ruler of Poland, Bolesław the Brave was seen by Halecki as an ideal implementation of the concept of peaceful cooperation between European countries in pursuit of the common goal – building the Christian order in the world. The Congress of Gniezno embodies the idea of co-existence and respect for the right to sovereignty of the weaker nations. The congress had its genesis in the martyr death of the bishop of Prague, Adalbert from the Czech clan of Slavnik, who was denied the possibility of rendering his service in his diocese and who obtained the permission to conduct missionary activities among pagan Prussians. In this way, newly-converted Poland on the threshold of the new millennium of Christianity became a starting point for further missionary activities – saint Adalbert preached the Gospel under the protection of Bolesław the Brave, who also gave his daughter in marriage to the duke of Kiev and send a Catholic bishop with her. Halecki perceived this as the first manifestation of the historic mission of Poland – Poles were to pass the faith and culture of the Latin civilization not through conquering, but through peaceful influence, which was best expressed in the union with Lithuania<sup>10</sup>.

Oskar Halecki considered Bolesław the Brave to be the first Polish ruler to successfully implement the idea of Central European nations cooperation as defense against imperial aggression in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Bolesław the Brave spread his influence over Bohemia and Kiev Russia, his aim being not to conquer the lands but to neutralize the activities of Emperor Henry II, who planned to subordinate Bohemia and cooperate with Kiev against Poland. The geopolitical game of Bolesław the Brave illustrates the problems resulting from the location of Poland between Germany and Russia. Halecki shows that at the beginning of their statehood, Poles faced the same threats as the generations living in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to him, Bolesław noticed that in order to protect against German empire and mag-

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8 Jadwiga of Anjou was for Halecki one of key characters in our history, see his book published posthumously by his disciple, Tadeusz V. Gromada: O. Halecki, *Jadwiga of Anjou and the rise of East Central Europe*, New York 1991 (Polish edition: Same author, *Jadwiga Andegaweńska i kształtowanie się Europy Środkowo-wschodniej*, translated by M. Borowska-Sobotka, Kraków 1991).

9 See also: R. Michałowski, *Zjazd gnieźnieński. Religijne przesłanki powstania arcybiskupstwa gnieźnieńskiego*, Wrocław 2005.

10 O. Halecki, *Historia Polski, op. cit.*, passim.

nates and to achieve permanent security, he had no choice but to form an alliance of baptized Slavic political communities between the Dnieper and the Elbe. He concludes that Bolesław's activities did not create any new geopolitical situation, but the idea itself was "inspiring in its greatness"<sup>11</sup>.

## 2. Towards the Unification of the Kingdom

In 1278 Ottokar II of Bohemia was defeated by Roman-German king Rudolf of Habsburg in the Battle on the Marchfeld. The Bohemian king was supported by the Polish knights, whereas Rudolf was backed by Hungarian king, Ladislaus IV. The victory of the Roman-German king significantly strengthened the dynasty of the Habsburg and also led to significant losses of the Piast dukes and gains of the margraves of Brandenburg. Oskar Halecki points out that the divisions between Central European nations account for their inability to strengthen their position in relation to the Habsburg and other German clans. He criticizes the divisions within the Piast clan, who were unable to develop a common position and, together with the Bohemians, form an alliance of Slavic rulers against the Habsburg. Poles who stand divided and who pursue their particular interests, become passive observers of events in the region and are unable to protect their country against external aggression.

On 26<sup>th</sup> June 1295 Przemysł II – representative of the Wielkopolska branch of the Piast dynasty – was crowned the King of Poland. 219 years after the crowning of Bolesław II the Bold in 1076, another member of the Piast dynasty was crowned, which was to unite politically the divided Polish lands. However, in the next year Przemysł II was murdered, and in 1297 the Bohemians crowned Wenceslaus II, who also ruled in Kraków and Małopolska. In 1300 Wenceslaus II was crowned the King of Poland in Gniezno Cathedral. Oskar Halecki points out that this unification of the thrones of Bohemia and Poland at the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> century was opposed by Pope Boniface VIII, who supported the Piast unification efforts. In 1301 the Hungarian throne was also in the hands of the House of Přemyslid – in this way the Bohemian dynasty ruled in three Central European monarchies, however its reign was not the outcome of an agreement, but of a brutal fight, which could not lead to peaceful coexistence. Halecki emphasizes that the successes of the last Přemyslid rulers posed a threat to the nations of Central Europe, as this dynasty was supported by the Habsburg, and the growing power of Wenceslaus could result in Poland's incorporation into the empire. Wenceslaus II died in 1305, and his son, the last representative of the House of Přemyslid, Wenceslaus III – King of Bohemia, Poland and Hungary – died a year later. This enabled Władysław Łokietek to continue his fight for unification of Poland under the Piast rule, whereas Bohemia became the place of rivalry between foreign dynasties<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> See also: P. Urbańczyk, *Bolesław Chrobry – lew ryczący*, Toruń 2017 (containing updated bibliography on the king).

<sup>12</sup> O. Halecki, *Borderlands of Western Civilization*, *op. cit.*, pp. 93–106.

In 1308 the Teutonic Knights annexed Pomerania and slaughtered the inhabitants of Gdańsk – this constituted an attack on the most vital interests of the Piast state. Due to his weak position, Władysław Łokietek could not prevent it. The loss of the access to the Baltic Sea weakened Poland's international position – the Polish elites in the 14<sup>th</sup> century understood that. In 1311 John of Luxemburg, son of Holy Roman Emperor Henry VII, became king of Bohemia. He was a titular king of Poland, justifying his claims to the Polish throne with the fact that he inherited them from his predecessors on the Bohemian throne. The simultaneous pressure on the kingdom of Poland from the Teutonic Knights who controlled Gdańsk Pomerania, from John of Luxemburg who held Małopolska and Wielkopolska in check, and from the Margraviate of Brandenburg, posed a deadly threat to the uniting kingdom of the Piast dynasty. Halecki perceived the position of the monarchy of Władysław Łokietek, who was crowned in 1320, as a synonym of a geopolitical crisis, in which Poles faced external aggression on each of their borders.

The next Piast monarch, Casimir II the Great, along with the political elite of the Kingdom, sought ways of solving this unfavorable international situation and led to the organization of a congress of Central European monarchs in Visegrad in 1335, where the Polish king met the Bohemian king John of Luxemburg and the Hungarian king Charles Robert of Anjou (husband of Władysław Łokietek's daughter, Elżbieta, and thus Casimir's brother-in-law). King Casimir agreed to resign from Silesia in return for renouncing the rights to the Polish throne by king John. In this way the Polish king partly neutralized the alliance between the Teutonic Knights and the Bohemians, which led to the Treaty of Kalisz (1343), ending the period of destructive raids of the Teutonic Knights on Polish lands. Oskar Halecki shows that king Casimir understood very well that a situation when one Central European monarchy (in his case – Bohemia) turns its resources against another (Poland), acting in alliance with the whole or part of the German empire must constitute a direct threat to the existence of the attacked community. On the other hand, if we combine the resources of Central European monarchies, we create possibilities of effective achievement of the goals of cooperating nations.

### **3. The Jagiellonian Era**

The Polish elites that followed the generation of king Casimir III the Great came to a conclusion that it was necessary to seek possibilities of a permanent alliance in Central Europe. That is why a personal union with the kingdom of Hungary, in the person of king Louis the Hungarian, was established. When the daughter of the Hungarian king, Jadwiga, as a ruler of Poland, married the pagan duke of Lithuania, Jagiełło, the first step was made in the history of the Polish-Lithuanian union, which was an expression of cooperation aspirations of nations threatened by a common

enemy, and which opened the road to the period of the greatest accumulation of power and resources of Central Europe<sup>13</sup>. Since the third decade of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the Czech nation rebelled against the dominance of the Luxemburg dynasty – the Hussite Wars lasted from 1419 to 1434 and coincided with the increasing power of the Polish-Lithuanian monarchy, which fought successfully with the Teutonic Knights. Facing the destructive war with the German troops of Sigismund of Luxemburg – Roman-German king and king of Bohemia and Hungary, Bohemians turned to Władysław Jagiełło, as they noticed that in the confrontation with the German opponent, they could defend themselves only through an alliance in Central Europe. Oskar Halecki points at the geopolitical dimension of the congress of monarchs in Lutsk in Volhynia in 1429, attended by, inter alia, Władysław Jagiełło, Grand Duke Vytautas and Sigismund of Luxemburg. The Roman-German king, facing then the resistance from the Bohemians, aimed at breaking the Polish-Lithuanian union by proposing the crown to Grand Duke Vytautas – Sigismund was aware of the dangers posed by the alliance between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which was favorably perceived by the Bohemians. The aftermath of this geopolitical turn of Sigismund's subjects towards Jagiełło was the joint Polish-Czech expedition against the Teutonic Knights in 1433.

Jagiełło died in 1434 and his son Władysław (of Varna) became his successor. Sigismund of Luxemburg died in 1437, his son-in-law and successor, Albert the Magnanimous died two years later without a male heir to the throne. The Jagiellonian dynasty saw an opportunity to have the thrones of Central European kingdoms united in one dynasty. The first-born son of Jagiełło, king of Poland Władysław III, took the Hungarian throne and in 1444 died as a crusader and defender of the Latin civilization<sup>14</sup>. The Wawel throne was taken by the next son of Jagiełło, Casimir, who reigned in the Kingdom since 1447. At the beginning of the 1460s, Bohemian king George of Poděbrady, made an agreement with king Casimir IV Jagiellon and after king George's death in 1471, by virtue of the abovementioned agreement between two monarchs, Casimir's son, Vladislaus became king of Bohemia. He had to fight king of Hungary, Matthias Corvinus, who also made claims to the throne in Prague. King Matthias died in 1490, and after his death the Hungarian throne was taken by Vladislaus, who thus united Central Europe facing the Ottoman threat. Oskar Halecki wrote about the "Jagiellonian federation" spreading from the gates of Moscow to the Adriatic Sea. The Lithuanian, Polish, Bohemian and Hungarian thrones

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13 *Idem, Dzieje unii jagiellońskiej*, Volume 1, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-166.

14 Halecki devoted a lot of attention to the crusade of Władysław of Varna: O. Halecki, *The Crusade of Varna. A Discussion of Controversial Problems*, New York 1943, p. 96; see also a review of this paper: J. Bromberg, *The Crusade of Varna by Oskar Halecki (review)*, „Speculum”, 1945 No. 20/2, pp. 247-250, where the reviewer observed that the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Varna in 1944 marked a year that was as tragic for Central Europe as 1444. The crusade of Varna as an important event in the history of crusades was also indicated by Oskar Halecki in: O. Halecki, *The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages by Aziz Suryal Atiya (review)*, „Byzantion” 1940-1941 No. 15, pp. 473-483.

were united without resorting to military aggression – none of the monarchies was subjected to another. Halecki emphasizes that all nations united by the Jagiellonian dynasty drew benefits from this situation.

The Habsburgs, however, did not stop exerting regular pressure on Central Europe, using a series of diplomatic moves, whose structure was repeated. Emperor Maximilian I in 1514 formed an anti-Jagiellonian alliance with Moscow (which in the same year took Smolensk from Lithuania) and cooperated with the Teutonic Knights – united Central Europe was surrounded by the enemy alliance of the countries whose successors two and a half centuries later partitioned Poland. But at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the nations of Central Europe effectively resisted the expansion of empires. A year later – in 1515 – a congress was held in Vienna, participated by the representatives of the Jagiellonian and the Habsburg dynasties, at which emperor Maximilian resigned from the alliance with Moscow and Albert of Hohenzollern in return for the consent of the Jagiellonian dynasty to marry a representative of the Habsburg dynasty – which was to give Maximilian's successors the grounds for making claims to the thrones in Prague and Buda<sup>15</sup>. Vladislaus of Bohemia and Hungary died in the next year and the two crowns were inherited by his son, Louis. He turned out to be worthy of his name and died in 1526 in the Battle of Mohacs as a defender of Central Europe against the Ottoman invasion. Halecki here emphasizes the passive attitude of king Sigismund I the Old – he compared Louis to his grand uncle, Władysław of Varna, as they both sacrificed their lives defending Europe and they both were deprived of strong support of Poland and other monarchies. The defeat of the Christian army in Mohacs ended the Jagiellonian Central European federation, which spread from the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea. The Bohemian and Hungarian thrones were seized by the Habsburg for centuries and the Panonian Basin was partly occupied by the Ottoman army.

## Conclusion

Oskar Halecki saw the history of Poles and Czechs, as well as other nations of Central Europe, tied for all centuries. The geopolitical location of one nation affected the situation of the whole region. Periods of greater pressure and dominance of Germany over Bohemia brought serious threats to Poland, as the western empire based on the Vltava river always kept Poland in check with its alliances with eastern or northern neighbors of our country. On the other hand, the Czech resistance to the empire always gave Poland some space and an opportunity to take the initiative. In this perspective, even if both countries at some periods did not affect each other on the level of monarch politics, the events by the Vltava river must always be per-

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15 *Idem, Dzieje unii jagiellońskiej, Volume 2, op. cit., pp. 40-74.*

ceived as affecting the situation by the Vistula river. In our times, when knowledge and awareness of the events taking place on the other side of the Sudetes is diminishing, the lesson given to us by professor Oskar Halecki seems to be particularly relevant.

Adam Buława

## The Polish-Czechoslovak Relations before 1945

The competition between Poland and Czechoslovakia, their different goals and approaches to the European politics resulted largely from their mutual misunderstanding<sup>1</sup>. The figure of a Pole was represented by a gentry man personifying aggression, unruliness, touchiness, quick temper, impertinence, riotous life and sanctimoniousness. A Pole was a traitor of Slavism. Polish character was associated with greed, possessiveness, chauvinism, emotionality, lack of honor, hatred and envy towards the Czechs. Poles were perceived as people demonstrating a flash in the pan characteristics and megalomaniacs, but also defenders of Slavism against the German domination, as patriots demonstrating nobleness, heroism and fighting for freedom. The opinions of Poles were shaped as a result of conflict situations. Czechs seemed to them to be petit bourgeois, ostentatiously pursuing progressiveness, convinced of their uniqueness, faithless, down-to-earth, submissive to the stronger ones, a condottiere – a Trojan horse of the West, whereas Czechoslovakia was perceived as a state dominated by the masonry and pro-soviet sympathies. On the northern side of the Carpathian mountains we observed a set of economic and civilization stereotypes exhibiting the positive traits of the 1<sup>st</sup> Republic.

“The decisive factor was the difference of national strategies, which were developed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and found social resonance in each

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1 M. Przeperski, *Nieznosny ciężar braterstwa. Konflikty polsko-czeskie w XX wieku*, Kraków 2016, pp. 224–237; G. Pańko, *Polska i Polacy w czeskiej opinii publicznej w okresie międzywojennym*, Wrocław 1996, pp. 20, 92, 106, 110; J. Valenta, *Polska i Polacy w oczach Czechów*, „Dzieje Najnowsze” XXVII 1995 No. 2, p. 136; T. Kisielewski, *Czesi w oczach Polaków*, „Dzieje Najnowsze” XXVII 1995 No. 2, p. 118; W. Nawrocki, „*Od złych sąsiad wszystko złe*”. *Polacy, Czesi i Słowacy we własnych oczach*, [in:] B. Gołębiowski (ed.), *Siedem granic, osiem kultur i Europa*, Łomża 2001, p. 72. Michał Przeperski's book attracted a specter of reviews from historians (including Polish ones), though it must be admitted that it has its value and significance. Its content editor was dr Grzegorz Gąsior, whose results of research on the policy of Czechoslovakia towards the Polish community in Zaolzie are highly praised. The book received an annual award of “Nowe Książki” monthly (2017) and was nominated to the Kazimierz Moczarski Historical Award (2017). Here is a fragment of a critical review: “Let's consider it a promising beginning of the discussion rather than the final word”.

of these nations”<sup>2</sup>. The Czech leaders aimed at taking over part of the heritage of the Habsburg Monarchy. They allowed the Polish autonomy within Russia, then the limitation of it to ethnically Polish lands, and saw conflicts with participation of Germany in annexing the Eastern Borderlands<sup>3</sup>. Not questioning the borders of their neighbors, the Polish politicians were indignant about it. Declining their right to historical borders, the Czechs wanted the same right for themselves, as guaranteed in a treaty with France.

The period of 1918–1920 was dominated by the issue of Cieszyn Silesia, Orava and Spiš. Poles believed in the idea of self-determination of nations – they wanted to incorporate the districts of Cieszyn, Bielsko and a large part of Fryštát, dominated ethnically by Poles, to independent Poland. The opposite side aimed at restoring the historical borders of saint Wenceslaus crown. On 28<sup>th</sup> October 1918 the Czechoslovak Republic was recognized by the Entente. To counteract the Czech demonstrations, the National Council for Cieszyn Silesia, established on 12–19<sup>th</sup> October, published an appeal, in which it proclaimed that the whole area belonged to the Polish state. At the night of 31<sup>st</sup> October/1<sup>st</sup> November the Polish bloodless military coup took place, whereas on 1<sup>st</sup> November the Czechs proclaimed that they took over the Austrian Silesia and the Duchy of Teschen<sup>4</sup>.

On 5<sup>th</sup> November 1918, following the agreement reached by the Polish Council and the Czech National Council, Cieszyn Silesia was divided along the ethnic criterion and the task of establishing the final territorial border between the countries was delegated to the governments in Warsaw and Prague. The Czechs questioned the agreement, since apart from deposits of coal and heavy industry, the Košice – Bohumin Railway, going through the Polish zone, was of strategic importance to them. Prime Minister Karel Kramář was tempted by the idea of a state including southern part of Poland, Silesia, Slovakia, western Ukraine, Lusatia, Milsko and northern Austria. The military option was acceptable to both sides of the conflict, which was evidenced in appointing the Command of the Military Area in Cieszyn, subordinated to the army administration in Kraków and headed by colonel Franciszek Latinik<sup>5</sup>. On 28<sup>th</sup> November 1918 the Chief of State, Józef Piłsudski, announced elections to the Legislative Sejm. The January date and the constituencies on the disputed area gave the Czechs an excuse for military intervention. Piłsudski sent a letter to the Czechoslovak President Tomáš Masaryk in December, asking for the

2 A. Paczkowski, *Chłodne sąsiedztwo, Polacy i Czesi w XX wieku*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 25 VII 1997, pp. 16–17.

3 J. Valenta, *Czechosłowacja i Polska w 1918 roku. Rzeczywistość i perspektywy stosunków czechosłowacko-polskich w okresie rozpadu Austro-Węgier i formowania niepodległości państw*, „Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka” 1965 No. 4, pp. 527–528; M. K. Kamiński, *Początki polsko-czeskiego konfliktu po pierwszej wojnie światowej*, „Kwartalnik Historyczny” 2000 Volume 1, pp. 63–91.

4 M. Przeperski, *op. cit.*, p. 141; K. Nowak (ed.), *Śląsk Cieszyński w latach 1918–1945*, [in:] I. Panic (ed.), *Dzieje Śląska Cieszyńskiego od zarania do czasów współczesnych, Volume VI*, Cieszyn 2015, p. 15.

5 M. K. Kamiński, *Konflikt polsko-czeski 1918–1921*, Warszawa 2001, pp. 18–19; F. Latinik, *Walka o Śląsk Cieszyński w 1919 r.*, Cieszyn 1919, p. 29.

settlement of the dispute in negotiations, but following the withdrawal of the Polish army, the Czechs annexed Spiš and Orava<sup>6</sup>. Trying not to use the ethnical key, the Czech government wanted to solve the problem before the peace conference. The military aggression was determined at the meetings of the government attended by the president on 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> January 1919.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1919 the seven-day war broke out<sup>7</sup>. The invasion, whose plans were prepared by the chief of the French military mission, lieutenant colonel Antoine Gillain and the former soldier of the Foreign Legion lieutenant colonel Josef Šnejdárěk, involved 14–16 thousand of trained soldiers (infantry, artillery batteries, an armored train, a cavalry troop and an Italian legion). Under his command, colonel Latinik, who had to improvise defense against this army, had 1285 soldiers in 11 infantry companies with 18 machine guns, a battery of artillery with 4 guns, a 35-person platoon of cavalry, 546 military policemen and around 600 members of the citizen militia. The Czechs captured Bohumin, Karvina mines, Stonava and Cieszyn. On 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> January the battle of Skoczów was fought, but its result was unclear. When the Czech attack reached Wisła, an armistice was announced, forced by the Entente. On 3<sup>rd</sup> February an agreement was signed by Roman Dmowski and Edward Beneš, countersigned by the Big Four, which determined a demarcation line that was more favorable for the Czechoslovak Republic. After several attacks, the Czech soldiers finally withdrew (25<sup>th</sup> February). The epilogue of the conflict was the information of the murder of Polish prisoners of war (Stonava, Skoczów) and civilians (Karvina)<sup>8</sup>.

The next year was marked by the diplomatic game over Cieszyn Silesia on the forum of the Supreme Council of the Paris Peace Conference and with diplomacies of the countries, which in May 1919 exchanged notes recognizing the independent entities. On 27<sup>th</sup> September the Supreme Council decided that a plebiscite would be held in the Duchy of Teschen, Spiš and Orava<sup>9</sup>. The original date was postponed for

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6 J. M. Roszkowski, „Zapomniane kresy”. *Spisz, Orawa, Czadeckie w świadomości i działaniach Polaków 1895–1925*, Nowy Targ – Zakopane 2011, pp. 205–212.

7 K. Nowak (ed.), *Śląsk Cieszyński w latach 1918–1945, op. cit.*, p. 38–45; M. K. Kamiński, *Konflikt... op. cit.*, p. 34; F. Szymiczek, *Walka o Śląsk Cieszyński w latach 1914–1920*, Katowice 2010, pp. 69–72; P. Kolakowski, *Między Warszawą a Pragą. Polsko-czechosłowackie stosunki wojskowo-polityczne 1918–1939*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 94–107; F. Latinik, *op. cit.*, pp. 15–80; W. Janik, *Bitwa pod Skoczowem 28–30 stycznia 1919 r. Geneza, przebieg, skutki*, Cieszyn 1990, pp. 60–116.

8 K. Nowak (ed.), *Śląsk Cieszyński w latach 1918–1945, op. cit.*, p. 41; M. Przeperski, *op. cit.*, pp. 179–181; *Biała Księga zbrodni popełnionych w dniach 23–29. 01. 1919 na Śląsku Cieszyńskim przez Wojska Gen. Josefa Snejdárka*, edited by S. Król [et al], Cieszyn 2013, [http://zaolzie.xf.cz/Biała Księga\\_korekcja.Pdf](http://zaolzie.xf.cz/Biała_Księga_korekcja.Pdf) [Access on 21. 08. 2020]; D. Korbel, *Walki o Stonawę 26 stycznia 1919 roku*, „Pamiętnik Cieszyński”, 2019, 3, pp. 29–56 (here one can find the presentation of the subject literature)

9 A. Szklarska-Lohmannowa, *Polsko-czechosłowackie stosunki dyplomatyczne w latach 1918–1925*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1967, p. 48; M. Przeperski, *op. cit.*, pp. 192–194; K. Nowak (ed.), *Śląsk Cieszyński w latach 1918–1945, op. cit.*, p. 55; E. Orlof, *Źnaczenie plebiscytu w rozwiązywaniu problemów międzynarodowych po I wojnie światowej (na przykładzie niedosłego plebiscytu na Śląsku Cieszyńskim, Spiszu i Orawie)*, „Mazowieckie Studia Humanistyczne” 1997 No. 2, p. 39.

the period of three months after the International Plebiscite Commission would arrive in Cieszyn. The anarchy of life in Cieszyn Silesia was in the interest of the Czechoslovak government and the domestic authority in Opava: the Polish population was terrorized by the Czech groups and arrested by the military police, “workers tribunals” refused to hire Polish workers, while the counteraction involved removing Czech neighbors and miners’ strike. The Polish MPs demanded resignation from the plebiscite and breaking relations with Prague. The mediation of the Belgian King Albert was rejected and the issue of establishing the demarcation line was entrusted with the Entente states.

The behavior of Czechoslovakia towards Poland during the war with the Bolshevik Russia, which was to determine our future existence, was connected with the political attitude adopted by its governing elites, who hoped that an independent state of Ukraine would be established, composed partly of the former southern and eastern lands of Poland, which would constitute a buffer against the new Russian statehood. The success of the Kiev expedition could lead to separating the 1<sup>st</sup> Republic with pro-Polish Dnieper Ukraine, whereas its failure would make the East Galicia irredentism and the ultimate determination of the place of Cieszyn Silesia<sup>10</sup>. Since the beginning of 1920 Beneš declared the need to focus on economic relations with the Russian nation, in February Moscow’s diplomatic offensive towards Prague started<sup>11</sup>. The Czechoslovak press referred to the Polish actions with increasing hostility, fearing that Poland, exhilarated by its victories in the east, would resort to military intervention against its southern neighbor.

The resolution (inspired by the left wing of social democrats, who followed the orders from Moscow) of railway workers from Břeclav to boycott the transport of military supplies to Poland coincided with the failure to ratify the agreement between ministries of railways<sup>12</sup>. Beneš accused Poles before the League of Nations of violence on the plebiscite areas, while in fact the ČSR army troops were transferred to the Cieszyn section and towards Spiš and Orava. The Prague mission of the Russian Red Cross after Tukhachevsky’s offensive began intensified the Bolshevik propaganda.

Polish Prime Minister, Władysław Grabski, at the conference of heads of governments of the Entente states in Belgian Spa, accepted very difficult terms in return

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10 P. Kolakowski, *Kwestia ukraińska w relacjach polsko-czechosłowackich w latach 1918–1935*, „Ślupskie Studia Historyczne” 2007 Volume 13, pp. 247–248.

11 M. K. Kamiński, *Czechosłowacja wobec wojny polsko—bolszewickiej 1920 roku*, [in:] A. Koryn (ed.), *Wojna polsko—sowiecka 1920 roku. Przebieg walk i tło międzynarodowe. Materiały sesji naukowej w Instytucie Historii PAN 1–2 października 1990*, Warszawa 1991, pp. 185–198; J. Gruchala, *Czeska opinia publiczna wobec wojny polsko—sowieckiej (1919–1920)*, „Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo—Wschodniej” 1997 Volume 32, pp. 27–45.

12 M. K. Kamiński, *Czechosłowacja wobec wojny*, dz. cyt., s. 190; V. Olivová, *Polityka Czechosłowacji wobec Polski podczas wojny polsko—radzieckiej 1920 roku*, „Studia z Dziejów ZSRR i Europy Środkowej” 1967 Volume 2, s. 213–223; S. M. Nowinowski, *Polsko—czechosłowackie stosunki dyplomatyczne podczas wojny 1920 roku*, „Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis. Folia Historica” 1998 Volume 62, s. 58–59.

for the promise of support and mediation in peace talks with the Soviet Russia. On 28<sup>th</sup> August a verdict was given by the conference of the ambassadors: Czechoslovakia was granted vast plebiscite areas, Poland received the district of Bielsko, part of the Cieszyn district, and patches of Orava and Spiš, which put the final seal on the fate of 100 thousand Poles in the Zaolzie region along with the loss of mines, steelworks and railway connection<sup>13</sup>. “Defrosting” Polish–Czech relations consisted in the consent for transit via the railway under the Romanian army administration.

When the scales were beginning to turn in favor of the Soviet Russia, on 9<sup>th</sup> August the Czechoslovak government announced neutrality which was favorable to it<sup>14</sup>. When the Alliance mission of lord d’Abernon was approaching Warsaw, the government in Prague expressed its conviction of the imminent defeat of the neighbor country and did not agree for the marching of the Hungarian troops to help the Republic of Poland. During the negotiations with Moscow over repatriations, a confidential protocol was considered obliging the ČSR to remain neutral, refuse to organize anti-Bolshevik troops and to block transports of arms and ammunition. As the Red Army was approaching Warsaw, the Czechoslovak press published more and more opinions that were unfavorable to Poland. Polish politicians remembered that they could not either expect friendly neutrality or exclude the possibility of unpleasant surprises.

One of the issues that united the politicians of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic of Poland and the 1<sup>st</sup> Republic of Czechoslovakia was their attitude to the stability of the Versailles Order and the League of Nations. In the case of Czechoslovakia, “even if its minor or more extreme wishes were rejected.its territorial need.were more adequately recognized”<sup>15</sup>. Poland, whose eastern and western borders were questioned by Russia and Germany, feared their threat. It believed its interests could be protected through a closer relationship with other states located between those superpowers. For Czechoslovakia, Russia was a potential ally, as “in Central European politics, Czechoslovakia’s permanent concern was to defend itself against the German and the Hungarian elements and to ensure that the Slavic elements occupied an advantageous position”<sup>16</sup>. The Little Entente (established together with Romania and Yugoslavia) guaranteed peace in the area of the Danube, did not burden its member states and did not fall into disfavor with superpowers. Poland did not engage in the anti-Hungarian alliance and supported Slovakian autonomists. “Poland, with its superpower ambitions, territorial claims [...] presented itself to Paris as an of-

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13 M. K. Kamiński, *Konflikt...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 332–336.

14 *Idem*, *Stosunki polityczne pomiędzy Rzeczpospolitą Polską a Republiką Czechosłowacką (koniec lipca–grudzień 1920 r.)*, „Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Wschodniej” 1998 Volume 32, p. 77; P. Kołakowski, *Między Warszawą...* *op. cit.*, p. 152.

15 P. S. Wandycz, *Czechoslovak–Polish Confederation and the Great Powers 1940–1943*, Indiana 1956, p. 4.

16 J. Łukasiewicz, *Stosunek do Czechosłowacji w polskiej polityce zagranicznej*, „Przegląd Polityczny: dwutygodnik informacyjny” 1924 Volume 1, issue 3, p. 67.

fensive sword against the German threat and the growing Soviet threat. Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, as an island of peace and order, the only stabilizing factor in Central Europe, and at the same time a defense embankment against German, Hungarian and Bolshevik threats<sup>17</sup>. Poland's ace was its population, whereas for Czechoslovakia it was capital and industry.

The Peace of Riga offered some opportunities for improving relations in Central and Eastern Europe. At the end of August 1920 the authorities of the 1<sup>st</sup> Republic presented plans of an agreement between the Little Entente and Poland, leading to the establishment of a security system in Europe. Poland was given an opportunity to leave its isolated position, Czechoslovakia – to draw Poles away from cooperation with Hungary. The wind of change was brought about by the appointment of Konstanty Skirmunt for the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the signing of a political agreement and a trade treaty (6<sup>th</sup> November 1920): recognition of territorial integrity and renunciation of interest in the matters of Eastern Galicia, Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia, confirmation of neutrality and freedom of transit<sup>18</sup>. The treaty did not come into force due to the outbreak of another territorial conflict. The problem of Spiš Javorina provoked press reactions, involved government circles and international institutions. The addresses of Poland and the Little Entente at the conference in Genoa, preceded by the declaration on defending the principle of inviolability of Versailles Treaties and opposing superpowers in general European matters (10<sup>th</sup> April – 19<sup>th</sup> May 1922) did not help<sup>19</sup>. Poles demanded Javorina in return for two communes (the issue of the woods and timber). Czechoslovakia wanted to swap 2/3 of Javorina for Niedzica and Kacwin. After involving arbitration organs, the dispute was settled in 1924.<sup>20</sup>

During the visit of ČSR Minister of Foreign Affairs, Beneš, in Warsaw (23<sup>rd</sup> April 1923) an agreement was signed on legal and financial issues (liquidation agreement), as well as a conciliation and arbitration treaty and a trade convention<sup>21</sup>. The propaganda visit was a reaction to new phenomena in European politics, the rapprochement, however, did not lead to a political and military alliance. This was caused mainly by different approaches to the Locarno Treaties (16<sup>th</sup> October 1925), which

17 A. Klimek, *Benešovy představy o československém státu a jeho roli (do doby těsně po skončení 1. světové války)*, [in:] A. Drda (ed.), *Edvard Beneš a střední Evropa. Sborník přednášek a statí*, Praha 1994, p. 9, quoted after: K. Gawron, *Stosunki polsko-czechosłowackie w latach 1918–1939 jako przyczynek do badań nad konfederacją polsko-czechosłowacką 1939–1943*, [in:] P. Tomaszewski (ed.), *Wiek XX. Studia z historii myśli politycznej i idei*, Toruń 2004, p. 53.

18 P. Wandycz, *U źródeł paktu Skirmunt–Beneš*, „Kultura” 1958 No. 11, pp. 119–126; A. Szklarska-Lohmannowa, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

19 M. Przeperski, *op. cit.*, p. 211–213.

20 E. Orlof E. (ed.), *Stosunki polsko-czesko-słowackie w latach 1918–1939*, npp. 1994, pp. 62–80; A. Essen, *Polska a Mała Ententa 1920–1934*, Warszawa – Kraków 1992, p. 115; Z. K. Cesarz, *Polska a Liga Narodów. Konflikty terytorialne 1920–1925. Studium polityczno-prawne*, Wrocław 1993, pp. 100–103.

21 *Stosunki polsko-czesko-słowackie*, *op. cit.*, pp. 81–107; A. Essen, *Stosunki polsko-czechosłowackie 1925–1934. Szanse i zamiechania*, [in:] E. Orlof (ed.), *Od poznania do zrozumienia: Polacy, Czesi, Słowacy w XX wieku*, Rzeszów 1999, p. 70; A. Essen, *Edvard Beneš z perspektywy Warszawy w latach 20. i 30.*, „Dzieje Najnowsze” XXXII 2000, issue. 3, p. 83.

secured Germany's borders with France and Belgium, while failing to do so with Poland and Czechoslovakia<sup>22</sup>. Polish leaders treated it as a violation of the state security foundations. Beneš emphasized that the politics of Czechoslovakia in Locarno was successful thanks to the guarantees granted within the European system and the League of Nations. Poland was perceived by Prague as a state with unstable borders, threatened by its neighbors from the East and West alike. The ČSR foreign policy was dominated by the thesis that its borders were not threatened. contrary to the "Pomerania corridor" separating East Prussia from Germany. In April 1926 in Prague, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aleksander Skrzyński proposed political cooperation – in the "Slavic bloc" defending the independence of both countries. Beneš replied. "All we can do is to develop some means of sure and durable everyday cooperation in economy and culture"<sup>23</sup>. This chief decision-maker of foreign policy in the 1<sup>st</sup> republic, Minister of Foreign Affairs (since 1918) and since 1935 President of Czechoslovakia, identified foreign relations with the personal style of diplomacy. "He idealized his deed. and painted specific pictures of enemies. They were built *a priori* and did not yield to any critical review"<sup>24</sup>.

The talks on military rapprochement in 1924–1925 were conducted by the Polish chief of the General Staff, general Stanisław Haller and general Jan Syrovy, Deputy Chief of the General Staff in the Czechoslovak army<sup>25</sup>. Colonel František Bartoš claimed that "it is absolutely necessary for both our armies to cooperate closely as we are facing one common enemy – Germany. This cooperation is *conditio sine qua non* for the existence of both our countries"<sup>26</sup>. In the middle of the 1920s, members of general staffs designed plans of joint attack on German Silesia, which would change the balance of forces in Central Europe and eliminate the threat of encircling Poland from the south west<sup>27</sup>.

The May Coup did not change Polish politics, though Marshal Piłsudski's negative attitude affected the attitudes of Beneš and Masaryk towards Poland. In 1927 the transit agreement was signed. contacts were established between the General

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- 22 J. Dejmek, *Edvard Beneš a idea kolektivní bezpečnosti mezi světovými válkami*, [in:] A. M. Brzeziński (ed.), *Czechosłowacja w stosunkach międzynarodowych w pierwszej połowie XX wieku. Studia i szkice*, Warszawa 2003, p. 51.
- 23 P. S. Wandycz, *Trzy próby poprawy stosunków polsko-czechosłowackich 1921–1926–1933*, [in:] H. Bulhak et al. (ed.), *Ź dziejów polityki i dyplomacji polskiej. Studia poświęcone pamięci Edwarda hr. Raczyńskiego Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej na wychodźstwie*, Warszawa 1994, p. 228; S. Pilariski, *Zarys stosunków polsko-czechosłowackich 1918–1933*, Toruń 2008.
- 24 R. Kučera, *Benešova memoranda na pařížské mírové konferenci*, [in:] A. Drda (ed.), *Edvard Beneš a střední Evropa: sborník přednášek a statí*, Praha 1994, p. 13, quoted after: K. Gawron, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
- 25 P. Kolakowski, *Między Warszawą...* *op. cit.*, p. 287; W. Balcerak, *Sprawa polsko-czechosłowackiego sojuszu wojskowego w latach 1921– 1927*, „Studia z Dziejów ZSRR i Europy Środkowej” 1967 Volume 3, pp. 207–226; H. Bulhak, *Ź dziejów stosunków wojskowych polsko-czechosłowackich w latach 1921–1927*, „Studia z Dziejów ZSRR i Europy Wschodniej” 1969 Volume 5, pp. 124–133.
- 26 J. Engelgard, *Sojusz z Czechosłowacją – niewykorzystana szansa*, [in:] R. Mossakowski (ed.), *Piłsudski i sanacja – błędy i zbrodnie*, Warszawa, 2018, p. 48; P. Stawecki, *Polityka wojskowa Polski 1921–1926*, Warszawa 1981, pp. 208–209.
- 27 W. Balcerak, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

Staffs and a staff conference was held in Warsaw<sup>28</sup>. In 1932 the countries stopped cooperating in the League of Nations in minority issues, which, apart from economic problems, demonstrated that there were fewer and fewer common points. The Four-Power Pact proposed by Italy led to a short-term rapprochement<sup>29</sup>. Józef Beck (Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs since November 1932) was ordered by Piłsudski to make efforts to form an alliance with the ČSR. Beneš persuaded France to modify the blueprint of the Pact, while Poland did not change its position<sup>30</sup>. The final echo of the thaw between the countries was when Czechoslovakia gave Poland the so-called archive of Omelan Senyk, an activist of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, apprehended by the Czechoslovak security service<sup>31</sup>.

The Polish-German Non-Aggression Pact signed in January 1934 was seen by the government in Prague as a hostile move. Poland started to attack the Czechoslovak policy towards the Zaolzie region (Czechization of the Teschen Silesia and discrimination of the Polish population) and involved in supporting Slovakian autonomists from the catholic and nationalist movement. In the background of the crisis we have Warsaw's opposition against the Eastern Pact – a French project of a multi-lateral agreement guaranteeing stability of borders in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>32</sup>. Since Poland and Germany refused to join it, it never came into force. For Prague this constituted a proof that there was a “secret agreement” between the above countries. The ČSR-USSR agreement of 16<sup>th</sup> May 1935 (analogous to the agreement on mutual help made by France and the Soviet Union) was seen by Poles as evidence that Prague “lets the Soviet Union into Europe” and “expands the influence of the communism”<sup>33</sup>. The expansion of Germany further deteriorated the situation of Czechoslovakia, but following the May agreement, Warsaw noticed that its neighbor revealed a tendency to toughen its position. This could be seen in the situation of the Polish population in Cieszyn Silesia. Minister Beck clearly and condescendingly rejected any closer cooperation, as it would violate the politics of balancing between Germany and the USSR. The existence of Czechoslovakia constituted an obstacle to the idea of “Third Europe” promoted by him in the late 1930s<sup>34</sup>.

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28 *Ibidem*, p. 222; H. Bulhak, *Ż dziejów stosunków...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-143.

29 J. Kozeński, *Czechosłowacja w polskiej polityce zagranicznej w latach 1932-1938*, Poznań 1964, pp. 52-56.

30 P. S. Wandycz, *Trzy próby poprawy stosunków polsko-czechosłowackich...*, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

31 Quoted after: A. Stec, *Polityka Czechosłowacji wobec zagadnienia ukraińskiego w kontekście stosunków czechosłowacko-polskich w latach 1918-1938. Zarys problematyki*, „Przegląd Geopolityczny” 2014 Volume 8, p. 82; L. Kulińska, *Działalność terrorystyczna i sabotażowa nacjonalistycznych organizacji ukraińskich w Polsce w latach 1922-1939*, Kraków 2009, p. 135.

32 A. Szklarska-Lohmannowa, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-143.

33 M. Cygański, *Narastający kryzys w stosunkach Czechosłowacji z Niemcami i Polską w latach 1933-1938*, „Studia Śląskie” 1998 Volume 57, p. 295.

34 K. Grygajtis, *Polska polityka zagraniczna 1926-1939: od koncepcji „międzymorza” Aleksandra Skrzyńskiego do idei „Trzeciej Europy” Józefa Becka*, „Krakowskie Studia Międzynarodowe” 2006 No. 2, pp. 219-243.

The relations between the two countries exacerbated during the Sudetes crisis (spring and summer of 1938). The Polish side activated the Association of Poles in the ČSR and its intelligence in Silesia and Slovakia. On the other hand, there were some contacts between Deputy Prime Minister Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski and ČSR Member of Parliament in Warsaw, Juraj Slavik and some business activists<sup>35</sup>. The *Anschluss* of Austria made Czechoslovakia willing to improve its relations with Poland. At the end of 1938 Slavik suggested developing relations in economy, culture and sports. Beneš offered to put an end to the anti-Polish activities of the Comintern agents and to grant the Polish population the rights enjoyed by other minorities. Prague wanted to strengthen its position against Germany and avoid to form a political and military alliance<sup>36</sup>. On 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1938 Beneš sent a letter to Polish President, Ignacy Mościcki, proposing the settlement of the Cieszyn issue “on the grounds of regulating the border”. The letter was treated as an element of playing for time – the return letter from Beneš was received as late as on 26<sup>th</sup> September, whereas the USSR threatened to reject the Non-Aggression Pact if Poles crossed the southern border<sup>37</sup>.

Despite the official „freezing of relations” the army circles of the 1<sup>st</sup> Republic did not abandon the conciliatory course and did not break the intelligence cooperation (1924–1936)<sup>38</sup>. An example of such actions can be a memorial presented to Tomáš Masaryk in March 1934 by general Silvester Blaha, head of the Military Office of the President, postulating intensification of political and military cooperation with Poland<sup>39</sup>. The President criticized it and order to keep it confidential. Blaha gave an expanded version of this document (1935) to President Beneš, and during the meetings in September 1938 criticized the country’s position towards the alliance between Prague and Warsaw<sup>40</sup>. In the beginning of December 1937, the Polish military attaché in Bucharest, lieutenant colonel Tadeusz Zakrzewski received a proposal from his Czech counterpart, lieutenant colonel Otokar Buda, who, on behalf of general Ludvik Krejčí, chief of the General Staff, proposed a secret meeting of

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35 M. Przeperski, *op. cit.*, p. 281; K. Badziak, G. Matwiejew, P. Samuś, „Powstanie” na Łaolziu w 1938. Polska akcja specjalna w świetle dokumentów Oddziału II Sztabu Głównego WP, Warszawa 1997, p. 17 and next; E. Długajczyk, *Tajny front na granicy cieszyńskiej. Wywiad i dywersja w latach 1919–1939*, Katowice 1993; D. Miszewski, *Aktywność polityczna mniejszości polskiej w Czechosłowacji 1920–1938*, Toruń 2002.

36 P. S. Wandycz, *Czechoslovak–Polish Confederation...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 23, 68.

37 K. Gawron, *op. cit.*, p. 67; P. Majewski, *Nierozegrana kampania. Możliwości obrony Czechosłowacji jesienią 1938 roku*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 39–40; J. Kupliński, *Polsko–czechosłowackie kontakty wojskowe od wiosny 1938 do jesieni 1939 roku*, Gdańsk 1977, pp. 72–73, 78–80.

38 H. Bulhak, *Ź dziejów stosunków...*, *op. cit.*, p. 124; more on this subject: P. Kołakowski, *Między Warszawą...*, *op. cit.*

39 A. Essen, *Memoriał gen. Bláhy z marca 1934 r.*, „Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej” 1996 Volume 31, pp. 165–171; Same author, *Memoriał gen. Bláhy. Przyczynek do dziejów stosunków polsko–czechosłowackich w roku 1934*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Historyczne” 1994 No. 112, pp. 102–107.

40 M. K. Kamiński, *Beneš na przeszkodzie porozumienia z Polską w latach trzydziestych dwudziestego wieku*, „Dzieje Najnowsze” 2014 No. 2, pp. 19–21, 22–23; M. Deszczyński, *Ostatni egzamin. Wojsko Polskie wobec kryzysu czechosłowackiego 1938–1939*, Warszawa 2003, p. 242; M. Leczyk, *Polska i sąsiedzi. Stosunki wojskowe 1921–1939*, Białystok 1997, p. 80.

representatives of both staffs<sup>41</sup>. It encountered a reprimand of the chiefs of the Polish General Staff, general Waclaw Stachiewicz and colonel Tadeusz Pełczyński, commander of the II Department. The proposal was repeated in February 1938 by the Czech military attaché in Moscow, lieutenant colonel František Dastych: Czech generals were ready to remove Beneš government from the office in return for an alliance<sup>42</sup>. Poles replied to the offer of raw materials and military equipment supplies and even terminating the agreement with Moscow that talks can only be conducted in capital cities of the interlocutors<sup>43</sup>.

The command of the Czechoslovak army, composed of veterans of fights against the Bolsheviks, was the most pro-Polish part of the establishment and a potential political lobby. Ludvík Krejčí, Alois Eliáš, Lev Prchala, Jan Syrový, Sergej Wojcechovsky during the Sudetes crisis could overthrow President Beneš government in the coup and create a pro-war government. This was basically the content of the offer made by Krejčí, delivered by colonel Heliodor Pika to the Polish attaché office in Romania<sup>44</sup>. Poles neglected the geopolitical and strategic value of their neighbor, who had the powerful arms industry and the well-equipped army. If the agreement had been signed, this could have prevented the disintegration of Czechoslovakia and the defeat of Poland, as the countries would have gained the anti-German potential of 2.6 million soldiers, over 80 divisions and brigades, 1.5 thousand tanks, tankettes and armored cars, 6 thousand cannons, nearly 3 thousand anti-tank cannons, nearly 1 thousand anti-aircraft cannons and nearly 1 thousand planes<sup>45</sup>.

After the Munich Agreement (29<sup>th</sup>–30<sup>th</sup> September 1938), Poland, though it did not participate in the diktat of England, France, Germany and Italy, contributed to the partition of Czechoslovakia. This can be seen in the ultimatum made by the Polish government and in the annexation of the Zaolzie region from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>

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41 K. Bulhak, *Czechosłowackie próby wznowienia rozmów na temat sojuszu wojskowego z Polską (1937-1938)*, „Studia z Dziejów ZSRR i Europy Środkowej” 1976 Volume 12, pp. 205-206; J. Kupliński, *Polsko-czechosłowackie kontakty...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-4.

42 K. Bulhak, *Czechosłowackie próby...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-209; J. Kupliński, *Polsko-czechosłowackie kontakty...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-12; P. Kołakowski, *Między Warszawą...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 452-458.

43 M. Deszczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 233; J. Kozeński, *op. cit.*, p. 260; J. Kupliński, *Polsko-czechosłowackie kontakty...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 16, 49-50; M. Leczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 390; K. Bulhak, *Czechosłowackie próby...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-210; Same author, *Próba czechosłowackich kół wojskowych nawiązania rozmów sojuszniczych z polskim Sztabem Głównym w marcu 1938 r.*, „Studia z Dziejów ZSRR i Europy Środkowej” 1979 Volume 15, pp. 205-209.

44 P. Majewski, *op. cit.*, pp. 250-254; J. Friedl, *Na jednym froncie. Czechosłowacko-polskie stosunki wojskowe 1939-1945*, Gdańsk-Warszawa 2011, pp. 42-43; J. Kupliński, *Polsko-czechosłowackie kontakty...*, *op. cit.*, p. 74; P. Kołakowski, *Między Warszawą...*, *op. cit.*, p. 320; S. Stanisławska, *Wielka i mała polityka Józefa Becka /marzec-maj 1938/*, Warszawa 1962, pp. 102-103.

45 M. Zgórniak, *Ź problematyki polityczno-wojskowej Polski i Czechosłowacji w latach 1921-1938*, [in:] M. Pułaski (ed.), *Ź dziejów Europy Środkowej w XX wieku. Studia ofiarowane Henrykowi Batołowskiemu w 90. rocznicę urodzin*, Kraków 1997, p. 108; A. Chomicz, *Przesłanki wojskowe do współpracy polsko-czechosłowackiej przed 1939 r.*, „Bellona” 1947, pp. 315-316; M. K. Kamiński, *Kłaska państwa czechosłowackiego w 1938 r.*, „Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej” 2014 issue 2, pp. 114-126.

October by nearly 36 thousand soldiers of Silesia Independent Operation Group led by major general Władysław Bortnowski (3 divisions of infantry, a brigade of cavalry and armored cavalry, 1. 5 brigades of national defense forces, a battalion of tanks, 2 battalions of anti-tank, heavy and heaviest artillery, a battery of howitzers, 5 flights of fighter planes, 2 light bomber squadron and 1 reconnaissance squadron, 5 accompanying platoons)<sup>46</sup>. Beck, irritated by the fact that the Polish demands had been ignored, perceived the risk of regulating the ownership of Pomerania, Gdańsk and Silesia by means of a diktat of superpowers. His methods caused outrage in Czechoslovakia, further intensified by the news of how the Czechs were treated on the annexed areas. The repossession of the Zaolzie area brought Poland unfavorable opinions in the West. Poland was accused of cooperation with the Third Reich<sup>47</sup>. However, "At no point did Poland threaten Czechoslovakia with a war or a joint action with Germany, on the contrary, its independent, separate action at the end of the conflict did not suit Germany and it was considered then as an attempt at taking over their sphere of interest. Czechoslovakia could have changed Poland's attitude by regulating the issue of Cieszyn Silesia [...] Putting Poland in the same group as Germany and treating it as Germany's ally is a Czech thesis often created ad hoc"<sup>48</sup>.

The Polish general consul in Bratislava presented Polish demands to autonomous Slovakia: Mosty Śląskie-Zwardoń railway, Spiš Javorina with Ždiar, border corrections in Spiš, the Pieniny Mountains, near the Poprad gorge, south of Łupków<sup>49</sup>. The government in Prague, while ready to make concessions, hoped that Slovakia would be subordinated to it and that its cooperation with Poland would break down. Polish Motorized Cavalry Brigade of lieutenant colonel Stanisław Maczek was to take control of the grounds defended along the Ždiar ridge and the Smerdzonka stream line. The meeting of the Demarcation Commission was interrupted by the battle near Čadca (25<sup>th</sup> November 1938) between a troop of Silesia Independent Operation Group and a battalion of the Czechoslovak army led by lieutenant colonel Richard Loschner. The defenders executed the order of the Prime Minister of Slovakian government, Josef Tiso, and then retreated<sup>50</sup>. On 30<sup>th</sup> November 1938, on the basis

46 M. Przeperski, *op. cit.*, pp. 302-303, *op. cit.* ; *Śląsk Cieszyński...*, *op. cit.* p. 118; M. Deszczyński, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-283.

47 M. Deszczyński, *op. cit.* pp. 227-233.

48 M. K. Kamiński, E. Orlof, *Odpowied. Kazimierza Papego na ankietę rządu polskiego na uchodźstwie dotyczącego polskiej polityki zagranicznej wobec Czechosłowacji w 1938 r.*, „Dzieje Najnowsze” 1998 No. 4, pp. 145- 158; P. Majewski, *op. cit.*, p. 37 -38 (Hitler's potential ally - J. Tomaszewski, *Polska wobec Czechosłowacji w 1938 r.*, „Przegląd Historyczny” 1996 No. 1, pp. 41-59; manifestation of power - T. Kisielewski, *W odpowiedzi historykowi czeskiemu. Polemika z Jaroslavem Valentą w sprawie stosunków polsko-czeskich w latach 1938-1945*, „Dzieje Najnowsze” 1993 No. 2, pp. 91-100; standing on the ČSR side in the European war - J. Beck, *Ostatni raport*, Warszawa 1987, pp. 147-148).

49 A. Olejko, *Niedoszły sojusznik czy trzeci agresor? Wojskowo-polityczne aspekty trudnego sąsiedztwa Polski i Słowacji 1918-1939*, Kraków - Rzeszów 2012, p. 16.

50 M. Borák, *Starcie zbrojne polskiego i czechosłowackiego wojska pod Czadczą 25 .XI 1938*, [in:] R. Kowalski (ed.), *Od Zaolzia po Jaworzynę. Rewindykacje granicznej jesienią 1938 r.*, „Prace Komisji Historycznej” 2013 Volume 3; M. Deszczyński, *op. cit.*, pp. 283-293.

of the demarcation agreement, Poland annexed 226 square kilometers and 4500 inhabitants, which was good news to the Czech and German sides, as it encouraged Slovakia to participate in the aggression in 1939<sup>51</sup>.

After the annexation of the Zaolzie region, considered to be the result of joint aggression with the Third Reich, and as a result of the attitude of the Polish authorities towards the Czech population, discriminated in economic, cultural and education aspects, Prague used the Silesian Resistance Movement to inspire some propaganda actions as well as acts of terrorism and sabotage (October 1938 – February 1939). It also returned to its policy of supporting the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists<sup>52</sup>. In cooperation with Hungary in autumn 1938 the Branch of II Division of Border Guards of Polish Army initiated the “Łom” Operation, aimed at internal disorganization and creating the effect of an uprising in Carpathian Ruthenia (22/23<sup>rd</sup> October – 24<sup>th</sup> November 1938)<sup>53</sup>. Poland feared the influence of “Ukrainian Piedmont” – the autonomous Republic on the Ukrainian minority in Poland. 7 groups of sabotage units from Zaolzie paramilitary organizations conducted several combat actions and got involved in 4 skirmishes, destroyed 12 road bridges, a water dam, a telephone exchange, a post office, broke telephone lines. In spite of the success of the operation, it turned out to be politically pointless.

In March 1939 Poland gained the border with Hungary, whereas the former Czechoslovak border was guarded by German divisions. Poles were the only neighbors willing to provide assistance to the Czechs: the new border was crossed by the Jews, politicians, officers and soldiers<sup>54</sup>. After the establishment of Slovakia and the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, both dependent on the Third Reich, resistance centers were formed by: in London – former Prime Minister of the 1<sup>st</sup> Republic, Milan Hodža (of Slovakian origin) and its former President, Beneš, in Paris – ambassador Stefan Osusky (also of Slovakian origin). In Poland, supporters of Beneš gathered around the MP in Warsaw, Slavik, and the consulate in Kraków. “The ambassador trend” was represented there by general Lev Prchala, who provided patronage for the independence actions of the so-called Military Group. The Legion of Czechs and Slovaks, consisting of nearly a thousand volunteers, officially established by a decree issued by President of Poland, Ignacy Mościcki (3<sup>rd</sup> Septem-

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51 J. Berghauzen, *Stosunki polsko-słowackie w latach 1938–1947*, „Przegląd Historyczny” 1975 issue 3, pp. 413–414.

52 P. Kolakowski, *Czesko-słowackie działania sabotażowo-dywersyjne przeciwko Polsce jesienią 1938 r.*, „Śląskie Studia Historyczne” 2007 No. 13, pp. 337–346; J. Kupliński, *Czeskie działania dywersyjne przeciwko Polsce. Listopad 1938–marzec 1939 r.*, „Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny” 1992 No. 2, pp. 299–300; A. Stec, *Polityka Czechosłowacji*, *op. cit.*, pp. 69–74.

53 *Inter alia* J. Stolarczyk, *Próby polskiej akcji dywersyjnej „Łom” na Rusi Zakarpackiej (listopad 1938–marzec 1939)*, „Rocznik Wschodni” 2007 No. 7; J. Kupliński, *Polskie działania dywersyjne na Ukrainie Zakarpackiej w 1938 r.*, „Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny” 1996 No. 4, pp. 65–83; A. Wszendyrówny, *Działania specjalne na Śląsku Zaolziańskim i Rusi Zakarpackiej*, cz. I (*Operacja „Łom”*), „Bellona” 2013 No. 4, pp. 86–107. M. Deszczyński, *op. cit.*, pp. 293–215.

54 J. Tomaszewski, *Czechosłowacja*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 80–81; J. Friedl, *Na jednym froncie...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 48–67; J. Kupliński, *Polsko-czechosłowackie kontakty...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 157–175.

ber 1939) , engaged in the autumn campaign in Podkarpacie<sup>55</sup>.

In October 1939 Beneš consolidated a considerable part of emigrants in the Czechoslovak National Liberation Committee. The Slovakian National Committee was set up by Prime Minister Hodža, an advocate of independent Slovakia remaining in a union with the Czech Republic. Both Committees were in favor of cooperation with Polish authorities<sup>56</sup>, which was “a consequence of the catastrophe and total occupation of both states and the resulting concern for ensuring better security conditions in the future” [...] The most important premise was the common political goal – the organization of post-war Europe, the creation of a system which would make them independent from superpowers, keep a tight rein on Germany and neutralize the position of the USSR<sup>57</sup>. France and Great Britain supported the concept of a federation which was of anti-soviet nature as far as defense and stabilization were concerned. Relations with Poland were initiated due to the fact that the Polish Prime Minister, general Władysław Sikorski, abandon the politics of Beck. Politicians established some personal and letter contacts<sup>58</sup>: on Beneš side it was a fragment of a diplomatic game, following the USSR aggression on Finland, which led to terminating relations with the Czechs.

Beneš, who was recognized by the allies as the president again in June 1940, issued a memorandum containing a vision of “sui generis” confederation with Poland<sup>59</sup>. On 11<sup>th</sup> November 1940 a declaration was signed thus ending the period of conflicts and establishing a post-war alliance<sup>60</sup>. In January 1941 the Joint Polish–Czech Co-ordination Committee was established by, inter alia, Edward Raczyński, general Kazimierz Sosnkowski and August Zaleski, Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Masaryk and Minister of Internal Affairs Slávik<sup>61</sup>. A month later Beneš in his letter to general Sikorski conditioned the agreement with Poland on the consent of Great Britain, the USA and the USSR.

Since the end of 1939 soldiers from both countries jointly broke through Romania and Hungary to the West and joint traineeships were held for officers of both

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55 T. Kisielewski, *Federacja środkowo-europejska*, Warszawa 1991, p. 21; J. Friedl, *Na jednym froncie...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–126; A. Radomski, M. Starczewski, *Legion Czechów i Słowaków oraz Legion Węgierski w kampanii jesiennej 1939 roku na Podkarpaciu*, [in:] J. Gancarski (ed.), *Dzieje Podkarpacia, Volume 4*, Krosno 2000, pp. 78–83; J. Kupliński, *Polsko-czechosłowackie kontakty...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 176–280.

56 K. Gawron, *op. cit.*, pp. 69–72; T. Kisielewski, *Federacja...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 21–22; M. K. Kamiński, *Edward Beneš kontra gen. Władysław Sikorski*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 13–14.

57 T. Komarnicki, *Próba stworzenia związku polsko-czechosłowackiego w okresie II wojny światowej*, „Sprawy Międzynarodowe” 1947 No. 2–3, p. 64.

58 T. Kisielewski, *Federacja...*, *op. cit.*, p. 26; M. Kamiński, *Edward Beneš kontra...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 16–17.

59 T. Kisielewski, *Federacja...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 66–73, 251–256; M. Turlejska, *Spór o Polskę. Szkice historyczne*, Warszawa 1981, pp. 110–113; M. Kamiński, *Edward Beneš kontra...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 71–73.

60 T. Kisielewski, *Federacja...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 75–77, 257–258; M. Turlejska, *op. cit.*, p. 75; M. Kamiński, *Edward Beneš kontra...*, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

61 T. Kisielewski, *Federacja...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 90–91, 94–98; M. Kamiński, *Edward Beneš kontra...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 82–85.

armies<sup>62</sup>. A Czechoslovak battalion was temporarily subordinated to the Polish Carpathian Rifle Brigade in Tobruk, Czech pilots served in Polish squadrons and intelligence services of both armies cooperated. But there was a conflict over the Zaolzie prisoners of war from the Wehrmacht and over the Zaolzie region. After 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1941 the Polish-Soviet agreement was considered by Beneš to be insufficiently friendly for the USSR, therefore political negotiations were only ostensible<sup>63</sup>.

On 14<sup>th</sup> January 1942, during the New York conference of the International Labor Organization, representatives of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Greece and Yugoslavia as well as representatives of workers and employers signed a declaration on the establishment of the Central and Eastern Europe Planning Board for economic, social and educational reconstruction<sup>64</sup>. As far as the confederation was concerned, Poles proposed a federation state with uniform diplomatic service and army and internal duty customs. The Czechs proposed a union of two states preserving the institutional and political identity of the states, but with a customs union. Foreign, military and economic policies were to be coordinated. A relevant agreement was finally signed on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1942.<sup>65</sup>

In order to preserve territorial gains and weaken the Polish government, the Soviets issued diplomatic notes and a veto (15<sup>th</sup> July 1942). Beneš tried to save the situation with an unspecified Soviet-Polish-Czechoslovak union or an alliance agreement with Poland for 20 years. On 25<sup>th</sup> January 1943 minister Masaryk announced the Kremlin's objection, and when the Polish side noticed the abandonment, he notified Poles of suspending the works (17<sup>th</sup> May 1943)<sup>66</sup>. On 12<sup>th</sup> December 1943 a treaty on friendship, mutual assistance and post-war cooperation between the ČSR and the USSR was signed, which once and for all shattered the dreams of the Polish-Czechoslovak union<sup>67</sup>.

The Czechoslovak politicians reoriented to the so-called "Moscow Poles". The optimism was fuelled by the declaration of the Union of Polish Patriots (16<sup>th</sup> June 1943), which criticized the breakdown of Czechoslovakia and stated that "our border [...] in the Zaolzie region must be established jointly with the reborn Czechoslovak state in a peaceful way, which will not be detrimental to the permanent friendship

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62 J. Friedl, *Na jednym froncie*, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-186, 204-257, 329-404.

63 T. Kisielewski, *Federacja...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 139, 145, 162-163; M. Kamiński, *Edward Beneš kontra...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 107, 112-114.

64 J. Sadowski, *Polscy federaliści i konfederaliści w czasie II wojny światowej (cz. I)*, „Studia Europejskie” 2005 No. 3, p. 14-15.

65 T. Kisielewski: *Federacja...*, *op. cit.*, p. 174, pp. 268-269. The document was preceded by the Principles of the Constitutional Act of 21<sup>st</sup> May 1941 (*Ibidem*, pp. 259-267); T. Turlejska, *op. cit.* p. 140 and M. Kamiński, *Edward Beneš kontra...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-94, 137-138, 146

66 P. Wandycz: *Polska a Żagranica, dwie próby stworzenia związków regionalnych w Europie Wschodniej*, Paryż 1986, p. 917; T. Kisielewski, *Federacja...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 204, 217; M. Kamiński, *Edward Beneš kontra...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-202, 257-258, 261, 279-281, 286-287.

67 T. Kisielewski, *Federacja...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 228-229; M. Kamiński, *Edward Beneš we współpracy z Kremlem. Polityka zagraniczna władz czechosłowackich na emigracji 1943-1945*, Warszawa 2009, p. 78.

between our nations”<sup>68</sup>. But the October manifesto of the Polish communists emphasized that foreign policy will ensure the existence of a national state and recommended solving border conflicts through self-determination. Fearing that the situation in the Zaolzie region would resemble that in Carpathian Ruthenia, where the Soviets supported the separatist aspirations, was one of the main reasons why the Czechoslovak authorities recognized the puppet Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland (30<sup>th</sup> January 1945)<sup>69</sup>. Czech politicians abandoned the path of cooperation and symbolically contributed to the communist enslavement of Poles. The pursuit of particular interests of one participant of the dialogue (just like in 1938) did not save it from the fate of the other participant.

If we compare the lists of disputable and joint issues between the two countries, we will easily see that the number of contentious points was growing: territorial disputes; regional alliances/ Central European domination; attitude to Germany, the USSR, France, the League of Nations, the Slovakian movement, national minorities. Any attempts at determining whether there was a chance to build an alliance and stop the Third Reich would lead us to the area of alternative history. The antagonism was not unavoidable, there was the lack of determination, while the personalities of leaders and the different political priorities determined the outcome. The authorities of the 1<sup>st</sup> Republic and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic of Poland blocked the agreement that could have saved their sovereignty, whereas the emigration alliance was questioned by Beneš. Bilateral relations were determined by divergent interest and different perception of reality in its geopolitical dimension.

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68 D. Miszewski, *Zaolzie w stosunkach polsko-czechosłowackich w czasie II wojny światowej*, „Wieki Stare i Nowe” 2018 Volume 13, pp. 237-238.

69 W. Nawrocki, „*Kwestia czeška*”: tożsamość narodowa, literatura i polityka. *Szkice i uwagi*, Piotrków Trybunalski 2000, p. 558 ; M. Kamiński, *Edvard Beneš we współpracy...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 233, 240.



## The Czechoslovak-Polish Relations in 1945-1989

### Introduction

The Czechoslovak-Polish relations in the reference period still remain a matter of interest on part of the Czech historians seeking after 1989 a new analysis and new interpretation of their development,<sup>1</sup> previously restricted to a mere enumeration of selected political, economic and cultural contacts, aligned more or less by the then ideological schemes.<sup>2</sup> However, a more extensive synthesis or analytical study on bilateral relations covering either the entire period or long parts of the period are not available in this country, compared to several Polish studies published throughout the latest decade.<sup>3</sup> They are covered in a separate chapter in a monograph by J. Dejmek, describing them in 1918-1992; they are covered by a part of an encyclopaedia entry on Czech-Polish relations between the Middle Ages and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well as by part of the final chapter in the latest History of Poland.<sup>4</sup> But other than that, there are only studies covering particular

- 1 The present paper was written as part of project "Legal, Historical and Social Scientific Aspects of New and Traditional Minorities in the Czech Republic", project code DG18P02OVV064, within programme "National Cultural Identity II" sponsored by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic.
- 2 E. g. K. Kořalková, *Československo-polské vztahy 1945-1961*, Praha 1962; Idem, *Dvacet let československo-polského spojení*, [in:] K. Kořalková (ed.), *Československo-polské vztahy v nejnovejších dějinách. Sborník referátů a diskusních příspěvků z vědecké konference v Ústavu pro mezinárodní politiku a ekonomii v Praze /2. 3. 1967/*, Praha 1967, pp. 37-49; B. Lehár, *Hospodářské vztahy PLR a ČSSR v letech 1945-1960*, „Slovanský přehled.1975 No. 5, pp. 389-397; B. Lehár, *Stosunki gospodarcze PRL i CSRS w latach 1945-1975*, [in:] W. Balcerak (ed.), *Stosunki polsko-czechosłowackie a rewolucje ludowa-demokratyczne*, Wrocław 1989, pp. 181-208; V. Melichar, *Československo-polské spojení po druhé světové válce*, Praha 1985.
- 3 E. g. A. Szczepańska, *Warszawa – Praga 1948-1968. Od nakazanej przyjaźni do kryzysu*, Szczecin 2011. In relation to the Polish minority in Czechoslovakia, they are explored by K. Nowak, *Mniejszość polska w Czechosłowacji 1945-1989. Między nacjonalizmem a ideą internacjonalizmu*, Cieszyn 2012.
- 4 J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho soused.a velmoci ve 20. století (1918-1992)*, Praha 2002, pp. 135-169; R. Šimůnek, D. Janiš, J. Pánek, J. Valenta, J. Němeček, J. Vykoukal, R. Baron, *Česko-polské vztahy*, [in:] J. Pánek (ed.) et al., *Akademická encyklopedie českých dějin, sv. II, Č/1, (carodějnické procesy – česko-portugalské vztahy)*, pp. 362-364; M. Wihoda, M. Řezník, J. Friedl, *Tisíciletý příběh jednoho nelehkého sousedství*, [in:] J. Friedl, T. Jurek, M. Řezník,

topics (such as travel and cross-border contacts);<sup>5</sup> A number of short papers on a range of topics and periods were also presented in a conference in Wrocław in November 2004.<sup>6</sup>

Where short periods are concerned, attention has been primarily paid to the period from May 1945 to March 1947 (conclusion of the Czechoslovak–Polish alliance treaty), covered by tens of studies and articles, particularly dealing with various aspects of the Czechoslovak–Polish territorial dispute. However, more general and comprehensive studies see the first turning point in the communist coup in February 1948, or the turn of 1948 and 1949. This periodization, derived from political history, is also accepted by the successful synthesis by Jiří Friedl that depicts the development of Czechoslovak–Polish postwar relations up to March 1949, that is, the expiry of the first term of the supplemental protocols of the alliance treaty. The book also provides a detailed bibliography of relevant Czech and Polish reference sources.<sup>7</sup> In terms of economic developments and history, the beginning of 1949 is the moment when the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) was established, preferring bilateral cooperation of members with the Soviet Union; however, the Czechoslovak–Polish cooperation based on the 1947 trade treaties was only completed upon the launch of the six-year plan in Poland at the turn of 1950 and 1951 when most of the Polish workers left Czechoslovakia.<sup>8</sup>

The latest Czech historiography has failed to pay attention to the mutual relations in the first half of the 1950s, save for the minimum extent provided in the comparative study by Z. Jirásek and A. Małkiewicz covering 1948 to 1956.<sup>9</sup> The different course of events in 1956 in Poland and Czechoslovakia was analysed in detail by Czech and foreign authors, and the reactions to events in Poland were also projected within the context of the Polish minority in Těšín Silesia.<sup>10</sup> However, the sole

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M. Wihoda, *Dějiny Polska*, Praha 2017, pp. 609–614.

- 5 J. Rychlík, *Československo a Polsko před rokem 1968*, [in:] P. Blažek, E. Kamiński, R. Vévoda (ed.), *Polsko a Československo v roce 1968. Sborník příspěvků z mezinárodní vědecké konference Varšava, 4. – 5. září 2003*, Praha 2006, pp. 21–32; Idem, *Cestovní styk mezi Československem a Polskem v letech 1945–1989*, [in:] D. Hodek (ed.), *Česká a polská historická tradice a její vztah k současnosti*, Praha 2003, pp. 127–140; D. Janák, *Oficjalne formy przygranicznych kontaktów czesko-polskich w latach 1945–1989*, [in:] P. Blažek, P. Jaworski, E. Kamiński (ed.), *Między przymusową przyjaźnią a prawdziwą solidarnością. Czesi–Polacy–Słowacy 1938/39–1945, część II*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 109–115.
- 6 E. g., R. Vévoda, *Rok 1956 – zmarnowana szansa? Polscy dyplomaci w Czechosłowacji w roku przełomu*, [in:] P. Blažek, P. Jaworski, E. Kamiński (ed.), *Między przymusową przyjaźnią... op. cit.*, pp. 172–178; M. Hroníček, *Reakcja Czechosłowacji na plan Rapackiego w latach 1957–1959*, *Ibidem*, pp. 179–187; J. Cuhra, *Kościół katolicki w Polsce a Czechosłowacji w okresie normalizacji*, *Ibidem*, pp. 235–239.
- 7 J. Friedl, *Vztahy mezi Československem a Polskem v letech 1945–1949*, [in:] J. Friedl, Z. Jirásek, *Rozpačité spojení. Československo–polské vztahy v letech 1945–1949*, Praha 2008, pp. 5–339, bibliography pp. 378–389.
- 8 E. g., conf. D. Janák, *Dopad polské měnové reformy v roce 1950 na Ostravsku*, [in:] Z. Jirásek, J. Novotný, J. Šouša, J. Šula (ed.), *Měnové systémy na území českých zemí 1892–1993. Sborník z konference v Opavě 22. a 23. března 1994*, Opava – Praha 1994, pp. 99–104.
- 9 Z. Jirásek, A. Małkiewicz, *Polska i Czechosłowacja w dobie stalinizmu (1948–1956). Studium porównawcze*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 177–180.
- 10 E. g. J. Pernes, *Československý rok 1956*, „Soudobé dějiny“ 2000 No. 4, pp. 594–618; Idem, *Ohlas maďarské revoluce roku 1956 v československé veřejnosti. Z interních hlášení krajských správ ministerstva vnitra*, „Soudobé dějiny“ 1996

large monograph focusing expressly on Czechoslovak–Polish relations, by I. Lukeš and K. Sieber, was published in Poland only.<sup>11</sup> The development of the interrelationship from October 1956 to August 1968 was outlined by T. Marczak at the Czechoslovak–Polish conference in 2000<sup>12</sup>. Similarly, attention was paid to the demarcation of the Czechoslovak–Polish border between the autumn of 1955 to the spring of 1959.<sup>13</sup> The course of events in 1968 and the early stage of normalization are captured by the proceedings from the Warsaw conference in 2003,<sup>14</sup> while Ł. Kamiński captured the attitudes of the Polish public to the occupation of Czechoslovakia.<sup>15</sup> Jointly with G. Majchrzak, he curated a vast series of documents concerning Operation “Podhale”, a codename for an operation launched by the Polish secret police (SB) in Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1968.<sup>16</sup>

A perspective of Czechoslovak–Polish relations in 1968–1981 was offered by Tomáš Zahradníček,<sup>17</sup> but the only Czech publication covering their development in the 1970s is by Polish historian M. Szumił; additionally in Poland, a study by O. Klípa explores Polish female workers in Czechoslovakia.<sup>18</sup> By contrast, the detailed research concerns the political aspects of the crisis of the Polish communist regime and their reflection in bilateral relations and the attitudes of both communist

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No. 4, pp. 512–526; Z. Jirásek, A. Malkiewicz, *Polska i Czechosłowacja ...., op. cit.*, pp. 380–383; J. Rupnik, *Promeškané setkání. Rok 1956 z pohled.Prahy*. „Soudobé dějiny“ 1996 No. 4, pp. 535–539; M. Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost. Československo a rok 1956*, Praha 2001, particularly pp. 26–134, 287–312; Z. Jirásek, *K průběhu roku 1956 v Ostravském kraji*. “Časopis Slezského zemského muzea série B” 1997 No. 1, pp. 85–93 et seq.

- 11 I. Lukeš, K. Sieber, *Pies, który nie szczełal. Czechosłowacja i wydarzenia w Polsce w 1956 roku*. [in:] J. Rowiński, collaboration by T. Jaskulowski (ed.), *Polski październik 1956 w polityce światowej*, Warszawa 2006, pp. 145–165.
- 12 T. Marczak, *Od „polského října“ k „pražskému jaru“: Hlavní problémy v polsko-československých vztazích v letech 1956–1968*. [in:] J. J. Bruski, E. Maur, M. Pulaski, J. Valenta (ed.), *Mezi dvěma transformacemi. Československo a Polsko v letech 1947 (1948)–1989. – Od transformaci do transformaci. Polska i Czechosłowacja w latach 1947 (1948)–1989*, Praha 2001, pp. 173–181.
- 13 D. Janák, *Vytyčení československo–polské hranice a řešení otázky hornoslezských uprchlíků v letech 1948–1960*, “Časopis Slezského zemského muzea, série B” 1993 No. 3, pp. 243–249.
- 14 In addition to the discussion between Czech and Polish historians, the proceedings also include contemporary documents, including the minutes of the Politburo of the Polish United Workers’ Party between January and July 1968 where Czechoslovakia was concerned. P. Blažek, Ł. Kamiński, R. Vévoda (ed.), *Polsko a Československo...*, *op. cit.*, Appendixes 1–5, pp. 222–336.
- 15 Ł. Kamiński, *Polská společnost a invaze vojsk Varšavské smlouvy do Československa*. [in:] P. Blažek (ed.), *Opozice a odpor proti komunistickému režimu v Československu 1968–1989*, Praha 2005, pp. 270–289 (notes 336–339).
- 16 *Operacja Podhale. Służba Bezpieczeństwa wobec wydarzeń w Czechosłowacji 1968 – 1970*, wstęp wybór i oprac. Ł. Kamiński, G. Majchrzak, Warszawa 2008. Also cf. K. Nowak (ed.), *Podhale na Żołziu. Służba Bezpieczeństwa przeciwko zaolziańskiej Praskiej Wiośnie. Wybór dokumentów z lat 1968–1969*, Acta Historica Silesiae Superioris, t. XVII, Cieszyn 2005.
- 17 T. Zahradníček, *Polské poučení z pražského jara. Tři studie z dějin politického myšlení 1968–1981*, Praha 2011. In the opening part, he analyzes the ideas and texts by Leszek Kolakowski, Jacek Kuroń, Adam Michnik and others., in the other two chapters, he analyses diary entries by Mieczysław W. Rakowski and Józef Tejcma.
- 18 M. Szumił, *Stosunki polsko-czechosłowackie w latach 1972–1977*. [in:] J. Petráš, L. Svoboda, *Bezčasí. Československo v letech 1972–1977*, Praha – České Budějovice 2018, pp. 238–250; O. Klípa, *Polskie robotnice Czechosłowacji: czy przyjechały, by pozostać?*. [in:] W. Borodziej, J. Kochanowski (ed.), *Bocznymi drogami. Nieoficjalne kontakty społeczeństwa socjalistycznych 1956–1989*, Warszawa 2010, pp. 279–303.

leaders and opposition in Czechoslovakia. The research was started by O. Tůma<sup>19</sup> in the late 1990s, and continued, in particular, by P. Blažek who also published a two-volume collection of documents in 2017, containing archival documents of the Czechoslovak ministry of interior, covering in particular Operation “North” run by Czechoslovak intelligence services between June 1981 and June 1984 in order to monitor the situation in Poland, the activity of the Polish opposition groups and the opinions of Czechoslovak and Polish public, as well as to launch a number of actions to support the Polish communist regime.<sup>20</sup> P. Tomek and A. Maskalík, among others, described the military aspects of the Polish crisis within Czechoslovakia.<sup>21</sup> Jointly with Ł. Kamiński and G. Majewski, P. Blažek also explored the history of the Polish–Czechoslovak Solidarity in 1981–1989, who were a major link in the second half of the 1980s in terms of contacts and cooperation between the opposition in Czechoslovakia and Poland.<sup>22</sup>

Based on the above sources, we will attempt a tentative overview of the Czechoslovak–Polish relations in 1945–1989 both in terms of the official policy and dissenting opposition, with partial insights into economics. In doing so, we will take into account the border zone contacts and tourism as phenomena intertwining the subject areas of interest, structuring the presentation in chronological stages.

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- 19 O. Tůma, *The Czechoslovak Communist Regime and the Polish Crisis, 1980–1981*, “Cold War International History Project Bulletin” 1998 No. 11, pp. 60–75.
- 20 P. Blažek (ed.), *Akce „Sever“. Státní bezpečnost a krize Polské lidové republiky 1980–1984. Edice dokumentů*, Praha 2017. In addition to the introductory historical study by P. Blažek, *Krize Polské lidové republiky a její reflexe v Československu 1980–1984*, *ibidem*, volume 1, pp. 11–32, a vast bibliography of Czech and Polish sources is attached. cf. *List of Reference Sources*, *ibidem*, volume 2, pp. 482–486. To name other studies on the impact of the Polish crisis in Czechoslovakia, e. g. P. Blažek, *Operation “North”. Czechoslovak Security Apparatus and the Polish Crisis 1980–1984*, [in:] L. Babka, P. Roubal (ed.), *Prague Perspectives (II). A New Generation of Czech East European Studies*, Prague 2007, pp. 263–276; Idem, *Československo a polská krize 1980–1981*, „Securitas Imperii“ 2012 No. 20, pp. 58–75; Idem, *Czechosłowacja i kryzys w Polsce w latach 1980 – 1981*, [in:] Kamiński, P. Jaworski (ed.), *Świat wobec “Solidarności” 1980–1989*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 148–160; J. Rychlík, *Spoleczeństwo czechosłowackie i Komunistyczna Partia Czechosłowacji i wydarzenia w Polsce w latach 1980–1981*, [in:] P. Blažek, P. Jaworski, Ł. Kamiński (ed.), *Między przymusem a przyjaźnią ... op. cit.*, pp. 207–220; From Polish studies, e. g., A. Kobus, *Czechosłowacja wobec narodzin, rozwoju i delegalizacji “Solidarności” (1980 – 1982)*, Warszawa 2006.
- 21 P. Tomek, *Akce Křkonoše: československé vojenské souvislosti polské krize*, „Historie a vojenství“ 2017 No. 3, pp. 4–19; A. Maskalík, *Akcja Křkonoše*, „Vojenská história: časopis pre vojenskú históriu, múzejníctvo a archívniectvo“ 2017 No. 2, pp. 135–161.
- 22 P. Blažek, *Akcja “Červotoč” (“Kołatek”) Tajny współpracownik SIB Stanisław Dvořak jako kurier „Solidarności Polsko-Czechosłowackiej”*, „Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość” 2006 no. 1, pp. 117–164; Ł. Kamiński, P. Blažek, G. Majewski, *Ponad granicami. Historia Solidarności Polsko-Czechosłowackiej*, Wrocław 2009; Ł. Kamiński, P. Blažek, G. Majewski, *Hranicím navzdory. Příběh Polsko-československé solidarity*, Praha 2017; Ł. Kamiński, P. Blažek, G. Majewski, *Solidarność Polsko-Czechosłowacka 1981–1989*, [in:] Ł. Kamiński, G. Waligóra (ed.), *NSZZ Solidarność. Tom 2. Ruch społeczny*, Warszawa 2010, pp. 575–590.

## 1. Heading for the Soviet Bloc: Disputes and Conflicts (1945-1947)

Up to the spring of 1947, the Czechoslovak-Polish relations were dominated by the territorial dispute over Těšín Silesia, potentially a threat of a new armed conflict just a while after the war ended. The Polish line of reasoning was based on the notion of statehood as a homogeneous nation. For the Czechoslovak society, no further changes of the pre-Munich borders were acceptable after the loss of the Carpathian Ruthenia. The political class argued in terms of the strategic importance of Těšín Silesia for the national economy, countering the Polish claims with claims concerning former German territories in Silesia (areas around Kłodzko, Racibórz, Głubczyce and Koźle), supporting the claims with historic rights as well as strategic reasons, and, in particular, the disputable ethnic structure of the local population. However, such claims were formulated too late, only after the territories were handed over to Polish administration in early June 1945, and the international presentation of such claims concerning defeated Germany was perceived both in Warsaw and Moscow as an attempt to question the border along the Oder-Neisse line. These territories were relatively small, and their exchange for Těšín Silesia, repeatedly offered by the Polish government, was unacceptable for the Czechoslovak party; the only concession by the latter was to grant the Polish minority in Těšín Silesia with limited rights in terms of culture and language. Polish complaints concerned with the treatment of the minority were then countered with similar Czechoslovak complaints concerning the situation of the ethnic Slovak population of the Polish part of Orava and Upper Spiš that had been part of Slovakia during the war; at the same time, the Czechoslovaks indicated they did not claim the territory.<sup>23</sup>

The early minor conflicts and clashes escalated when 14 villages around Racibórz were taken over by Czechoslovak units in June 1945; in part, this was due to a misunderstanding on the Soviet side concerning the course of the border line in a map.<sup>24</sup> The situation was remedied by Soviet generals Andrey Yeremenko and Lev Mekhlis; the imminent armed conflict was warded off by diplomatic negotiations in Moscow in late June. However, subsequent months witnessed a new escalation, resulting from ongoing ethnic disputes in the border zone and the flow of refugees on both sides of the border.<sup>25</sup> Polish refugees from Těšín Silesia stayed in the Polish border-

23 J. Friedl, *Vztahy mezi Československem ..., op. cit.*, pp. 334-336.

24 S. Kokoška, J. Friedl, *Neznámé pozadí ratibořského incidentu v červnu 1945*, [in:] *Svět historie – historikův svět. Sborník profesoru Robertu Kvačkoví*, Liberec 2008, pp. 425-433.

25 A high level of unrest prevailed in Těšín Silesia, fuelled by a propaganda campaign from Poland, countered by a retaliatory action of the Czechoslovak government. The dispute was intensified on both sides by repeatedly erupting press campaigns (which have not been analysed in depth yet), shows of force and open issues. Such issues included a rally supporting the annexation of Těšín Silesia, held in Cieszyn on 4 September 1945; also in Cieszyn, the National Council of Zaolzie was established two days later; the return of ethnic Czech returnees; and the preparations underway to deport over 6,000 Polish "occupiers", i. e. Polish settlers arriving in Těšín Silesia after 1 October 1938), put on hold in spring 1946; with additional issues such as the rehabilitation of people listed in Volksliste and the associated confiscations of property, failed attempt at restoration of Polish associations, renewal of Polish

lands, where waves of Polish immigrants arrived in 1945–1946 from the former eastern Polish territories, then annexed by the Soviet Union. Likewise, economic and social tensions were heightened, in particular around Hlučín and Opava, upon the arrival of some 4 to 5 thousand refugees from Upper Silesia, indigenous Czech people with the endonym “Moravci”. Some 2,500 ethnic Czechs from Kladsko County found shelter in and around Hronov and Náchod.<sup>26</sup>

Territorial disputes led to the imposition of mutual obstacles, hindering, for instance, the shipping of raw materials to Czechoslovakia through Poland and the transit of Polish returnees through Czechoslovakia.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, traditional economic ties in some border regions were renewed. Some companies from the Ostrava region (such as Tonak Nový Jičín) started recruiting staff directly in the Racibórz area, where first economic refugees came from, looking for jobs). Likewise, in the middle of 1946, some 200–250 Polish workers started commuting to the iron works in Třinec and Bohumín and to the collieries in Karviná, using short-term permits (referred to as “cross-border commuters”). Gradually, these were joined by other job seekers, many of whom stayed to work in Czechoslovakia after their valid documents expired. In northeastern Bohemia, reciprocal supplies of raw materials and food, in particular, resumed in 1945–1946.<sup>28</sup> The smuggling of food and consumer goods was a specific phenomenon of the Czechoslovak–Polish border, continuing in later years as well.<sup>29</sup>

As stated by Jiří Friedl, the attitude of the Soviet Union remains largely unexplored. Soviet officials played both sides against the middle, using the territorial dispute to consolidate their influence both on Poland and Czechoslovakia. However, as soon as the dispute turned into a threat to the integration of both countries within the Soviet sphere of interest and their joint stance in international affairs, Stalin intervened directly in July 1946, calling on both Prague and Warsaw to close a bilateral alliance treaty almost immediately. The negotiations for the treaty started the next month during the peace conference in Paris. However, as the Polish party requested an annex warranting reciprocity in securing both the Polish minority rights and a solution of the territorial disputes within two years, the negotiations became highly protracted, to be ultimately put on hold after complex turns

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schools etc. J. Friedl, *Vztahy mezi Československem...*, *op. cit.*, p. 336; D. Janák, *České Slezsko po roce 1945. Národnostní problémy. Polská menšina*. [in:] D. Gawrecki et al., *Dějiny Českého Slezska 1740–2000. II*, Opava 2003, pp. 496–501.

26 For details, conf. D. Janák, *Neklidná hranice I. –II. (Slezské pohraničí v letech 1945–1947)*, „Časopis Slezského zemského muzea, série B” 1993 No. 1, pp. 63–75, No. 2, pp. 147–168; Z. Jirásek, *K otázkám některých českých aktivit pro získání Kladska po roce 1945*, [in:] J. Čáp, L. Hladký, J. Šůla, V. Wolf (ed.), *Kladský sborník 1*, Hradec Králové 1996, pp. 130–131.

27 J. Friedl, *Vztahy mezi Československem...*, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

28 D. Janák, S. Kokoška et kol., *Průmyslové dělnictvo v českých zemích v letech 1945–1948*, Praha 2019, p. 328; Z. Jirásek, *Česko–polská hospodářská spolupráce v severovýchodních Čechách v letech 1945–1949*, „Slezský sborník” 1984 No. 2, pp. 98–104.

29 For details on smuggling in Silesia, conf. D. Janák, *Neklidná hranice II...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 160–161.

of events. It was again a direct intervention by Moscow in February 1947, requested by the Polish party, forcing Czechoslovakia on 10 March 1947 to sign the treaty with “typical characteristics of the Soviet style of international law”.<sup>30</sup>

## 2. Troubled Alliance (1947-1950)

In terms of international politics, the treaty was based on alliance against Germany, and later against West Germany, a principle that became the cornerstone of bilateral relations for the next two decades, as made soon obvious when Czechoslovakia rejected the US request to review Poland’s western border and when both ministries of foreign affairs agreed in the autumn of 1947 to coordinate their approach in such matters.<sup>31</sup>

However, other problems and animosity persisted, albeit with differing intensity. The most challenging issue was the immediate fulfilment of the clause on minority rights in the annex, as urged by the Polish party. As the communist-held ministry of interior found itself in a complex situation, dealing with the matter of ethnic Polish associations, a series of problems and controversies led to the removal of Polish ambassador Stefan Wierbłowski, replaced in office by Józef Olszewski. The new ethnic Polish organizations, Polish Cultural and Educational Union (PZKO) and the Association of Polish Youth (SMP), established in the summer of 1947, were given a small part of the assets owned by former Polish associations. Czechoslovak politicians, the government included, refused to grant a larger scope of minority rights to the Polish minority.

After the communist coup d’état in Czechoslovakia on 21–25 February 1948, aided also by a delegation of Polish socialists present in Prague at the time,<sup>32</sup> there was some improvement regarding the Polish minority education system, but in other respects, the situation remained unchanged. Although Polish ambassador J. Olszewski noted in early 1949 that the Additional Protocol had been almost completed, Warsaw asked to prolong its validity by an additional two years. Although the Czechoslovak side did not like the idea, they eventually accepted the secret prolongation.<sup>33</sup> However, the minority issue virtually disappeared from bilateral relations after February 1948 as the Polish side was reluctant to heighten tensions even though the status of the Polish minority was not solved.<sup>34</sup> Border adjustments remained open into the late 1950s, with territorial disputes disappearing as both

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30 *Ibidem*, pp. 158–159; J. Friedl, *Vztahy mezi Československem ...., op. cit.*, p. 337. J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé...., op. cit.*, p. 155 (citation).

31 J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé...., op. cit.*, p. 156; J. Friedl, *Vztahy mezi Československem ...., op. cit.*, p. 337.

32 J. Friedl, *Vztahy mezi Československem ...., op. cit.*, pp. 312–313; A. Szczepańska, *Warszawa – Praga...., op. cit.*, pp. 58–59 et seq.

33 J. Friedl, *Vztahy mezi Československem ...., op. cit.*, p. 338.

34 M. Wihoda, M. Řezník, J. Friedl, *Tisíciletý příběh...., op. cit.*, p. 610.

sides tacitly accepted the status quo. Similarly, the problem of refugees from Upper Silesia and Kladsko Country as well as the illegal cross-border commuters” was most likely solved with a compromise agreed on in early 1951.<sup>35</sup>

Both nations stressed close cooperation, which remained difficult, save for certain exceptions, such as the fight against Ukrainian nationalist guerillas in 1947 and experience sharing between the communist-led politic police StB (Czechoslovakia) and UB (Poland); even the spontaneous contacts in border areas upon the closing of the contract were fast turned into formal politic and business-related visits, trips and meetings. Only economic cooperation developed in the first two years after the agreement closing. The generous scope of treaties, most likely exceeding the potential of Czechoslovakia, could no longer be implemented once Comecon was established. Still, it was a starting point for the subsequent stage.<sup>36</sup> The relations included a growing number of cross-border commuters, with the number culminating after a bilateral treaty was signed 1947, with some 7, 000 commuters working in the Ostrava region, in particular in the construction, metallurgy and mining.<sup>37</sup> In the autumn of 1947, Poland introduced stricter conditions for cross-border travel and improved wages, in particular in mining. Accordingly, the number of Polish workers dropped fast, with merely 3, 500 of them still working in the Ostrava region in July 1948, and approximately 1, 000 persons on top of that, mostly women, working in the textile companies in the districts of Aš and Náchod.<sup>38</sup>

These numbers increased temporarily only in 1949–1950, also as a result of a number of agreements closed to regulate the legal aspects of cross-border employment and social security.<sup>39</sup> For example, about four and a half thousand Polish workers worked in the Ostrava region in mid-1949, while Poland claimed there were 12 thousand of them, a third of whom were illegally in Czechoslovakia as their permits expired.<sup>40</sup> Polish authority made official permissions for the required 6, 000 persons for the subsequent period conditional on a number of requirements.<sup>41</sup>

35 The full integration of “unregistered immigrants from Poland, both temporary workers and refugees from Upper Silesia as well as (some) Kladsko Czechs occurred in the first half of the 1950s. D. Janák, *Vytyčení československo-polské...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 246–247.

36 L. Kulíková, *Československo-polské hospodářské dohody z roku 1947*, „Slezský sborník” 1992 No. 2, pp. 121–129; J. Friedl, *Vztahy mezi Československem...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 338–339; A. Szczepańska, *Warszawa – Praga...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 165–168 et seq.

37 According to some sources, they were up to 9, 000 persons in the files of the District Office for Labour Protection in Ostrava. L. Bajger, *Ostravsko po druhé světové válce. 1945–1948. Obyvatelstvo a pracovní trh*, Ostrava 1971, p. 140.

38 D. Janák, S. Kokoška et al., *Průmyslové dělnictvo...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 344–345.

39 The contracts were closed from spring of 1948 to April 1951, when an agreement was signed in Warsaw concerning the mutual payments of social and illness benefits. A. Szczepańska, *Warszawa – Praga...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–71.

40 Polish authorities relied on the fact that 24 million zloty were transferred to Cieszyn district, with an assumed per capita amount of 20, 000 zloty. An interesting fact to note is that about 80 million Czechoslovak crowns were transferred to Poland every month as benefits and salaries. D. Janák, *Dopad polské...*, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

41 In addition to a crackdown on workers remaining illegally in Czechoslovakia, this included debt clearing with attractive Czech goods, faster delivery of two coke plants from the iron works in Vítkovice, allowance of free coal to miners, and a ration of food and work clothes for all Polish members of staff, and similar. *Ibidem*.

In 1950, the number of cross-border commuters in the wider environs of Ostrava increased to some 6, 300 persons in 1950, yet mere 1, 500 workers remained after the Polish currency reform in January 1951. At the beginning of the first five-year, about 200 Polish textile workers worked in and around Náchod, and roughly the same number of ethnic Slovak workers from Polish parts of Orava and Spiš were involved in the construction of the Orava reservoir.<sup>42</sup> Based on a bilateral treaty on hiring of farming workers, almost 4 thousand Polish workers arrived in Czechoslovakia gradually after late November 1948 under 6-month contracts; however, an overwhelming majority of them terminated their employment contracts by the autumn of 1949, with the rest returning to Poland in the spring of 1950.<sup>43</sup>

### **3. Cooperation or Isolation: Behind the Socialist “Iron Curtain” (1951-1956)**

In the first half of the 1950s, bilateral political cooperation was essentially restricted to a joint position on the German question, as evidenced by the lack of top-level negotiations.<sup>44</sup> The obvious effort of both nations to restrict cross-border traffic manifested itself through gradual closures of border crossings and parts of border ridges sealed off. Thus, an iron curtain was established de facto between Poland and Czechoslovakia; the border regime was controlled by border commissioners, whereby the Czechoslovak border commissioners were members of the State Security.<sup>45</sup>

All kinds of direct cross-border regional cooperation vanished. The local cross-border traffic involving “economic passes” was limited to the least possible number (such as workers commuting to metallurgic plants and collieries in Těšín Silesia and owners of plots across the border).<sup>46</sup> Thus, the only field where mutual relations flourished was economic cooperation focusing on the use of Czechoslovak heavy industry to implement massive “socialist industrialization” of Poland. The emerging bilateral Polish-Czech economic cooperation has been

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42 *Ibidem*, pp. 101–105; V. Průcha, *Zahranční dělníci v Československu 1946–1950*, [in:] J. Macháčová, J. Matějček (ed.), *Studie k sociálním dějinám. Sv. 6. Konference Sociální dějiny českých zemí v 18., 19. a 20. století (Praha, 10. –11. 10. 2000)*, Kutná Hora – Praha – Opava 2001, p. 256. The data on numbers of Polish workers in 1949–1950 vary greatly. Based on the data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, V. Průcha claims that as of 15 September 1990, there were mere 2602 Polish nationals employed in the Ostrava region, while the regional administration for the Ostrava region indicate that in September 1950, there were 3009 of them in district Karviná alone. Conf. D. Janák, *Dopad polské ..., op. cit.*, p. 101.

43 V. Průcha, *Zahranční dělníci..., op. cit.*, p. 255.

44 J. Dejmeck, *Československo, jeho sousedé..., op. cit.*, p. 156; Z. Jirásek, A. Małkiewicz, *Polska i Czechosłowacja..., op. cit.*, pp. 179–180 et seq.

45 Their activities included a wide range of problems: they dealt with border incidents and malfunctions, smuggling, border protection, local cross-border traffic, life of ethnic minorities in the borderland, and contacts to the embassies and consulates. D. Janák, *Vytyčení československo-polské..., op. cit.*, pp. 244–245.

46 *Ibidem*.

replaced by directive plans for supplies of goods and raw materials drawn up internationally within the Comecon framework. Soviet “advisors” were an additional tool to control the satellites.<sup>47</sup> By the autumn of 1949, they had been involved in changes of the six-year plan in Poland and, most likely, their directives were reflected in the revisions of the six-year plan in July 1950, where, unlike the original plan quota for industrial increase by 85–95% between 1949 and 1955 was changed to 158%.<sup>48</sup>

One of the consequences of these processes was the new five-year Czechoslovak-Polish agreement on mutual supply of goods for the period of 1951–1955 signed in Warsaw in April 1951.<sup>49</sup> According to J. Dejmek, the mutual trade was more than doubled in 1953 as compared to the provisions of the 1948 agreements; despite a decrease resulting from the six-year plan in Poland, it attained “early features of a certain socialist division of labour within the bloc” still before Moscow suggested a reform of the Comecon.<sup>50</sup> However, both economies suffered from the burden of unfavourable contracts with the Soviet Union, with the increase of supplies before 1953 reflecting the Soviet vision of development of heavy industry and preparation for war, rather than the economic potential.<sup>51</sup> The asymmetric structure of goods, believed by the public opinion in Poland to be one the causes of the prevailing poverty and shortage of food (along with the unfavourable terms of trade with the Soviet Union),<sup>52</sup> was also mirrored in disproportionate volumes of exports (throughout the period, Polish exports to Czechoslovakia amounted to a half of the other direction). The disproportionate trade was set off in complex

47 Regarding these issues, e. g. K. Kaplan, *Československo v RVHP 1949–1956*, Praha 1995; *Idem, Sovětská poradci v Československu 1949–1956*, Praha 1993, pp. 42–66; D. Janák, Z. Jirásek, *Sovětská poradci a ekonomický vývoj v ostravsko-karvinském revíru*, Opava 1996, pp. 28–70.

48 The first instance of this was, most likely, the revision of development plans for the coal mining industry as a result of a Soviet “expert survey”, largely leading to an increase in extensive factors in the coal mining industry in Poland. For more details, conf. D. Janák, *Sovětská „expertiza“ uhelného hornictví ve Slezsku v roce 1949*, [in:] R. Kaczmarek, *Silesia – de te fabula narratur (Śląsk – do ciebie stosuje się to co powiedziano). Księga jubileuszowa dedykowana Profesorowi Michałowi Lisowi z okazji 55-lecia pracy nauczycielskiej oraz 40-lecia pracy badawczej i naukowej*, Opole 2009, pp. 191–198.

49 Interestingly, during Prague negotiations in the autumn of 1950, Polish delegates felt “lack of trust on the Czechoslovak side who failed to understand the importance of the membership in the socialist family and treated the Polish negotiators as if they were capitalist competitors”. A. Szczepańska, *Warszawa – Praga...*, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

50 J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé...*, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

51 Fuel and electricity, raw materials, semi-finished products and food accounted for most of Poland’s exports until 1953, with more than two thirds (about 70%) being supplies of hard coal. By contrast, a similar share in total exports (65–75% of total exports) went to machines and industrial systems, in particular large industrial facilities, including complete projects from assembly to operative servicing, allegedly often under the auspices of Soviet advisors. Such projects included the Halemba colliery, power plants Jaworzno I and Miechowice, Zabrze, Czechnice and Elbląg, cement mill Odra and Groszowice (Wiek II), rolling mill Bobrek, facilities in metallurgical plants Baildon and Florian, viscose plant in Jelenia Góra, and some more. A. Szczepańska, *Warszawa – Praga...*, *op. cit.*, p. 180; K. Kořalková, *Československo-polské vztahy...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 41–42.

52 A whispering propaganda claimed that, for instance, Poland paid each Skoda car with 50 tonnes of bacon, meaning dignitaries of all sorts showed off in cars paid at the cost of the stomachs of common people. Z. Jirásek, A. Malkiewicz, *Polska i Czechosłowacja ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 178–179.

ways, involving transit rail and maritime transport of raw materials and consumer goods to Czechoslovakia through Poland.<sup>53</sup> In 1954–1955, there was a decrease in trade exchange due to a partial change favouring the consumer industries and, in particular, decreased supplies of Polish coal. Problems arose from differences in the technological advancement of both nations, in particular in the metal industry and electrical engineering, as well as from different institutional structures and mental barriers, and similar. In addition, investment credits, the lack of single currency, the Soviet pressure within the dysfunctional Comecon framework, and different economic priorities all combined hardly allowed to see any epitome of labour even though the economic relations of the two nations ranked high in their respective foreign trade.<sup>54</sup>

Owing to the closed border, monitored by the Polish border guards (WOP), the Czechoslovak strikes and unrest following the currency reform in June 1953 failed to result in wide response in Poland,<sup>55</sup> although within Těšín Silesia, Polish commuters to iron works in Bohumín and Třinec and to Karviná collieries took part in the events. In the following years, the numbers of workers rose significantly<sup>56</sup>. After 22 April 1956, the effective starting date of the Czechoslovak–Polish agreement on tourism in the High Tatras signed in September 1955, intensive tourism developed rapidly. A range of illicit trading and smuggling tricks accompanied. So in late August 1956, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia decided to inform the Polish party.<sup>57</sup> It is hard to

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53 In 1950–1953, Polish exports rose from 231.2 million to 380.9 million zloty (convertible) and Czechoslovak exports rose from 584.3 to 709.5 million zloty (convertible). In 1954–1956, Polish exports dropped slightly below 300 million, while Czechoslovak exports decreased in 1954–1955 (629.3 million and 519.8 million), with an increase to 716.4 million zloty (convertible) in 1956. A. Szczepańska, *Warszawa – Praga...*, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

54 *Ibidem*, pp. 174–182.

55 According to J. Rychlík, the border was not completely impassable. While a passport and visa were required legally for travel, “mainly in Těšín Silesia, there was intensive illegal cross-border travel” by ethnic Polish nationals of Czechoslovakia, who were also considered Polish nationals under the then Polish legislation. (This issue was only solved in 1965–1966 with a Czechoslovak–Polish agreement on prevention of double citizenship.) Thus, they visited their relatives and even looked for jobs and studied across the border. J. Rychlík, *Cestovní styk...*, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

56 While in the first trimester of 1954, there were 500 Polish workers in Czechoslovakia and 300 Czechoslovak residents working in Poland, the numbers rose in the first half of 1956 to 1500 Polish workers and about 800 Czechoslovak workers. A. Szczepańska, *Warszawa – Praga...*, *op. cit.*, p. 69; Report on local cross-border travel between Czechoslovakia, Poland Hungary, for the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, describing the status as of 14 June 1956.

57 A. Szczepańska, *Warszawa – Praga...*, *op. cit.*, p. 133. A draft letter of the headquarters of the Border Guard says that Polish tourists (but also some delegations) bring sweaters, agricultural alcohol and other goods for sale to Czechoslovak nationals (along with exchange of Polish zloty (3 zloty for 1 crown), in order to buy goods to bring along to Poland. The most serious situation was said to be in the High Tatras, where on some days, 1500–3000 tourists arrived, trading “in whole groups in the streets. A number of tourists travel further inland with their goods”. By contrast, in Těšín Silesia, a large part of Polish workers opted not to send money to Poland through the national bank, instead using the money to buy goods in Czechoslovakia for resale in Poland, earning thus “huge unchecked income in the Polish currency”. Národní archiv v Praze (dále „NA“), fond (dále „f.“) Komunistická strana Československa – Ústřední výbor – Kancelář I. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část (dále „KSČ–ÚV–AN II“), k. 160, inv. č. 387, *Draft letter (to the PB resolution of 27 August 1956)*, pp. 41–42.

say which issue Czechoslovak communist leaders minded more: the economic offences or the uncontrolled travel of large numbers of Polish nationals outside the border zone.<sup>58</sup>

The different developments of domestic politics in both nations in 1956 were covered by a number of publications<sup>59</sup>, yet in the spring of 1956, both parties had high expectations of the visit by prime minister Viliam Široký to Warsaw, Gdańsk and Szczecin, prepared for long but only taking place on 6–11 July 1956, after the Poznań protests. While agreements were reached concerning a wider scope of mutual relations, the final demarcation of the border, settlements of mutual debts, and a joint stance of solidarity concerning the German question, there were failed expectations on the Polish side, concerning a joint course of action to gain more independence from Moscow, and on the Czechoslovak side, concerning agreements on supplies of Polish coal.<sup>60</sup>

In the following weeks, mutual relations deteriorated. a delegation of Czechoslovak communists refused to be present in the 8th plenary meeting of the central committee of the Polish United Worker Party in late July, copying the stance of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. After that, cross-border contacts decreased and the distribution of Polish press was reduced. while the border surveillance intensified. The hostile atmosphere, exacerbated by diplomats reporting from Warsaw and Szczecin,<sup>61</sup> reached its peak in late October after Władysław Gomułka was promoted to the top party post during the 8<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting of the central committee of the Polish United Worker Party. The disinformation campaign launched in Czechoslovakia interpreted the changes in progress in Poland as a result of revisionist, anti-socialist and anti-Soviet forces making use of the economic hardships. On 21–22 October, communist meetings were held in industrial plants and in army units. A range of security measures were introduced. with People's Militia put on alert on 24 October.<sup>62</sup> Particularly strong concerns prevailed in the Ostrava

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58 However, this also worked in the reverse, as evidenced by trips of Jiří Němec and Dana Němcová, a married couple of later dissidents, who went on several such trips to Poland where they established some friendly contacts, in particular with Polish intellectuals associated with Krakow-based Catholic magazine „Znak”. L. Kamiński, P. Blažek, G. Majewski, *Ponad granicami ... op. cit.*, p. 39.

59 M. Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost ... op. cit.*, pp. 303–306; J. Pernes, *Československý rok 1956... op. cit.*, pp. 612–613. In other studies, e. g., J. Rupnik, *Proměškané setkání ... op. cit.*, pp. 535–539; J. Pernes, *Ohlas maďarské... op. cit.*, pp. 512–526.

60 T. Marczak, *Od „polského října“... op. cit.*, p. 173; A. Szczepeńska, *Warszawa – Praga... op. cit.*, pp. 91–92; J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedě... op. cit.*, pp. 157–158.

61 Regarding the actions of the embassy in Warsaw and the attitudes of the Czechoslovak ambassador to Poland, Karel Vojáček, who witnessed the bloody suppression of the worker protests in Poznań on 29 June 1956, cf. R. Vévoda, *Rok 1956... op. cit.*, pp. 175–177; A. Szczepeńska, *Warszawa – Praga... op. cit.*, pp. 89–90. Additionally, cf. the detailed report of Václav Macura, Czechoslovak consul general in Szczecin, for the secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in early December 1956, also covering the development after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-AN II, k. 157, inv. č. . 380, Report on the Current Situation in Poland since the 8th Plenary Meeting of the Polish United Worker Party.

62 L. Kamiński, P. Blažek, G. Majewski, *Ponad granicami ... op. cit.*, pp. 37–38; R. Vévoda, *Rok 1956 ... op. cit.*, p. 175.

region, especially in the districts of Bohumín, Karviná and Český Těšín, due to the direct contacts with Poland that included the distribution of Polish press and and the favourable opinion of Polish events held by certain parts of the ethnic Polish minority.<sup>63</sup>

#### 4. Between Two Crises: from Rapprochement to Occupation of Czechoslovakia (October 1956 – August 1968)

After the outbreak of the Hungarian Revolution, events in Poland were eclipsed. even though on the outside, the overall tone calmed down after the Soviet declaration on straightened relations with the states of people's democracy issued on 30 October 1956 as well as after the visit to Moscow by W. Gomulka, the opinions about Poland held by Czechoslovak communists and the party leadership remained practically unchanged until the end of the year.<sup>64</sup> The beginning of improved relations and the new development era as well as a new stage of their development can be believed to be the reciprocal visit by Polish government officials to Prague in May 1957, headed by Józef Cyrankiewicz. Both the visit and the conclusions were not free of friction though, which showed both in the Czechoslovak assessment of the situation in Poland and different attitudes to the international situation.<sup>65</sup> Relations between the leaderships of Novotný and Gomulka improved in late 1958 once a retreat from liberalization became visible in Poland. This was confirmed by an exchange of top-level visits in 1960 and 1961, "in fact for the first time in the modern history of mutual relations", when a close tie of alliance was explicitly declared concerning the German question, from nullity of the Munich Agreement down to the Oder-Neisse border line.<sup>66</sup>

A number of activities contributed to the convergence of opinions in the second

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63 People's militia and the StB were put on alert immediately after the Poznań events, and they were joined by Svazarm in late October. Meetings of Communist Party chapters were held in Český Těšín and Karviná, stressing the difference between the economic situation in Poland and Czechoslovakia. The editorial board of *Glos ludu* was advised not to reprint articles from *Rudé právo* and polemize with the Polish press, instead, they were told to present Poland as a "sound nation". Z. Jirásek, *K průběhu roku 1956 ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 88, 91. At the same time, "the outraged response of Czechoslovak leaders to the article by Henryk Jasiczek, the editor-in-chief of *Glos Ludu*, a Polish-language communist newspaper in Těšín Silesia, who applauded the October events, was a distinct sign of displeasure felt in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia". M. Wihoda, M. Řezník, J. Friedl, *Tisíciletý příběh...*, *op. cit.*, p. 611.

64 Conf. Ľ. Kamiňski, P. Blažek, G. Majewski, *Ponad hranicami ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 37; A. Szczepańska, *Warszawa – Praga...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 95–97, who interprets the speech of A. Novotný this way, as delivered in the 7<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting of the central committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. According to R. Vévoda, *Rok 1956 ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 178, though, she states he gave the first signal here to change the interpretation of the events in Poland. Cf. also documents for the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia 14 December 1956, NA, f. KSC-ÚV-AN II, k. 157, inv. č. 380, Information about Poland.

65 J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé...*, *op. cit.*, p. 158; A. Szczepańska, *Warszawa – Praga...*, *op. cit.*, p. 97, she states wrongly this was a visit of W. Gomulka, and pp. 251–252. Cf. also NA, f. KSC-ÚV-AN II, k. 160, inv. č. 387, Report on the meeting of the Political Commission 5 May 1957 (preparing the Czechoslovak-Polish final communiqué).

66 J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 158–159.

half of the 1950s. In international politics, they included the Rapacki plan, a Polish initiative to create a limited armament zone (or a nuclear-free zone) that would comprise Poland, Czechoslovakia and both German republics. However, the question is whether Czechoslovakia truly supported the plan in full awareness of the consequences for Central European matters, or it was merely another propaganda disarmament measure, as it seemed after the Czechoslovak presentation in the UN, inspired by Moscow.<sup>67</sup>

A more significant step in mutual relations was the result of the final adjustment of the mutual border. In June 1956, the Czechoslovak-Polish Joint Commission came into existence; on 13 June 1958, an agreement was signed between Czechoslovakia and Poland about the ultimate demarcation of the border, becoming effective in February 1959 when its ratification instruments were exchanged. At the same time, the demarcation of the national border started, guided by the effort to stick to the current border while allowing for some minor local adjustments.<sup>68</sup>

In early July 1959, a new agreement was signed to regulate local cross-border traffic, made effective in April 1960; a new agreement on tourism became effective in May 1961; and on 1 June 1962, a joint hiking path was made accessible along the main ridge of the Giant Mountains. At the same time, in addition to the High Tatra, three other tourist areas were designated for access with tourist permits. In order to travel to Poland, Czechoslovak nationals still needed an exit permit, issued upon an invitation with official verification, yet in the 1960s, tourism developed rapidly, both as individual trips to tourist areas and as trips organized by travel agencies. Poland did not close the border during the 1968 invasion either but Polish authorities were much stricter when searching for smuggled “anti-socialist” press, including the Polish-language communist press published in the Ostrava region.<sup>69</sup>

As early as in May 1957, during a visit by a Polish delegation, a new Czechoslovak-Polish Committee for Economic Cooperation was established, striving for better cooperation within the Comecon at the level of companies and industries. While

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67 For details, cf. T. Marczak, *Od „polského října“... , op. cit.*, pp. 173-176; M. Hroníček, *Reakce Českoslovačaji ... , op. cit.*, pp. 184-186.

68 A total of 85 modifications were made, required to merge plots for the purpose of “socialist large-scale production”, to ensure sources of drinking water, and to eliminate instances of land plots owned across the border. For the sake of such modifications, Czechoslovakia provided 837 hectares and Poland provided 1, 205 hectares, shortening the border by 80 kilometres. However, it was not until 1967 that an agreement was concluded on legal relations and cooperation in solving border problems. The actual transfer of land ownership took a couple of decades, even after the breakup of Czechoslovakia, including a negotiation about this “land debt” where “a compensation was considered in the Frýdlant Salient and near Králíky”. D. Janák, *Vytyčení československo-polské... , op. cit.*, pp. 244-246; H. Dominiczak, *Granice państwa i ich ochrona na przestrzeni dziejów 996-1996*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 332-333; A. Szczepańska, *Warszawa – Praga... , op. cit.*, pp. 334-342; M. Wihoda, M. Řezník, J. Friedl, *Tisíciletý příběh... , op. cit.*, p. 616 (citation).

69 In detail, A. Szczepańska, *Warszawa – Praga... , op. cit.*, pp. 342-355; also cf. D. Janák, *Oficjalne formy, op. cit.*, p. 113; J. Rychlík, *Cestovní styk ... , op. cit.*, p. 133.

at the beginning, it dealt primarily with supplies of Polish sulphur and, in particular, coal that were arbitrarily reduced by Poland,<sup>70</sup> from the late 1950s onwards, it dealt with cooperation and specialization up to a certain division of labour, in particular in machine engineering, chemistry and coal mining.<sup>71</sup> The negotiations were held in the context of Polish suggestions of closer cooperation among Central European nations; yet Antonín Novotný turned down the Polish proposal of gradual economic integration of both nations when he had negotiations with W. Gomulka in Zakopane in March 1963.<sup>72</sup> Despite differing views on certain political and economic issues,<sup>73</sup> intensive economic cooperation continued in later years; as an instance, the numbers of Polish workers in the border areas grew fast from approximate 4, 000 in 1964 to some 12, 000 or 13, 000 in 1969, in particular due to young female Polish workers commuting on a daily and weekly basis to seven districts of Northern and Eastern Bohemia, from Děčín to Trutnov and Semily.<sup>74</sup>

Signed during the visit of Novotný to Warsaw on 1 March 1967, the new Czechoslovak-Polish alliance treaty again stressed their joint attitude to the German question, readiness to serve their military commitments within the Warsaw Treaty Organization, develop cooperation in economy, science and technology, to employ “the framework of socialist division of labour in order to coordinate national eco-

70 Compared to the original quota of coal agreed at 4, 486, 000 tonnes a year, later amended to 2, 300, 000 tonnes, Poland declared in early 1957 only 1, 300, 000 tonnes can be supplied.subject to a price increase of 50%. The Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia ultimately accepted the request, with Czechoslovakia granting Poland an additional loan of 100 million in June 1957 for sulphur mining and processing until 1961, to be paid back with sulphur supplies; in May 1958, an additional loan of 250 million roubles to develop coal mining until ....., to be paid back with coal supplies. I. Lukes (Lukes), K. Sieber, *Pies, któryy .... op. cit.*, p. 165; B. Lehár, *Hospodářské vztahy...., op. cit.*, p. 396.

71 While the structure of Czechoslovak exports to Poland remained roughly the same in 1956-1960, with the share of machinery and devices increased slightly from 51. 4% to 56. 6% and the share of raw materials from 32. 2% to 33. 1%, the Polish exports featured a marked increase in supplies of machinery and tools from 7. 1% to 35. 8%, with the share of raw materials decreasing from 90% to 57%. B. Lehar (Lehár), *Stosunki gospodarcze ...., op. cit.*, p. 191.

72 T. Marczak, *Od „polského října“...., op. cit.*, pp. 176-179.

73 For example, Novotný felt resentful about the deposition of Khrushchev in October 1964 whom Gomulka did not trust, owing to attempts at contacts with West Germany. J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé...., op. cit.*, p. 159. In early 1965, the Polish party sent an unexpected memorandum of economic cooperation to Prague, unparalleled in mutual relations in its “style and tone” according to Czechoslovak experts and containing an annex that was “shocking in terms of international relations owing to its unilateral nature, lack of precision, and style”. They attributed this to “the intensive and aggressive effort to highly improve the benefits from cooperation with the socialist countries for the Polish economy and ensure extended assistance of socialist countries in tackling Polish economy” that found itself in difficulties, failing to complete the export plans and repay the loans provided earlier. Regarding the loans, they pointed out also that even though Czechoslovakia funded the development of coal mining with a credit worth 450 million crowns after 1957, Polish supplies would be lower in 1970 (2. 5 - 3 million tonnes) than in 1953 (4. 4 million tonnes). They also saw another reason in the growing influence of people critical of the cooperation with the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, such as Stanisław Jędrzychowski and Tadeusz Ged.(the chairman of the Planning Committee of the Polish government and his deputy) as well people favouring extended cooperation with the West. NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-AN II, k. 159, inv. č. 385, Preliminary notes on the memorandum of Polish party and government bodies.

74 In the late 1960s, the number of female Polish commuters approached 10, 000 but some of them found their spouses here and settled here. O. Klípa, *Polskie robotnice...., op. cit.*, pp. 280-281, 285-286, 290. Also cf. Š. Hernová, G. Sokolová, *Národně jazykové vědomí obyvatel národnostně smíšených oblastí České republiky*, Opava 2000, p. 16.

conomic plans and production cooperation". Both nations also signed alliance treaties with the German Democratic Republic in the spring of 1967.<sup>75</sup>

After mid-1967, the political developments of Czechoslovakia and Poland followed different paths. In Czechoslovakia the regime was undergoing a rapid liberalization during the Prague Spring; unlike this, the regime in Poland was consolidating in a neo-Stalinist spirit once the protests and demonstrations of March 1968 were crushed. Gomulka's leadership sought to isolate the country from the southern neighbour, repeatedly protesting against how the Czechoslovak press described the situation in Poland; the criticism of the Polish situation by three Czechoslovak writers in early May 1968 triggered an immediate protest of the central committee of the Polish United Worker Party and the Polish government, in coordination with Moscow, marking a beginning of a propaganda campaign against the development in Czechoslovakia.<sup>76</sup>

To a crucial degree, the attitude of the Polish leadership was determined by W. Gomulka, who warned Alexander Dubček against the "counter-revolution" at their first meeting in Ostrava in early February 1968; he reproached the Czechoslovak leadership for tolerating it the August meeting in Bratislava, and promoted this attitude even during the meetings of the "Warsaw Five".<sup>77</sup> Not surprisingly, any attempts by Czechoslovak representatives to gain the support of the Polish leadership for reforms ended up as a "total failure", which was, beyond doubt, also due to the reports by the Polish ambassador to Prague, Włodzimierz Janiurek.<sup>78</sup> By contrast, in order to attack the reforms, Czechoslovak Stalinists also used the "friendship" contacts established in border areas after the late 1950s. For instance, the well-known secret meeting of regional communist officials from Ostrava and Katowice in early May 1968 in Cieszyn involving also Drahomír Kolder and Edward Gierek, while used in the meeting of the "Warsaw Five" in Moscow on 8 May 1968 as a claim

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75 Interestingly, certain doubts arose even among Polish army officers at the time, questioning the potential for friendship and cooperation with Czechoslovakia and the "Czechs", a term under which both the Czechs and the Slovaks were lumped together, while no doubts of this kind applied to East Germans. J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-160; L. Kamiński, *Polská společnost .... op. cit.*, p. 270.

76 This was a statement by Pavel Kohout, Jan Procházka and Arnošt Lustig published on 4 May 1968 in *Práce*, a trade union daily. P. Blažek, "Všechno dostane jiný směr". *Vliv polského Března na Pražské jaro*, [in:] P. Blažek, L. Kamiński, R. Vévoda (ed.), *Polsko a Československo...*, *op. cit.*, p. 53. In further detail, the issues are covered in J. Eisler, *Vliv Pražského jara na polský Březen*, *Ibidem*, pp. 33-44.

77 Interesting to note, Gomulka tried to win over Dubček during their Ostrava meeting to support a more extensive production specialization, expressed criticism of the Soviet pricing system and currency system within the Com-econ, suggesting to introduce a joint currency; this was, most likely, a follow-up on his earlier plans for a close alliance between Poland and Czechoslovakia, or both these nations and East Germany. He also mentioned the joint currency in the Moscow meeting on 8 May 1968 (with no Czechoslovak representatives present) where he faced resistance at hands of W. Ulbricht who later, during the Warsaw consultations of the Warsaw Treaty Organization, made references to efforts by Prague to establish an analogy of the interwar Little Entente, made up from Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia. T. Marczak, *Od „polského října“...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-180. For more details of attitudes and speeches by W. Gomulka, cf. P. Machcewicz, „K čertu se suverenitou“. *Władysław Gomulka a Pražské jaro*, [in:] P. Blažek, L. Kamiński, R. Vévoda (ed.), *Polsko a Československo...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-103; L. Kamiński, *Polská společnost .... op. cit.*, pp. 270-271.

78 J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-160.

of “counter-revolution” in Czechoslovakia, also resulted in an agreement to hold a counter-reformist Czech-Polish rally in Český Těšín on 9 May 1968.<sup>79</sup>

Gomulka was also among the most ardent supporters of the armed invasion of Czechoslovakia, inciting Soviet generals as early as in August 1968. He gave his consent in early July to the involvement of the Polish army in Operation “Danube”, and during the Moscow talks following the failed Soviet attempts to install a “worker-peasant government” in Czechoslovakia in August 1968, he called for heavy-handed treatment of “counter-revolutionaries”.<sup>80</sup> As shown by Operation “Podhale” though, where the Polish secret police (SB) monitored the situation in both countries in the summer and autumn of 1968, the Polish secret police (SB) monitored the situation in both countries in the summer and autumn of 1968, the Polish public “showed a surprising scope of solidarity with the Czechs and Slovaks”; the most tragic form of protest against the invasion and the communist regime was used by Ryszard Siwiec, who burnt himself on 12 September 1968 during the harvest festival in Warsaw. Yet we must add that comments approving of the invasion were also present, instigated by the official propaganda employing negative stereotypes and the fear of actions by West Germany, etc.<sup>81</sup>

During the invasion, the Polish army made a point of avoiding Těšín Silesia, occupying parts of northern Moravia and eastern Bohemia. Most ethnic Poles remained loyal to the republic, rejecting the invasion; the editors of *Głos Ludu* even travelled to Olomouc to deliver a special issue supporting the reforms to Polish units. However, this failed to stop anti-Polish feelings and destruction of Polish signage in Těšín Silesia. Unfortunately, the relatively short presence of Polish occupation forces in Czechoslovakia was marked with a tragedy in Jičín where a drunk Polish soldier shot two people dead, injuring several other people.<sup>82</sup>

## 5. Failed Expectations (Autumn 1968 - Summer 1980)

The last convoy of Polish troops left Czechoslovakia on 12 November 1968; already in February 1969, the Polish minister of foreign affairs Stanisław Jędrzychowski and his Czechoslovak counterpart Ján Marek discussed their relations with the Federal Republic of Germany. After Gustav Husák assumed the top position in the normalization leadership in May 1969, the issue was also paid attention during the visit of

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79 D. Janák, *Oficjalne formy .... op. cit.*, p. 113; P. Blažek, “*Všechno dostane .... op. cit.*”, pp. 56–57.

80 J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé.... op. cit.*, pp. 159–160.

81 In detail, L. Kamiński, *Polská společnost.... op. cit.*, pp. 272–289 (citation p. 289). As part of the “Podhale” crackdown, 80 persons had been detained by the end of September 1968, part of whom were brought to court over leaflets and slogans providing true information about the situation in Czechoslovakia. Another group, who produced and distributed leaflets from March 1968, also distributing several types of leaflets after 21 August, was destroyed in late October and early November, with at least 30 persons detained, out of whom 7 people were sentenced to imprisonment terms. *Ibidem*, pp. 288–289.

82 M. Wihoda, M. Řezník, J. Friedl, *Tisíciletý příběh.... op. cit.*, p. 612.

president Ludvík Svoboda in Poland in September 1969; however, as West Germany acknowledged the Oder-Neisse border line in December 1970, the German question became temporarily irrelevant. At the same time, after the bloody suppression of worker unrest against price rises on the Baltic coast in December 1970, Gomulka was replaced at the top of the Polish United Worker Party by a more pragmatic leader, Edward Gierek. His first foreign trip, in January 1971, was “somewhat surprisingly” arranged to be in Prague; yet the bilateral relations continued to be subject to the “proletarian internationalism”, Moscow and the Comecon cooperation, all of this being reflected in the Declaration of Strengthened Friendship and Increased Cooperation, as signed in Warsaw on 14 March 1974.<sup>83</sup> However, closer cooperation in the economy collided with both Comecon plans and willingness of Gierek’s leadership to draw loans from the West and cooperate with Western nations. Despite relatively frequent meetings of Husák and Gierek, “the party top ranks in Poland and Czechoslovakia rather drifted apart”.<sup>84</sup>

During the industrial boom in Poland in the first half of the 1970s, the foreign trade volume doubled from 4.4 billion crowns to 8.9 billion crowns in 1975. While their mutual trade was the third largest export item in these two nations, its structure changed and the trade imbalance favouring initially Czechoslovak exports was reversed in 1975 to favour Polish exports (Czechoslovak exports were worth 4.1 billion crowns while Czechoslovak imports from Poland totalled 4.8 billion crowns). In Polish exports, there was an increase in the share of construction work in industry and transport supplied by specialist companies; Czechoslovak exports still focussed on the compounds of technology and iron rolling (such as the metallurgical plant in Katowice and rolling plant in Zawiercie), with developing transit of maritime cargoes from Polish ports of Szczecin, Gdańsk and Gdynia as well as rail transport across Czechoslovakia.<sup>85</sup> After 1978, the economic and social problems in Poland, gradually changed into an economic and politic crisis of the Communist regime, manifested negatively in supplies of raw materials and consumer goods as well as in transport, as evidenced by the memorandum of the last meeting of Gierek and Husák in Prague in January 1980.<sup>86</sup> The agenda of top-level negotiations dealt issues with failed and delayed key export supplies, but also topics for extended cooperation in 1981–1985, presented as a formation of a new “socialist type” of rela-

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83 M. Szumilo, *Stosunki polsko-czechosłowackie...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 242–243; J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé...*, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

84 M. Wihoda, M. Řezník, J. Friedl, *Tisíciletý příběh...*, *op. cit.*, p. 613.

85 Engineering products, including cars, accounted for more than half of Poland’s and nearly two-thirds of Czechoslovak exports. About a third consisted in raw materials and semi-finished products. In Polish exports, these were in particular coal, sulphur and copper, with their share increasing in 1970–1975 from 27.9% to 33.0%; in Czechoslovak exports, these were metallurgical coke, rolled iron products, cement, kaolin, chemicals etc., whose share declined from 32.3% to 26.0%. B. Lehar, *Stosunki gospodarcze ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 198, 204–205.

86 J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé...*, *op. cit.*, p. 164; V. Melichar, *Československo-polské spojení...*, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

tions (for instance after the meeting of Gierek and Husák in February 1979), most agreements for that period remained mere words.<sup>87</sup>

The early 1970s were also the peak time for work commuting in the border areas, involving over 10 thousand people; however, the number decreased to 5, 600 people in the mid-1970s, later fluctuating around 5, 000 persons. This was due to a bilateral agreement for 1972–1977 allowing for employment of Polish workers beyond the border areas. At the time of its signing, around 16, 600 people were employed in Czechoslovakia, including about 13, 300 women working mainly in the Czech border areas. In 1974, the figure was 22, 000 people, including 17, 000 women mostly in the young age range of 18–25. They made up “the largest group of foreign workforce within the Soviet bloc”. However, the number of female Polish workers, often hailing from distant parts of Poland and finding employment deep inland Czechoslovakia, decreased considerably after 1978; the sole exceptions were jobs with potential improvement of skills. At the end of the 1970s, only 4–5 thousand workers remained working for the Czechoslovak industry, mostly border zone commuters.<sup>88</sup> The specific subset were the staff of Polish companies involved in export construction projects, involving industrial sites and transport facilities; in late 1973, these made up some 4, 000 people on 13 sites.<sup>89</sup>

In the 1970s, individual travel to Poland gradually became simplified and expanded. Initially, a one-off or permanent exit permit was required along with an invitation, so the easiest way was still to cross the border with a tourist permit for the border zone, as the border was not monitored. As Czechoslovakia implemented a new registration of passports and seized those of “suspicious people”, Czechoslovak passports contained a new stamp after 1 May 1972 that replaced the exit permit for travel to socialist nations. This meant in practical terms that from that time on, in order to travel to Poland, one only had to have a passport and present a fictitious invitation that Czechoslovak nationals often sent themselves from inside Poland; the same method was used to send invitations of Polish nationals. The Czechoslovak-Polish Agreement on the Facilitation of Travel, signed on 20 July 1977 in Warsaw, coming into force a month later, lifted the requirement for invitation; after 20 August 1977, the only bilateral requirement applicable was to have the minimum amount in the other currency allotted officially per day (170 zloty and 80 crowns).<sup>90</sup>

The intensive professional and personal contacts also gave rise to fears of il-

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87 J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 161–163.

88 O. Klípa, *Polskie robotnice...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 280 (citation)– 283; M. Szumiło, *Stosunki polsko-czechosłowackie .... op. cit.*, pp. 246–248.

89 In the early stage, the instances included the power station Tušimice II, a production hall for Tesla Orava; in addition, 430 workers from tractor maker Ursus worked for ZKL Brno in mid-1972. M. Szumiło, *Stosunki polsko-czechosłowackie .... op. cit.*, pp. 247–248.

90 J. Rychlík, *Cestovní styk .... op. cit.*, pp. 134–135.

licit contacts of “subversive elements”, dissemination of “anti-socialist ideas” and clandestine press. This was to be addressed in the first half of the 1970s with comprehensive and partial agreements to subdue them using the law enforcement agencies of both nations.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, they failed to prevent extensive contacts of the clandestine church in Czechoslovakia with the much stronger Roman Catholic church in Poland who helped the former keep in touch with the church life in the West and with the Vatican, something of particular benefit for clandestine monk orders in Czechoslovakia. A number of conspiratorial meetings and initiatives took place in Warsaw, Kraków and Wrocław, including clandestine studies, ordination of priests and monk oaths, activities that also involved cardinals Stefan Wyszyński and Karol Wojtyła. Exile religious literature was smuggled from Poland to Slovakia and to Těšín Silesia; people around Krakow-based magazines “Znak” and “Tygodnik Powszechny” met visitors; Polish priests lectured in secret theological seminaries, and similar.<sup>92</sup>

In the second half of the 1970s, both the StB and SB targeted new opposition groupings. In Poland, it was mainly the Workers’ Defence Committee (KOR), established in September 1976 following the massive June protests against price rises, and some other groups formed in 1976–1978. In Czechoslovakia, Charter 77 published their declaration in January 1977, and in 1978, the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted (VONS) was established. The first personal contacts between the Czechoslovak and Polish opposition were established as early as June 1976 in Warsaw, but closer relations began in autumn 1977 after the conversion of KOR to the Committee of Social Self-Defense “KOR” (KSS “KOR”). Apart from exchange of publications and mutual support through declarations, representatives of KSS “KOR” and Charter 77 succeeded in holding two meetings on the Path of Czechoslovak-Polish Friendship in the Giant Mountains. It was only the third meeting that the StB and SB thwarted by arresting the participants. However, mutual ties could not be severed, as witnessed by the protest of all Polish opposition organizations held in 1979 against the persecution of VONS members. After the strike wave in the summer of 1980 and the emergence of Solidarity, Charter 77 issued several statements on the situation in Poland, but direct contacts died for some time.<sup>93</sup>

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91 In 1971, the interior ministers of Poland and Czechoslovakia agreed to covert operations of Polish secret police among the Polish workers in Czechoslovakia, resulting in a group of operatives from the secret police (SB) dispatched to northern Bohemia and northern Moravia. In 1972, they signed an agreement on cooperation in fight against the Catholic church, followed in September 1973 by an agreement on comprehensive cooperation of both departments, including a joint fight against church and opposition groupings, reactionary emigré communities and means of ideological subversion such as Radio Free Europe and Voice of America, and followed again in 1974–1976 by several partial agreements between particular agencies within the ministries. M. Szumilo, *Stosunki polsko-czechosłowackie ...*, op. cit., pp. 245–246.

92 J. Cuhra, *Kościół katolicki ...*, op. cit., pp. 236–237.

93 A factor to be considered here was the different footing and strength of the opposition in both countries, establishment of independent trade unions challenging in terms of time and personal resources, the self-imposed strategy of “limitation” of the Polish revolution so that their support of opposition forces in another state within the Soviet

## 6. From Crisis to Fall of Communist Regimes (Autumn 1980 – November 1989)

The distrust on part of Husák's leadership concerning the developments in Poland showed in the relations with the new leadership of the Polish United Worker Party, where Edward Gierek was replaced by Stanisław Kania; Kania paid a short visit to Prague as late as February 1981. As early as late 1980, during a meeting of the political advisory board of the Warsaw Treaty Organization in Moscow, G. Husák came up with a request to eliminate the "dual rule" in Poland.<sup>94</sup> After that, Czechoslovak communist officials tried to influence the events in Poland using a range of means. They cooperated with conservative groups within the PZPR in Katowice and Poznań as well as several members at the national level; they invoked regional "friendship ties" to arrange for meetings of communist dignitaries and secret police members (in particular in the regions of Northern Moravia and Eastern Bohemia). Czech lecturers went to Poland to give ideological lectures. In April 1981, the Czechoslovak Radio started a regular propaganda service in Polish, provided in assistance with the ministry of interior. In June, Operation "North" was launched, whereby the secret police monitored and tried to influence the situation in Poland.<sup>95</sup>

Although the border was not completely closed until 13 December 1981, Czechoslovak authorities applied the maximum possible range of measures to prevent contacts between common people: the local cross-border traffic was virtually made impossible; the border was monitored for "ideological subversion" within the context for the Model Border Municipality in the region of Northern Moravia; the legal provision on obligatory allotments of foreign currency was strictly adhered to; people returning from Poland were carefully searched and sometimes interrogated, and other measures. While some measures could be circumvented, they met their goal to a certain extent, helping the propaganda of the communist government to instill in parts of the Czech and Slovak population, in particular lower social strata, an unfavourable feeling concerning the Polish opposition and the strike movement as well as travel to Poland.<sup>96</sup>

Attitudes of Czechoslovak communist dignitaries included a tacit feeling of retaliation for 1968. This was visible during the massive military exercise "Giant Moun-

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bloc was not used as a pretext to attack Solidarity, an not least, an effort to spare Czechoslovak friends of further reprisals. Ł. Kamiński, P. Błażek, G. Majewski, *Solidarność Polsko-Czechosłowacka...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 575-576; for more details, cf. Ł. Kamiński, P. Błażek, G. Majewski, *Ponad granicami ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-156.

94 J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé...*, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

95 P. Błażek, *Kříže Polské ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15, 17; D. Janák, *Oficjalne formy ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

96 J. Rychlík, *Cestovní styk ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-137; D. Janák, *Oficjalne formy ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 114. According to M. Řezník, they managed to "instill a feeling in a large segment of population in Czechoslovakia ... that the movement is a direct result of the qualities attributed to Polish people in negative Czech stereotypes", which continued to "amplify and influence common interpersonal relations and notions" even after 1989. M. Řezník, *Polsko*, Praha 2002, p. 216.

tains” in December 1980, held as part of the exercise campaign “Friendship 80” of the armies of the Warsaw Treaty Organization, as well as during the negotiations in Prague and Moscow in the spring of 1981 where Gustáv Husák and Erich Honecker were among the most vocal supporters of an invasion of Poland by the armies of the Warsaw Treaty Organization.<sup>97</sup>

In the autumn of 1981, the Czechoslovak ministry of foreign affairs issued a note to Warsaw protesting “anti-socialist events”, which referred to the Message to the Working People of Eastern Europe, issued by the 1<sup>st</sup> congress of Solidarity, the distribution of printed texts about the events of 1968 and other materials that were found an insult of Czechoslovakia and inadmissible interference in its internal matters. Shortly thereafter, the leadership of the Communist Party welcomed the replacement of S. Kania in the position of the first secretary of the central committee of the Polish United Worker Party with General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who was given a promise of full support “against the counter-revolutionary forces and in the defence of socialism”. Less than two months later, they supported the declaration of martial law in Poland, expressly declaring support of General Jaruzelski during his visit to Prague in April 1982.<sup>98</sup>

This support lasted until the downfall of Jaruzelski’s regime in 1989. Despite the liberalization of the circumstances within the Soviet bloc and the international détente in the second half of the 1980s, the strengthening of the Czechoslovak-Polish alliance treaty from 1967 was linked again to the alleged “revanchism” in West Germany. Ultimately, the treaty was quietly prolonged. In early February 1988, Milouš Jakeš, the new general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, meeting General Jaruzelski in Warsaw during his first foreign visit, agreed that both shared “a whole range of joint approaches”. In February 1989, when Warsaw finalized the preparation for the famous round table, on his last visit to Prague, General Jaruzelski was also offered by the Czechoslovak communist leadership a “draft agreement on cooperation of the brotherly parties in terms of the superstructure”. After the June elections in Poland that ended in a crushing defeat of the communists, the symbolic ending of the last stage of relations between the two communist governments was marked with the meeting of prime ministers Ladislav Adamec, Willi Stoph and the outgoing prime minister Mieczysław Rakowski in Wrocław in July 1989 who signed a trilateral treaty on environmental protection between the Polish People’s Republic, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the German Democratic Republic.<sup>99</sup>

This Czechoslovak position projected quite clearly into economic relations. Somewhat reluctantly, a contract was made already in September 1980 to provide

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97 O. Tůma, *The Czechoslovak Communist ... op. cit.*, p. 62; P. Blažek, *Kříze Polské ... op. cit.*, p. 16.

98 P. Blažek, *Kříze Polské ... op. cit.*, pp. 17–18.

99 J. Dejmeš, *Československo, jeho sousedé... op. cit.*, pp. 165–166.

material assistance and food supplies to Poland in exchange for selected consumer goods. Owing to the economic crisis in Poland though, the contract was not completed (estimates for October that same year showed that the failed Polish obligations would reach some 80 million roubles, that is, twice the usual volume, whereas the Czechoslovak default would only amount to 38 million). Only after martial law was declared in Poland, the communist leadership decided in January 1982 to deliver goods worth 813 million crowns, largely as a non-refundable loan. In 1983, the Czechoslovak government began negotiations about investments into industrial development projects in progress in Poland, in order to decrease Poland's dependence on the West. The economic plans for the second half of the 1980s were meant to be aligned with record levels of mutual trade worth 1.8 billion roubles. In April 1986, while Polish prime minister Zbigniew Messner was visiting Prague, a new long-term trade agreement was signed, securing the role of Poland as number two in Czechoslovak foreign trade; when Gustav Husák was visiting Warsaw towards the end of the next month, the nations signed a long-term programme of mutual economic, scientific and technological cooperation until 2000, which then was not implemented for obvious reasons. The economic cooperation of the two communist regimes was put to an actual end with the economic crisis and a massive wave of strikes when the second reform stage was declared in Poland, culminating in the summer of 1988, even if economic matters were discussed again in February 1989 during the visit of General Jaruzelski to Prague, as mentioned above.<sup>100</sup>

However, the employment of Polish nationals in Czechoslovakia remained a notable part of the economic relations. In the autumn of 1981, some 5,400 persons, mostly commuters, worked in textile plants, sugar mills, collieries and metallurgical plants in Czechoslovakia. In 1982–1984, there was an increase in numbers of Polish workers outside the border zone, but in the mid-1980s, the number decreased to about 1,000 again. Yet still in the last years of the decade, where this form of employment for Polish nationals no longer existed, some 8,000 female Polish workers lived in the Czech lands, most of whom lived in mixed marriages. Additional 10,000 people were employed in 1981 by Polish companies involved in industrial development projects in Czechoslovakia (one of the largest projects was the completion of power station Prunéřov II, already behind its schedule in the early 1980s). Their number was planned to increase by mere 3,000 the next year, yet in the second half of the 1980s, their number grew fast, amounting to some 33,000 people in 1989.<sup>101</sup>

By contrast, travel to Poland was subject to strict restrictions. The border was closed by both nations from December 1981 to the suspension of the martial law in December 1982 and its lifting in 1983. Polish authorities then opened the border, yet private travel in both directions was virtually impossible in Czechoslovakia (save

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100 *Ibidem*; P. Blažek, *Kříze Polské ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 12; V. Melichar, *Československo-polské spojení ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

101 P. Blažek, *Kříze Polské lidové republiky*, *op. cit.*, p. 27; O. Klípa, *Polskie robotnice...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 281, 284, 286.

for invitations by the next of kin) until the mid-1980s. However, there were ways to circumvent the Czechoslovak restrictions (such as declaration of private trips as business trips, travel through a third nation, and transit to East Germany through Poland); this was also due as Polish authorities considered the measures as accepted unilaterally without their consent, and made repeated requests to have such measures abolished. Strict limits on travel to Poland remained in force not just until the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia, but also, somewhat illogically, some time afterwards.<sup>102</sup>

The cooperation between the Czech and Polish opposition was resumed after the 1<sup>st</sup> congress of Solidarity in September 1981, as the Polish-Czech Solidarity was established after a meeting of Aleksander Gleichgewicht from Wrocław with Anna Šabatová and Václav Malý in Prague as well as with Jan and Jaroslav Šabata in Brno. The arranged contacts and material handover were disrupted by the martial law. However, as A. Gleichgewicht was interned, his role was assumed by Mirosław Jasiński, a student activist from Wrocław; during those two years, the Polish-Czech Solidarity looked for other contacts, using the help and financial support of the Lower Silesian regional strike committee of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity". In the autumn of 1983, M. Jasiński started preparing a joint declaration of the Polish and Czechoslovak opposition, referring to the 1978 meeting signed by 45 signatories from both countries. After 1985, two channels provided for the connection; from Wrocław through the Kłodzko Valley to Prague and from Warsaw to Brno; owing to these channels, first personal meetings were held in the High Tatra and in the Giant Mountains, where illegal stamps honouring the 10th anniversary of Charter 77 were agreed on, with some of them delivered to Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1987.<sup>103</sup>

The beginning of the next stage of opposition activities is the transformation of the Polish-Czech Solidarity into the Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity in early July of 1987, under the patronage of a wider Circle of Friends of the Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity, made up from leading Polish, Czech and Slovak dissidents. The core activities of the Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity were the exchange of information, experience and clandestine press as well as a wide range of international initiatives within the opposition groupings in Eastern Europe. On top of the centres in Brno and Prague, then extended with the young readership of Revolver Revue, another group was established in Gottwaldov (present-day Zlín) around Stanislav Devátý.

In mid-August 1987, a large meeting of two dozen representatives of Czech and Polish dissidents was held; another similar event planned in September 1987 was an environmental rally protesting the destruction of the Giant Mountains, held solely

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102 J. Rychlík, *Cestovní styk ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 138–140.

103 L. Kamiński, P. Błażek, G. Majewski, *Solidarność Polsko-Czechosłowacka...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 576–579; L. Kamiński, P. Błażek, G. Majewski, *Ponad granicami ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 147, 158–167, 171–172.

by the Polish part of the Polish-Czechoslovak solidarity, owing to the imminent police crackdown. In December 1987, the Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity started publishing the *Information Bulletin*, whose last issue was published in January 1990. In April 1988, the Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity launched “Patronage”, an international project where opposition groupings and individuals took care of “prisoners of conscience” from the other country. Despite the change in tactics of the StB who, instead of contact monitoring, tried to disrupt events in progress, another large meeting of dissidents from both countries was held atop Králický Sněžník. Activities of the Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity were extended (the East European Information Agency was established in December 1988; the Polish-Hungarian Solidarity was established in February 1989; another local chapter of the Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity was established owing to the contacts of Janusz Okrzesik and Jerzy Kronhold from Cieszyn and Jaromír Piskoř from Opava. The reprisals during the demonstrations commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jan Palach’s death triggered a wave of solidarity in Poland: demonstrative hunger strikes in defence of Czechoslovak political prisoners were held in Katowice and Warsaw, a rally demanding the release of Václav Havel was held in Katowice and Bielsko-Biała, and demonstrations were held protesting the plan to build a coke plant in Stonava.<sup>104</sup>

After the following meeting of Czech and Polish dissidents on the border near Králický Sněžník on 25 June 1989, the focus of activities shifted to holding large events in support of the Czechoslovak opposition. This started with a demonstrative visit by newly elected members of parliament, Zbigniew Janas, Jan Lityński and Adam Michnik, who arrived with diplomatic passports in July to meet Czech and Slovak dissidents in Prague and Bratislava and were also received by Cardinal František Tomášek and Alexander Dubček,<sup>105</sup> followed by a demonstration of some 3,000, held in Cieszyn on 21 August 1989 to condemn the occupation of Czechoslovakia. The largest and most successful event then was the international seminar “Central Europe. Culture at a Crossroads – between Totalitarianism and Commercialization”, combined with festival “Show of Czechoslovak Independent Culture” in Wrocław on 3–5 November 1989, with both domestic and exiled artists taking part, watched by thousands of Czechoslovak spectators despite the effort by the StB and the animosity of Czechoslovak authorities who finally gave in once the festival started.<sup>106</sup> After the Velvet Revolution, on 21 December 1989, the Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity organized a meeting in Český Těšín involving representatives of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity” and the Civic Parliamentar-

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104 L. Kamiński, P. Blažek, G. Majewski, *Solidarność Polsko-Czechosłowacka...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 579–586; L. Kamiński, P. Blažek, G. Majewski, *Ponad granicami ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 173–179, 183–187, 196–198.

105 They were accompanied by M. Jasiński, leader of the Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity, who was detained at the border upon his return, and when released, he was forbidden entry to Czechoslovakia. L. Kamiński, P. Blažek, G. Majewski, *Solidarność Polsko-Czechosłowacka...*, *op. cit.*, p. 586.

106 *Ibidem*, pp. 587–588; L. Kamiński, P. Blažek, G. Majewski, *Hranicím navzdory ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 199–201, 204–211.

ry club with representatives of the Civic Forum from Prague, Brno and Ostrava, as well as the first official meeting of presidents Václav Havel and Lech Wałęsa in Okraj in the Giant Mountains on 15 March 1990, whose joint declaration was the closing symbol of over 10 years of cooperation between Czechoslovak and Polish dissidents.<sup>107</sup>

## Conclusion

The analysis of sources showed that a significant majority of latest Czech and joint Czech-Polish research papers were published in Poland, while Polish articles and studies were published in the Czech Republic to a lesser extent. Particular groups of topics and periods are not treated evenly; thorough attention is paid only to the period of 1945–1947, political relations during the crises in 1968 and 1980–1981, also partially to 1956. Other than this, there are only summary studies available for the official relations of the communist regimes as well as the dissidents, in terms of (international) policies, economic cooperation and foreign trade, and also certain niche topics (travel, cross-border cooperation). More recent synthetic views of individual periods and longer periods of time (save for 1945–1947) are absent in the Czech historiography as of now; yet these must be preceded by a systematic research in central archives, in particular in the resources of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in the National Archives in Prague, in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, especially for the period after 1967, and in various collections of the Archives of Security Agencies in Prague and in Kanice.

The development of Czechoslovak-Polish relations across the reference period can be split into six stages: May 1945 to March 1947; spring of 1947 to 1950; 1951 to 1956, 1957 to August 1968; autumn of 1968 to summer of 1980; autumn of 1980 to November 1989. The first stage was dominated by the territorial dispute over Těšín Silesia and other territories, hindering the slowly resumed and newly arising economic contacts in the border areas. Once an alliance treaty was signed under the pressure of Moscow, the cornerstone of mutual relations in the following two decades was the alliance against Germany and later West Germany. The asserted friendship in politics and other aspects of social life gained formal attributes, with various forms of excessively projected economic cooperations confined until the early 1950s to a mere exchange of goods and raw materials within the Comecon as part of the “socialist industrialization” and preparations for war under Soviet directives. The two countries were separated by an internal variety of the Iron Curtain, and the situation only began to change in the mid-1950s. However, the chang-

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107 L. Kamiński, P. Błażek, G. Majewski, *Solidarność Polsko-Czechosłowacka...*, *op. cit.*, p. 589; L. Kamiński, P. Błażek, G. Majewski, *Hranicím navzdory ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 215–216.

es were halted by the liberalization of the situation in Poland in 1956, from which Czechoslovak communist leaders distanced themselves, succeeding up to a point in their attempts to stop it from reaching Těšín Silesia in particular; yet they were unable to stop initial contacts of opposition-minded people, in particular among the Catholic intelligentsia.

In the second half of the 1950s, the final adjustment of the national border was agreed on; later on, the cross-border travel and tourism was made easier. More intensive economic cooperation was established within the context of Polish initiatives concerning the international policy and economic relations within Central Europe. However, the settlement of relations between the leaderships of Novotný and Gomulka was only confirmed during their top-level visits in 1960 and 1961 when repeated explicit declarations were issued concerning their close alliance in the German question. Yet in March 1963, Novotný turned down the Polish proposal of a gradual economic integration of both nations. Despite differing views on some political and economic issues, the intensive cooperation of the two countries continued until mid-1967, when the political developments in the two countries began to diverge. Following the suppression of the Polish “March”, influenced by the events of the “Prague Spring”, a propaganda campaign against developments in Czechoslovakia was launched under the auspices of W. Gomulka who was a prominent enemy of the developments and a supporter of an invasion by the armies of the Warsaw Treaty Organization. After the occupation of Czechoslovakia, where the Polish army was also deployed until November 1968, the hostile measures continued, including use of negative stereotypes, and Operation “Podhale” was launched, yet a number of Polish people sided with the Czechs and Slovaks. The statements of support and the effort to provide truthful reports of the situation in Poland in the spring of 1968 and in Czechoslovakia after the August occupation, in particular among Czech and Polish students and intellectuals, paved the way for the later cooperation of opposition forces.

The restoration of official contacts started in the spring of 1969; in the first half of the 1970s, the contacts extended owing to relatively stable contacts by the leaderships of Husák and Gierek. However, they remained subordinated to Moscow and the Comecon and were hindered by Poland’s willingness to cooperate with the West, so in terms of attitudes, the leaderships rather drifted apart. In the second half of the 1970s, increasing economic and social problems in Poland led to a negative impact on supplies of raw materials and consumer goods as well as on transport, so the intended plans failed to be met. The intensive professional and personal contacts also gave rise to fears of dissemination of “anti-socialist ideas” and clandestine press, subdued in cooperation by law enforcement agencies of both nations. Nevertheless, they failed to prevent extensive contacts of the clandestine church in Czechoslovakia with the much stronger Roman Catholic church in Poland, and

after 1977, cooperation of KSS “KOR” with Charter 77 who exchanged publications, shared mutual support, and managed two meetings of prominent dissidents on the border in the Giant Mountains.

When Solidarity was established in the summer of 1980, Husák’s leadership employed a range of methods to influence the situation in Poland, including failed attempts to launch an invasion by the Warsaw Treaty Organization. The leadership became content only with the rise of General W. Jaruzelski to the top post, providing political and economic support to his regime from the introduction of martial law in December 1981 to his fall in 1989. The border with Poland was closed by both parties during martial law. When it was opened by Polish authorities, Czechoslovak authorities still restricted travel until the end of the decade. Yet the Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity, established in the autumn of 1984 as a new international form of opposition cooperation between Wrocław and Prague, managed to resume its activities in 1984. In 1987, it changed to the Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity, seeking to exchange information, experience and clandestine publications as well as hold a range of international initiatives within the context of opposition groupings across Eastern Europe.

Jarosław Drozd

## The Relations Between Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1945–1989

### Introduction

Both Poland and Czechoslovakia went through dramatic experiences of the Second World War. They emerged from it terribly wounded, but in very different social and economic shapes. Geopolitically, Poland radically moved to the West, seizing the so-called Regained Lands from Germany and losing the Eastern Borderlands to the USSR, whereas Czechoslovakia did not experience any significant changes to its borders, its only loss being Carpathian Ruthenia, which was annexed by the USSR and which had been an autonomous region before the war. Both countries became ethnically highly homogenous, though in Czechoslovakia two main nations: Czechs and Slovaks, composed the national profile<sup>1</sup>, as the population of German origin was forced to leave the country. The level of destructions caused by the war was much higher in Poland, though the situation in Slovakia, as a result of intensive military operations and the Slovakian uprising, was similar to the Polish reality. Czechoslovakia preserved its developed industrial-agricultural nature. Poland, on the other hand, was dominated by the agricultural sector, with all its consequences in the structure of the society. Poland ended the war as one of the most important alliance countries as far as the military efforts were concerned. Czechoslovakia's contribution to the victory over the Third Reich was more modest, though by no means negligible.

### The Cementing of Communism in 1945-1956

Since 1944 the communist party practically ruled in Poland, though its size and influences in the society were far weaker than those of the communists in Czechoslo-

1 See more on this subject: P. J. Michniak, *Kwestia słowacka w Czechosłowacji w latach 1945-1948*, Warszawa 2013.

vakia. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic of Poland, the communist party was illegal and it suffered additional losses during the Stalinist purges, which led to the dissolution of the Communist Party of Poland by the Communist International (Comintern) in 1938. In spite of the fact that the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity included former politicians of the government in exile (Stanisław Mikołajczyk) as a result of the pressure from the Western allies, the Soviets forcefully supported the small and weak communist party (PPR<sup>2</sup>), ensuring it had the possibility to win and hold the power in Poland practically in conditions of the continuing civil war. Therefore, since 1945 the system situation in both countries differed. The government in Prague considered itself a clear continuator of the pre-war Czechoslovak statehood, whereas the government in Warsaw cut itself off from the tradition of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic of Poland and made extensive efforts to be internationally and internally recognized as the new political construction of the power, paradoxically, operating on the basis of the pre-war constitution.

The exile Czechoslovak government from London, with President Edward Beneš and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jan Masaryk, returned to Prague. The Prime Minister (5<sup>th</sup> April 1945 – 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1946) was the pre-war Czechoslovak diplomat, Zdeněk Fierlinger, who demonstrated pro-soviet attitude and who cooperated with the communists<sup>3</sup>.

This meant a formal continuation of the system and geopolitical shape of the country from 1938, from the period before the Munich Agreement. The communists joined the government and although for the first three years they did not have the majority, they did not find it an obstacle in playing a dominant role. They enjoyed wide social support resulting from their pre-war influences and activity during the Second World War. Before 1938 the communist party operated legally and won significant support in elections. The role of the communists in Czechoslovakia was far more significant than in Poland before the war. In the post-war government headed by Prime Minister Z. Fierlinger, the communists had 8 out of 25 ministry posts. The real influence of the communists was soon confirmed by nominating Klement Gottwald Prime Minister in 1946 (02<sup>nd</sup> July 1946 – 15<sup>th</sup> June 1948)<sup>4</sup>. The first post-war government of Czechoslovakia was based on the tradition of the state presented in the period before the wars as an anchor of democracy, an industrial power and an avant-garde of modernity. The Czech-Slovak ties were presented as unique in the

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2 PPR – the Polish Workers' Party, a communist party established on the USSR initiative on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1942 in Warsaw. Since 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1944 it practically governed Poland. In December 1948 in united with PPS (the Polish Socialist Party) forming PZPR – the Polish United Workers' Party.

3 During the war he was the ambassador of the Czechoslovak government in exile in London in the USSR, after the war – Chairman of the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD), he led to its union with the communist party in 1948. According to the Czech publications, since the 1930 he had been an agent of the soviet intelligence.

4 In the election of 16. 05. 1946 the Communist party of Czechoslovakia won 38% of the parliament seats, national socialists – 18%, Slovak democrats – 14%, and social democrats – 13%. In this situation Klement Gottwald became Prime Minister in the new government.

world, and Czechoslovakia was advertized as a country of technical progress and global industrial brands (Škoda, Bata, Zbrojovka).

Compared to its southern neighbor, post-war Poland appeared to be a country of forced migration, destructions and poverty, plagued by intensified communist terror affecting the constitutional order and moral and ethical norms. The first *quasi* government (formed in Moscow on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1944) – “the Polish Committee of National Liberation” (Polish abbreviation: PKWN) was not recognized internationally (except for *de iure* recognition of the USSR and *de facto* recognition by France). President Beneš in London refrained from initiating contacts with the PKWN, pointing in the telegram of Minister of Foreign Affairs, J. Masaryk, to ambassador Z. Fierlinger, that he was limited in his action by the “English and American position”<sup>5</sup>.

Only the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland (formed on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1944 in Lublin) received a positive reply of E. Beneš to the Polish notification. The Czechoslovak President’s decision to recognize the Provisional Government of Poland and readiness to initiate diplomatic relations was passed (on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1945) to the Polish side by ambassador Z. Fierlinger. This was the second (after the USSR) international recognition of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland. The Polish side replied that it recognized the Czechoslovak government in London and was ready to exchange diplomatic representatives. The Czechoslovak decision to accept the Lublin government was strongly influenced by Moscow. In this situation the rightful Polish government in London made a decision (01<sup>st</sup> February 1945) to sever its diplomatic relations with the Czechoslovak emigration government<sup>6</sup>. Such development of bilateral relations practically ruled out the possibility of bilateral discussion of federation projects which had been quite advanced in 1940–1943<sup>7</sup>.

On 19<sup>th</sup> March 1945 the first plenipotentiaries were agreed. The Polish one was pre-war communist activist, Stefan Wierbłowski, whereas the Czechoslovak plenipotentiary was an activist of the Slavic movement, Josef Hejret<sup>8</sup>. The nominations of the heads of diplomatic missions ended the formal establishment of the relations between the two countries. Consulates, however, were not established as the political problem of the course of the Polish–Czechoslovak border (including the issue of the Zaolzie region) remained unsolved.

The most important element of the actions taken by both countries was dealing with internal problems, including the relocation of the German population. Neither country was particularly interested in developing bilateral relations. This was sig-

5 W. Materski, W. Michowicz (ed.), *Historia Dyplomacji Polskiej, Volume VI*, Warszawa 2010, p. 66.

6 *Ibidem*, p. 79.

7 More on this topic: I. T. Kolendo, *Unia polsko-czechosłowacka. Projekt z lat 1940–1943. Ukochane dziecko premiera gen. Władysława Sikorskiego*, Łódź 2015.

8 W. Materski, W. Michowicz (ed.), *Historia Dyplomacji Polskiej, Volume VI, op. cit.*, p. 80.

nificantly due to the aggravating conflict over the Zaolzie region, which nearly led to the outbreak of a military conflict between the countries, as well as intense efforts made by the government in Prague to ignore the decisions made by superpowers in Potsdam and seize the area of the Kłodzko Valley and neighboring districts<sup>9</sup>. In June 1945 the growing border tension and the escalation of Czechoslovak military actions made Marshall M. Rola-Żymierski (as Minister of National Defense, acting on behalf of the Prime Minister) to issue a note (6<sup>th</sup> June 1945) demanding the withdrawal of the Czechoslovak troops from Racibórz district and to recall the unilaterally established Czechoslovak administration in the region of Zaolzie Silesia<sup>10</sup>. W. Rzymowski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, in his interview for “Dziennik Zachodni” stated that the Czechoslovak authorities were unable to differentiate between the cause and the effect. He believed that the annexation of the Zaolzie region in 1938 was a mistake, but it was caused by the violation of the agreement of 5<sup>th</sup> October 1918 by the Czechs<sup>11</sup> and the unlawful annexation of Teschen Silesia in 1919.<sup>12</sup>

In June 1945, soldiers of the Polish and the Czechoslovak armies, who had closely cooperated in their fight against the Third Reich, both in the western and eastern fronts, stood against each other on both sides of the border<sup>13</sup>. The fight did not start due to a very firm intervention of J. Stalin and general Andrei Yeremenko, head of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ukrainian Front of the Soviet army, whose troops were located in the disputed area<sup>14</sup>.

Both sides appealed to the leaders of the USSR (J. Stalin) for mediation. The Russians organized a series of meetings of the Polish and Czech delegations in Moscow in the second half of June 1945, but tactically did not adopt any official position concerning the dispute, appealing to both sides of the conflict to find a mutual agreement. The negotiations lasted nearly two years. It should be noted that the USSR authorities exerted pressure on both sides and argued that it was necessary to develop closer relations between Slavic states when facing the growing importance of the German problem and in the context of the meetings held between Ministers of Foreign Affairs devoted to the preparation of a peace treaty with Germany (such a meeting started in Moscow on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1947).

Moscow’s policy of encouraging compromise between Warsaw and Prague led to signing the Treaty on Friendship and Mutual Assistance on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1947 (valid for

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9 *Ibidem*, pp. 94–103 and 151–167.

10 *Ibidem*, p. 98.

11 On 5<sup>th</sup> November 1918 an agreement was made between the Polish National Council for Teschen Duchy (Polish abbreviation: RNKC) and the Czech Domestic National Council for Silesia – Zemský Národní Výbor pro Slezsko (ZNVS), established in Ostrava, which gave the Zaolzie region to Poland.

12 More on this topic: W. Materski, W. Michowicz (ed.), *Historia Dyplomacji Polskiej, Volume VI, op. cit.*, pp. 151–152.

13 More on this topic: J. Friedl, *Na jednym froncie. Czechosłowacko-polskie stosunki wojskowe 1939–1945*, Gdańsk-Warszawa 2011.

14 W. Lada, *Zaolziańska rozgrywka Stalina*, „Dziennik Gazeta Prawna”, 6–8. 03. 2020, No. 46 (5199); P. Pałys, *Czechosłowackie rozszczenia graniczne wobec Polski 1945–1947*, Opole 2007, pp. 60–68. ; W. Materski, W. Michowicz (ed.), *Historia Dyplomacji Polskiej, Volume VI, op. cit.*, pp. 98–100.

20 years, until 1967). The ceremony took place during the Warsaw visit of the Czech Prime Minister K. Gottwald. The border issues, however, remained unsettled in the Polish–Czechoslovak Treaty.

The issue was only referred to in a statement in the protocol – Appendix to the Treaty, namely that the parties “... shall determine on the basis of mutual agreement, within two years from the day of signing the Treaty on Friendship and Mutual Assistance, all territorial issues between both countries ...” and that “... will ensure that Poles in Czechoslovakia and Czechs and Slovaks in Poland, within the rule of law and on the principle of reciprocity, will have possibilities of national, political, cultural and economic development (schools, associations, cooperatives on principles of cooperative unity in Poland or in Czechoslovakia)”<sup>15</sup>.

There was obvious coincidence between the visit of Prime Minister K. Gottwald in Warsaw and the date of opening the Moscow conference to prepare the treaty with Germany. Paradoxically, during this visit, the post-war military conflict over the Zaolzie region, the Kłodzko Valley and Prudnik was symbolically ended by awarding army general Ludwik Svoboda, Minister of National Defense of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, the Grand Cross of Virtuti Militari by the President of Poland, B. Bierut, at the request of the Polish Minister of National Defense, Marshal M. Rola-Żymierski<sup>16</sup>. In this way the commander of the failed Polish offensive in Czechoslovakia requested that the highest military award be given to the highest rank Czechoslovak general<sup>17</sup>. It should also be noted that the visit of Prime Minister K. Gottwald in Warsaw in March 1947 was accompanied by a multitude of Czechoslovak awards given to Polish clerks (mostly from Ministry of Foreign Affairs)<sup>18</sup>. The visit also resulted in transforming the diplomatic missions of both countries into their embassies.

In spite of the propaganda publicity of “internationalism” in mutual relations, in 1948 the countries introduced stricter rules of controlling individual movement on the border, which, following the victory of the communists in Prague in February 1948, was practically closed. Nevertheless, formal institutions were being established aimed at developing closer relations between both societies. In 1946 the Polish–Czech Friendship Association was established in Poland, and in 1949 national information centers were opened both in Warsaw and Prague (since 1956 – centers/institutes of Polish and Czechoslovak culture)<sup>19</sup>.

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15 The Treaty on Friendship and Mutual Assistance between the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Czechoslovakia, signed in Warsaw on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1947 r. <https://www.prawo.pl/akty/dz-u-1948-7-47,16779833.html> (16th June 2020).

16 *Regulation of the President of the Republic of Poland of 11<sup>th</sup> March 1947*, „Monitor Polski” 1947 No. 62, item 456.

17 Both ministers shared interesting experience of personal fight against communism (in 1917-1920), only to become, since the Second World War, ardent collaborators of the soviet military and civilian authorities. Another example of Polish and Czechoslovak historical irony of fate...

18 *Regulation of the President of the Republic of Poland of 14<sup>th</sup> March 1947*, „Monitor Polski” 1947 No. 68, item 465.

19 Z. Jirásek, A. Małkiewicz, *Polska i Czechosłowacja w dobie stalinizmu (1948-1956)*. *Studium porównawcze*, Warszawa

The political treaty opened the way to intensifying economic cooperation. A relevant convention was signed on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1947 during the visit of Prime Minister J. Cyrankiewicz, in Prague. The Polish–Czechoslovak Council of Economic Cooperation became the principal institution in the system of bilateral cooperation. It was headed by Hubert Ripka, ex-participant of Polish–Czechoslovak confederation talks held at the beginning of the 1940s by the governments in exile in Great Britain. For two years it seemed possible to establish a common economic area which could constitute potential counterbalance to Germany. There were even concepts of building the “Eastern Ruhr Area” in the industrialized border area between Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany<sup>20</sup>. Unfortunately, the initiatives taken up by two and three sides were limited by the establishment of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) in 1949<sup>21</sup>. Within this structure, the concepts of developing bilateral relations were subjected to the regime of five-year plans, approved by the USSR, whereas own initiatives of particular countries of the “socialist bloc” were viewed critically by Moscow.

The economic sphere was a vital area of bilateral relations due to the destructions caused by the Second World War. Poland hoped that developed Czech economy would help us rebuild the destroyed country. Prague, on the other hand, desired supplies of raw materials, mostly coal. Therefore, regardless of conflict situations, economic contacts were established quickly and relevant agreements were signed without delay.

The Oder River water route, used for transporting goods imported and exported by the port in Szczecin, was of vital importance to bilateral relations. This communication route had been intensely exploited by Czech transport companies since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Prague made efforts to establish its own extraterritorial zone in the port in Szczecin to secure the Czechoslovak trade. Despite the initial positive response of Warsaw to the concept, the Polish side finally proposed the establishment of a zone leased by Czechoslovakia (Czechoslovak region) in the port in Szczecin and the appointment of relevant transport companies and friendly treatment of the Czechoslovak river sailing on the Oder River. A relevant agreement (Communication Agreement) in this matter was signed in Prague on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1947<sup>22</sup>.

Szczecin and the province of Szczecin played a special role in regional bilateral relations with the Czechoslovak partners. A number of regional agreements on

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2005, p. 179–180.

20 W. Materski, W. Michowicz (ed.), *Historia Dyplomacji Polskiej, Volume VI, op. cit.*, pp. 300–308.

21 Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) – an organization established in Moscow in January 1949 in order to coordinate and closely ration economic cooperation between the countries of the soviet bloc. Poland and Czechoslovakia were among its founding members. Dissolved in June 1991. The assets of the organizations have not been allocated between its members yet.

22 More on this topic: R. Techman, *Kalendarium wydarzeń Szczecin – Czechosłowacja*, [in:] A. Szczepańska-Dudziak (ed.), *Polsko-czeskie kontakty dyplomatyczne, gospodarcze i kulturalne w XX–XXI wieku*, Szczecin 2017.

cooperation were signed and in 1949 the Czechoslovak consulate was opened in Szczecin. Another impulse for developing contacts was provided by the program of development of the Czechoslovak fleet, implemented in the Szczecin shipyard. The fleet's home port was in Szczecin<sup>23</sup>. This explains traditional visits of high-rank representatives of Czechoslovak authorities in Szczecin. It was considered emblematic to visit the region of Poland that developed particularly intense bilateral relations. Obviously, Prague was very interested in securing the access to the Baltic Sea and to sea transport. In the 1940s preliminary design works were conducted concerning the construction of the Danube-Oder canal to strengthen the water connection with the Baltic Sea<sup>24</sup>.

Both countries lacked good atmosphere and favorable circumstances in which bilateral relations could be developed. Such social attitudes largely dated back to the period between the wars, characterized by very critical mutual perception and negative evaluations expressed in periodical propaganda campaigns. They mainly stemmed from the conflict over the Zaolzie region, differences in foreign policies, critical evaluation of internal relations and the system prevailing in Poland (particularly after the May Coup in 1926), different attitudes to the USSR, the support given by Prague to the Ukrainian irredenta in the territory of Poland, giving asylum to political prisoners from Poland (the Brest trials), the support given by Poland to the autonomy of Slovakia, etc.<sup>25</sup> The broad wave of criticism of the Polish policy expressed by the government by the Vltava River was sometimes accompanied by drastic publications by the Vistula River<sup>26</sup>. In addition, such attitudes were reinforced by mutually unfavorable social reception, including mutual mockery of the languages (the Czech language was considered childlike in Poland, whereas the Polish language was found funny by the Czechs)<sup>27</sup> or by other territorial conflicts, such as the Polish-Slovakian dispute over Spiš and Orawa<sup>28</sup>.

The two societies differed in their attitude to the USSR. Strong anti-soviet at-

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23 More on this topic: R. Techman, *Udział szczecińskiego przemysłu okrętowego w rozbudowie floty handlowej Czechosłowacji po II. wojnie światowej*, [in:] A. Szczepańska-Dudziak (ed.), *Polsko-czeskie kontakty dyplomatyczne, gospodarcze i kulturalne w XX-XXI wieku*, Szczecin 2017.

24 The concept of building the Danube-Oder canal emerged in next decades, as another signal of improving bilateral relations. It never went beyond the stage of preliminary design works and was never implemented. See: *Statut Polsko-Czechosłowackiego Komitetu Studiów do Spraw Drogi Wodnej ODRA – DUNAŃ*, in: *Stosunki gospodarcze polsko-czechosłowackie w latach 1945–1949. Zbiór dokumentów*, selected, edited and provided with an introduction by J. Skodlarski, Łódź 2015, pp. 76–78.

25 More on this topic: M. Przeperski, *Nieznosny ciężar braterstwa. Konflikty polsko-czeskie w XX wieku*, Kraków 2016.

26 More on this topic, for example: K. Niepokoyczycki, *Słowacy i Czesi. Zarys stosunków*, Warszawa 1937, T. Janowicz, *Czesi. Studium Historyczno-Polityczne*, Kraków 1936.

27 See A. Leix, „Pepiki” i „Pšonci”: *co u siebie wzajemnie lubią, co ich zaskakuje, czego nie lubią, a co wywołuje ich uśmiech?*, [in:] M. Dębicki, J. Makaro (ed.), *Sąsiedztwa III RP – Czechy. Zagadnienia społeczne*, Wrocław 2013, pp. 117–141.

28 Which significantly contributed to the participation of the Slovakian army on Hitler's side in the aggression of Poland on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939. See: I. Baka, *Udział Słowacji w agresji na Polskę w 1939 roku*, Warszawa 2010. The complexity of the less-known Polish-Slovakian conflict in Spiš see also: L. Włodek, *Cztery sztyndary, jeden adres. Historie ze Spisza*, Kraków 2017.

titudes in Poland contrasted with the domination of pro-Russian attitudes in Czechoslovakia, supported by popular concepts of Slavic unity, treating Russians as the biggest Slavic nation. Therefore, the USSR was perceived by Czechoslovakia as the biggest ally, whereas in Poland it was often seen as a hostile country, reluctant to tolerate Polish independence and historically discriminating Poles.

Both countries lacked influential communities which would support close cooperation and development of relations. In communist Poland, experts associated with the Western Institute and the Silesian Institute (of strong Home Army connotations) did not manage to gain acceptance for their concept of advanced cooperation of two Slavic countries<sup>29</sup>, in spite of the fact that these communities pointed at a vital element, attractive also to communists, strengthening foreign policies of both countries in post-war Europe – the German problem! The issue of relations with Germany was even more fundamental to Prague than to Poland, which for centuries had existed between the German and the Russian expansions. The Czechs had brutally been crushed only by one opponent – the German element. This issue did not, however, turn out to be a good bond and foundation for the Polish-Czechoslovak cooperation after the war. Some attempts were made at coordinating politics, but the countries failed to synchronize their activities in this area in spite of strong interest of the USSR in such activities.

On the formal level, official bilateral relations were developed. Delegations of various rank were exchanged. Agreements were concluded. Economic contacts were maintained and military cooperation was reinforced. All the above activities, however, were closely rationed by the Moscow-created politics of “union of brotherly states within the socialist bloc”, conducted in the political and economic dimension by the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, and in the political and military scope by the Warsaw Treaty<sup>30</sup>.

The countries were unable to revive the territories along the border. The borderlands were becoming increasingly peripheral, while the centrally-planned economy reduced the significance of such regions to minimum. The countries failed to develop and take advantage of the potential cooperation dynamics stemming from the border and transit location. The road and rail network was poorly developed (local rail and road routes on the pre-war Czech and German border were partly closed down), there was an insufficient number of border passes. A significant section of the Polish borderland was inhabited by the incoming population,

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29 More on this subject: T. Lehr-Splawiński, K. Piwarski, Z. Wojciechowski, *Polska-Czechy. Dziesięć wieków sąsiedztwa*, (ed.) Z. Wojciechowski, Katowice-Wrocław 1947.

30 The Warsaw Treaty – also known as the Warsaw Pact (the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance) was concluded on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1955 in Warsaw as a consequence of the integration of Western Germany into the NATO structures. A political and military organization of the soviet bloc countries, dominated by the USSR. It enabled the USSR to control and coordinate foreign and military policy of its dependent socialist European states. Poland and Czechoslovakia were among its founding members. It was dissolved on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1991.

transported there from the Eastern Borderlands and deprived of any experiences in Polish-Czech relations. Only the eastern part of the border area (Polish-Slovakian border) preserved the pre-war social and economic structures.

W. Gomułka's rise to power and the events of 1956 in Hungary aroused serious fears in Prague concerning potential demands of similar type from the Czechoslovak society. Undoubtedly, the economic situation of Czechoslovakia in 1956 was much better than in the above-mentioned countries. The quality of life had improved due to the significant correction of the economic policy in 1953 as a result of the economic crisis caused by the collectivization of agriculture, liquidation of private trade and industry and unfair exchange of money. Serious social unrest and workers' protests broke out, inter alia, in Prostějov, Pilsen, Prague, Bohumin and Ostrava in 1953<sup>31</sup>. The social protests in Czechoslovakia did not cause any resonance or affect in any way the situation in Poland. The opposite occurred in 1956, when the events of October in the Polish People's Republic did not influence social moods in Czechoslovakia.

The economic decisions taken in 1953 by the leaders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, including the abolishment of the voucher system and changes to economic priorities, quickly led to positive dynamics of economic growth<sup>32</sup>. The improvement of the social and economic situation enabled the authorities to control the Czechoslovak society in 1956, especially groups (students) susceptible to the events happening in Poland and Hungary. The government propaganda accused Poland of failing to meet the obligations to deliver coal and violating trade agreements. Simultaneously, the government adopted a more severe attitude to Polish organizations in the Zaolzie region (Polish diplomacy reacted only sporadically) and controlled the population movement on the border<sup>33</sup>.

The period of 1945-1956 was not the best time in bilateral relations. It is surprising that in spite of similar constitutional changes (consolidation of communism) taking place in both countries in the cold war reality, in spite of the shared fate, centrally-planned management, similar languages and the existence of centuries-old social, cultural and economic relations, the countries did not develop intense relations or cooperation. The widely propagated brotherhood of people's democracy countries turned out to be a mere cliché used in official propaganda. Prague critically evaluated the lack of progress in the Polish United Workers' Party fight with the Catholic Church and poor results of the collectivization in Poland. In this context, the Czechoslovak communists tried to demonstrate greater involve-

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31 E. Kamiński, A. Małkiewicz, K. Ruchniewicz, *Opór społeczny w Europie Środkowej w latach 1948-1953 na przykładzie Polski, NRD i Czechosłowacji*, Wrocław 2004, pp. 319-321.

32 In 1948 Czechoslovakia's GDP reached 98% of its pre-war level, in 1954 it was 154% and in 1956 - 184%. More on this topic: Z. Jirásek, A. Małkiewicz, *Polska i Czechosłowacja w dobie stalinizmu (1948-1956). Studium porównawcze*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 154-157.

33 W. Materski, W. Michowicz (ed.), *Historia Dyplomacji Polskiej, Volume VI, op. cit.*, p. 509.

ment in building communism in their country and the leading role of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia among all socialist countries. Such evaluations were willingly presented in Moscow<sup>34</sup>.

The criticism addressed at Warsaw did not facilitate the development of bilateral relations. In practice, the development of bloc structures (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the Warsaw Treaty) accompanied by the mechanism of controlling bilateral initiatives by Moscow in the 1950s led to a situation when ideological and propaganda activities were the subject of more liberal bilateral actions<sup>35</sup>.

One might add here that one of few successful Polish–Czechoslovak personal projects was the marriage contracted in 1955 in the USA by professor Zbigniew Brzeziński and Emilie Benes, an American sculptor of Czech origin<sup>36</sup>.

## 2. The Small Stabilization of 1957-1968

Abrupt political changes in Poland and W. Gomułka's rise to power in 1956 did not make a good impression on Czechoslovak leaders. On the other side of the Tatra mountains the process of the communist party consolidation was progressing, accompanied by the lack of willingness to condemn the Stalinist period. The changes in Poland were treated as revisionism and deviation from the proper course of the communist politics. Such evaluation did not encourage the dynamics of relations. The management of the Polish communist party, just like their Czechoslovak counterparts, invariably considered their contacts with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to be of top priority.

In 1956–1957 W. Gomułka critically perceived Prague hostility towards the changes taking place in the People's Republic of Poland<sup>37</sup>. However, as the political course of the Polish United Workers' Party was gradually dogmatized, the countries managed to reach some sort of rapprochement. It was manifested by the visit of A. Novotny (President of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) in Warsaw (5–10<sup>th</sup> September 1960). The leaders discussed intensification of economic cooperation and the support of Prague for the disarmament plan prepared by W. Gomułka for Central Europe. The visit was followed by considerations of the possibility of

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34 *Ibidem*, p. 510.

35 For example, the Czechoslovak government presented Poland with the original manuscript of Copernicus "De revolutionibus" in 1956 and the Czech delegation participated in the anniversaries of the battle of Grunwald.

36 Emilie Benes is the relative of Edward Beneš, President of Czechoslovakia until 1948 and daughter of Bohuš Beneš, who was Czechoslovak consul general in San Francisco before the communist cup in 1948.

37 His evaluation was further strengthened by the ostentatious support of Stalinism by Prague, manifested, inter alia, by laying a wreath at the tomb of J. Stalin in January 1957 by the official Czechoslovak delegation composed of: President A. Zapotocki and Prime Minister W. Śiroki, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (until 1968) A. Novotny. See also W. Materski, W. Michowicz (ed.), *Historia Dyplomacji Polskiej*, Volume VI, *op. cit.*, p. 510.

building a political and economic “iron triangle” in Central Europe, consisting of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Eastern Germany, seen as a counterbalance to Western Germany and an attempt at strengthening the position of those three countries towards Moscow<sup>38</sup>.

It was only on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1958 that *the Agreement between the Polish People’s Republic and the Czechoslovak Republic on the Final Demarcation of the State Border*<sup>39</sup> was signed. It was delayed by nine years. In accordance with the Agreement, both parties agreed to leave: the course of the Polish–Czechoslovak border in Teschen Silesia in its shape from 1920; in Spiš and Orava – in its shape from 1924; the regulation of Lower Silesia border along the former Czechoslovak–German border from 1938; the correction of the border (returning the village of Tkacze to Czechoslovakia). The border was mostly natural<sup>40</sup>. The agreement on the border did not resolve the problem of the status of the Polish ethnic group in the Zaolzie region. On the contrary, at the end of the 1940s and at the beginning of the 1950s, the Polish population suffered from intensified discriminatory actions. Prague continued its policy of depriving the Polish population in the Zaolzie region of their national identity. Warsaw did not offer diplomatic or material support. The situation of the minority did not change after concluding an agreement on small border traffic and abolishing (at the end of 1960) the obligation to possess a visa in private and tourist personal traffic<sup>41</sup>.

Despite uneasy political relations and the ideological criticism formulated by Prague (ceasing collectivization, too much freedom in culture), economic contacts were being developed. Industrial cooperation yielded positive results. In 1957 Czechoslovakia became Poland’s third trade partner in spite of the slowdown which ended in 1959 when trade between the countries exceeded the 1956 level. The structure of trade turnover was unfavorable for Poland. We imported mainly machines and appliances while exporting raw materials. In the 1950s the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic several times granted Poland loans for purchasing machines, appliances, development of coal mining and exploitation of sulfur deposits near Tarnobrzeg<sup>42</sup>. The membership in the Warsaw Treaty led to some joint military projects. One of the most successful examples of such cooperation was the production of a few thousands of infantry fighting vehicles (Czech abbreviation: SKOT – Medium Wheeled Armored Transporter)<sup>43</sup>. Paradoxically, the product of this cooperation was one of the basic elements of equipment used by Polish troops entering Czechoslovakia in

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38 W. Materski, W. Michowicz (ed.), *Historia Dyplomacji Polskiej, Volume VI, op. cit.*, p. 592.

39 Journal of Laws from 1959, No. 25, item 159.

40 The Czech Republic, however, has not compensated Poland for the surplus of 370 hectares of land in spite of the talks held by representatives of both countries on this topic since 1995.

41 W. Materski, W. Michowicz (ed.), *Historia Dyplomacji Polskiej, Volume VI, op. cit.*, p. 512.

42 *Ibidem*, pp. 510–511.

43 More on this topic: <https://aw.my.games/pl/news/general/polsko-czechoslowacka-wspolpraca-zbrojeniowa> (24. 08. 2020)

1968 in the military intervention of the Warsaw Treaty. In the economic sphere we could observe broad contacts, restricted however, by the increasingly tight corset of rationed cooperation within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. It limited the freedom of bilateral decisions and joint initiatives. At the same time the possibilities of developing economic cooperation were objectively slowed down by the centrally-planned system dominating in both countries. This model of economy particularly negatively affected the borderlands, which developed much more slowly than central regions. The implemented economic model treated borderlands as peripheries, depriving them of economic benefits that their counterparts in free-market economies enjoyed due to their location (servicing international exchange and transit, impulses for developing technical and spatial infrastructure).

Another significant problem in Polish-Czechoslovak relations were the issues concerning border waters, especially their regulation, flood hazards and contamination of water flows. The geo-morphological structure of the borderlands places them all in the basin of the Baltic Sea, with special role played here by the catchment area of the Oder River. Throughout the period of the Polish People's Republic (and also currently) there were disputes and conflicts concerning the execution of cooperation on Polish-Czechoslovak border waters. In order to create better conditions for systemic cooperation, *The Agreement between the government of the Polish People's Republic and the government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic on water management of border waters* was concluded on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1958<sup>44</sup>. Despite the attempts at regulating this sphere of relations (inter alia by establishing institutions of representatives of both sides), a number of contentious issues have disturbed bilateral relations for decades (for example the issue of rational water management and notifications in cases of flood danger, incidental contamination of the Polish river network by the Czechs, the influence of Turów Lignite Mine on the disappearance of underground waters in Czech border communes, especially in Uhelna commune)<sup>45</sup>.

The new stage in bilateral relations between Czechoslovakia – dominated by the post-Stalinist reality and Poland – falling into stagnation, started on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1967 when the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance was signed in Warsaw during the visit of Czechoslovak President A. Novotny, for another period of twenty years.

In spring 1968 the so-called 'March events', connected with students' protests and demands for greater democratization took place in Poland. Czechoslovakia was the arena of much more forceful transformations. Opposing the continuing

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44 Text in: The Supreme Audit Office. Branch in Katowice. Department of Environment Protection and Construction. *Information on the results of the audit of the tasks resulting from international agreements on border waters concluded between the Czech Republic and Poland*, Warszawa, Katowice, October 1997. (11. 01. 2020)

45 *Ibidem*, p. 33

cultivation of the Stalinism, the society demanded democratization of the political system, “socialism with human face” and deeper reforms. These postulates were supported by the reformist wing in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The positive personal changes and internal transformation, however, were negatively perceived in other countries of the Warsaw Treaty. At the meeting of First Secretaries of the communist parties of Poland, Czechoslovakia, the USSR, Bulgaria and Hungary, convened in Dresden (23<sup>rd</sup> March 1968) at the request of the Polish People’s Republic, W. Gomułka evaluated the authorities in Prague as unstable, whereas L. Brezhnev claimed that it was counter-revolution. The Polish evaluation of the “Prague Spring” was strongly influenced by the Czechoslovak criticism of the way the Polish authorities crushed the students’ protests in Warsaw and the anti-Semitic campaign that had began in Poland. The Polish authorities protested against Prague “anti-Polish campaign”, using diplomatic and party channels<sup>46</sup>.

The “Prague Spring” occurred in the country which had conducted de-Stalinization 12 years after Poland. The democratic changes in the society and in the communist party were facilitated by the fact that the soviet troops did not stay in the territory of Czechoslovakia. The Red Army left this country in 1945, along with the US troops, which liberated some of its territory in the spring offensive in 1945. The lack of direct presence of the USSR army made it easier to start and implement the reforms.

In spring 1968 further meetings of party and government leaders of the Warsaw Treaty countries were held. They were devoted to the situation in Czechoslovakia. It was argued that the Czechoslovak authorities were susceptible to the activities of the imperialism (including Western Germany). At the meeting of the leaders of the Polish People’s Republic, the USSR, Eastern Germany, Bulgaria and Hungary (held in Warsaw, on 13–15<sup>th</sup> July 1968) a decision was taken to conduct a military intervention of the Warsaw Treaty armies in Czechoslovakia. The intervention took place on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1968, on the day Czechoslovakia declared its neutrality.

The suppression of reforms in Prague was greeted with great satisfaction in Warsaw. Being in political and military sense one of the most active advocates of the intervention in Czechoslovakia, Poland was a pawn in the soviet game over Central Europe, delaying its chances of internal, economic and foreign policy changes by 12 years. At the same time, W. Gomułka saw the participation in the operation against democratization in Czechoslovakia as an opportunity to demonstrate again, after suppressing students’ protest in Poland in March 1968, the tough political course and the determination in implementing his conservative internal and foreign policy.

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46 W. Materski, W. Michowicz (ed.), *Historia Dyplomacji Polskiej, Volume VI, op. cit.*, pp. 655–656.

### 3. The Different Dynamics of 1969–1981

The active participation of the Polish People's Republic in pacifying Czechoslovakia in August 1968 created another wave of mutual aversion shared by the societies of the two countries. Although party and government leaders maintained official contacts, they met and bear-hugged. There was no chemistry in these relations. The Czechs and Slovaks had a very negative view on the Polish participation in the intervention and one could say they were waiting to take their revenge.

One of the vital issues consulted bilaterally were the talks held by Warsaw and Prague with Bonn on normalization of diplomatic relations with Western Germany (W. Brandt's Ostpolitik). Czechoslovakia found it more difficult to conclude a relevant agreement than Poland and therefore, with the assistance of the USSR, it tried to block the initiation of diplomatic relations between Poland and Western Germany<sup>47</sup>. The Polish side, however, decided not to wait for any progress in Prague–Bonn talks and initiated diplomatic relations with Western Germany in September 1972. The Czechoslovak authorities carefully and critically observed the diplomatic offensive towards the West conducted by the team of First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, E. Gierek<sup>48</sup>.

On the other hand, Warsaw was dissatisfied with the continuing economic advantage of Czechoslovakia, which, apart from raw materials, was only interested in increasing the employment of workers from Poland. The resulting growth of traffic between the two countries contributed to the natural growth of social contacts. The image of Poles was slightly spoiled by Polish tourists who did huge shopping in Czechoslovakia (buying famous 'Lentilky', for example). The Czechoslovak criticism of mass purchases met a response that in market economy (and that is how the economic system in Czechoslovakia was defined) increased demand is beneficial. Generally, in the 1970s the number of contacts and bilateral relations, including local ones, grew. Poland was more interested in developing such relations, but it did not achieve great results<sup>49</sup>.

The province of Szczecin remained a region of model Polish–Czechoslovak cooperation. This was attributed to the issues of sea transport, the existence of Czechoslovak Waterside in Szczecin and the implementation of a huge, long-term project of building trade ships for the Czechoslovak fleet, to which Szczecin was the home port, by the local shipyard. It should be added that a significant number of Czech fleet officers were educated at the Maritime University of Szczecin. Czechoslovak visits to the Polish People's Republic often included Szczecin in their agenda<sup>50</sup>. A specific event showing the role of western Pomerania in bilateral relations was the

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47 *Ibidem*, p. 677.

48 *Ibidem*, p. 678.

49 *Ibidem*.

50 More on this topic: R. Techman, *Udział szczecińskiego przemysłu okrętowego...., op. cit.*, Szczecin 2017.

crash of the plane flying to Szczecin on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1973 in the region of the Goleniów airport, in which Ministers of Internal Affairs of both countries (W. Ociepka and R. Kaska) died along with a group of high-rank officers of their Ministries<sup>51</sup>.

One of major topics of the progressing bilateral cooperation between the states was cooperation in fighting the opposition, or generally, signs of independent thinking and acting of individuals and social groups. The leaders of both countries, E. Gierek and G. Husak assured each other of the marginalization of the opposition communities in their countries during their official meetings<sup>52</sup>. In Czechoslovakia this process was largely successful, whereas in Poland, especially after the crisis of 1976, the activities of the opposition grew. These were the years of establishing KOR (Workers' Defense Committee) and other opposition groups, in Czechoslovakia – the time of the “Charter 77”<sup>53</sup>. In the 1970s, the first bilateral contacts of the opposition groups were established. Undoubtedly, an important impulse for supporting the opposition activities was provided by the signing of the Helsinki Accords of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975.

As an eminent German politician, Egon Bahr, said: “Today there is no doubt that without Helsinki the opposition activists in Prague would not survive. And without the Czechoslovak Charter 77 (...) there would not be Solidarity”<sup>54</sup>.

The potential possibility to take its revenge for the “Danube Operation” from 1968 came to Czechoslovakia in 1981. It was clearly visible that the Czechoslovak leaders expressed their aversion to the emergence of a powerful trade union – “Solidarity” and to the changes initiated by it in Poland in 1980. They did not think in categories of “Czechoslovak Spring of 1968”, but actively strived at physically crushing the wave of the workers' protest in Poland. Official Prague did not want to use changes in Poland to seek “human face socialism” in its own country.

The conservative and dogmatic leadership of the Czech and Slovak communist party aimed at violent pacification of the Polish revolution. Like E. Honecker, the Czech communists offered in Moscow their participation and pressed for a military intervention of the Warsaw Treaty in Poland. History nearly made a full cycle here. Fearing that bad ideas from Poland would reach Czechoslovakia, the government closed the border and the necessary traffic was closely controlled. Particular “care” was given to Polish workers employed in the territory of Czechoslovakia. The official propaganda did its best to disparage the Polish mess, chaos and creeping counter-revolution. It was argued that this course of events was detrimental to social peace and economic development of Czechoslovakia and the whole inter-

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51 [www.msn.com/pl-pl/wiadomosci/historia/smierc-szefow-bezpieki-tajemnicze-kulisy-katastrofy-pod-goleniowem/ar-BBZu7lQ?MSCC=1580459986&ocid=spartandhp#page=3](http://www.msn.com/pl-pl/wiadomosci/historia/smierc-szefow-bezpieki-tajemnicze-kulisy-katastrofy-pod-goleniowem/ar-BBZu7lQ?MSCC=1580459986&ocid=spartandhp#page=3) (17. 07. 2020)

52 W. Materski, W. Michowicz (ed.), *Historia Dyplomacji Polskiej*, volume VI, *op. cit.*, p. 736.

53 *Sąsiedzi o odmiennym bagażu doświadczeń. Rozmowa z Alexandrem Vondrą*, [in:] J. Kloczkowski (ed.), *Wolność. Polskie i czeskie dylematy*, Kraków 2017.

54 G. Hofmann, *Polacy i Niemcy. Droga do rewolucji europejskiej 1989/90*, Poznań 2018, p. 85.

nationalist community. The decisions taken by Prague led to broadcasting radio programs (in Interprogram Praha radio station) in Polish, criticizing “Solidarity” and the Polish party authorities. At the same time, the Czechoslovak Ministry of Internal Affairs started printing and distributing anti-Solidarity leaflets in Poland, calling for fighting the counter-revolution. During party and government contacts, the Polish authorities demanded that the Czechoslovak authorities did not generate anti-Polish moods<sup>55</sup>.

Presenting its extremely critical assessment of the events in Poland, Prague enthusiastically welcomed the martial law introduced in Poland on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1981. It was assessed as the right action, strengthening the socialist community. Some parcels were prepared for Christmas 1981 and sent to Poland as a gift from the Czechoslovak society. One could sense, however, that the party and government offices in Prague and Bratislava were disappointed that they had not been able to provide military internationalist support to Warsaw.

The economic sphere remained dominated by the model of specific isolation of both countries even though they participated in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. Centrally-made decisions on bilateral trade turnover, regulated within fixed long-term contracts, did not support the dynamics and flexibility of economic relations.

#### **4. The Stagnation of 1982–1988**

The Czechoslovak authorities were satisfied with the effects of the martial law imposed in the Polish People’s Republic. The bilateral government and party cooperation was maintained but without any outstanding achievements. The economic cooperation was becoming defective due to the economic crisis and common currency problems in Poland.

Both societies (especially the Polish one!) began to wonder whether the prevailing political and social system and the geopolitical system in which Central Europe was dominated by the USSR provided the countries of the region with proper social and economic development and internal and international security.

The opposition groups from both countries continued their clandestine meetings. In Poland, the activists associated with underground „Solidarity” were particularly active. In autumn 1981 the Polish-Czech-Slovakian Solidarity (originally Polish-Czech Solidarity) was established. The martial law in Poland, despite numerous problems it caused, did not limit contacts. Direct meetings of dissidents could be held due to the fact that the border was opened again and tourist hikes were allowed in the border area. A few meetings were held in the Karkonosze Mountains. They were attended by, inter alia, A. Michnik, J. Kuroń, V. Havel and Jiří Dienstbi-

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55 W. Materski, W. Michowicz (ed.), *Historia Dyplomacji Polskiej, Volume VI, op. cit.*, pp. 836-837.

er. Intense cooperation was initiated, covering the establishment of underground structures, information campaigns, translating and publishing literature, joint protests and appeals to the authorities<sup>56</sup>.

## 5. The “Solidarity” and “Velvet” Revolutions in 1989

Nobody could have envisaged at the beginning of 1989 that in a few months communism would be universally rejected in Central Europe. There were some premises and expectations, but they were far from being specific. The situation in both countries was similar in some aspects, the Church did not let itself be marginalized, the awareness of the elites and the working class was growing. Poland, with its experience of “Solidarity” large-scale movement developed since 1980 and the long-lasting economic and social crisis was particularly predestined to changes. The economic situation of Czechoslovakia at the end of the 1980s was relatively good, which accounted for the fact that the permanent crisis situation was never as strong a stimulator of dynamic internal changes as it was in Poland<sup>57</sup>.

The signs of essential political and economic changes were more visible in Poland than in Czechoslovakia. In Warsaw, reforms were also supported by the communist party which was losing its social base and the apparatus of coercion. Both countries were experiencing the internal disintegration of the existing communist system. This process, however, did not affect the relations between Poland and Czechoslovakia. Prague was ruled by rather unprogressive communists, who reveled in preaching to their Polish comrades and pointing out their ideological and economic mistakes, as well as lobbying in Moscow for more severe actions against the irredenta in Poland. When in summer 1989 the first non-communist government in the region was formed in Poland, it caused a snowball effect<sup>58</sup>. The effects of this process first appeared in Hungary and Eastern Germany, then in November changes took place in Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, and finally, in December in Romania.

There is no doubt that the dynamics of changes in the internal political situation in Poland (the Round Table, the parliament elections on 4<sup>th</sup> June, the formation of the non-communist government), visible since the beginning of 1989, inspired the events in Czechoslovakia and contributed to the outbreak of the “Velvet Revolution”. It resulted in overthrowing the communist rule in November 1989 and electing V. Havel to the post of the president. While the revolutionary changes in Poland

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56 More on this topic: J. Walczak, *Solidarność Polsko-Czechosłowacka (SPCz). Współpraca opozycji antykomunistycznej z Polską i Czechosłowacją w latach 1978-1990*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Wyższej Szkoły Przedsiębiorczości i Techniki w Polkowicach. Studia z nauk społecznych” 2018 issue 3, pp. 119-134, <http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.cejsh-fb484d76-e562-41df-8124-4311b3ae615f/c/J.Walczak.pdf> (18. 07. 2020); Ł. Kamiński, P. Błażek, G. Majewski, *Ponad granicami. Historia Solidarności Polsko-Czechosłowackiej*, Wrocław 2009.

57 More on this topic: B. J. Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe*, Budapest - New York 2003, pp. 80-100.

58 More on this topic: S. P. Huntington, *Trzecia fala demokracji*, Warszawa 1995, p. 23 and next.

were the result of the risk of evolutionary negotiation of an agreement between the opposition and the government at the “Round Table”, in Czechoslovakia, they were caused by incidental, mass social protest (manifestations) against the conservative, communist leaders of the country.

The influence of the events in Poland on the transformation in Czechoslovakia was particularly closely observed by the government of Western Germany. The changes on the eastern and southern border of Eastern Germany created a new situation concerning the development of the process of German reunification. Both Prague and Warsaw in summer 1989 encountered a dramatic problem of thousands of refugees from Eastern Germany, who were seeking asylum in Western Germany embassies and demanded to be permitted to enter Western Germany<sup>59</sup>. In cooperation with the governments of Western Germany and Eastern Germany, the Polish and Czech governments developed a procedure for their emigration.

The transformation process, however, did not bring any significant changes to the situation of the Polish national group in Czechoslovakia. Since 1945 the Polish minority in the Zaolzie region was consistently subjected to political control and preventive actions of the Czechoslovak administration, aimed at counteracting activities for free expression of national postulates and protecting national minority rights. The authorities tried to direct the activities of the Polish minority structures to the area of culture and folklore. These actions were accompanied by some sort of material support (Polish press, PZKO centers<sup>60</sup> known as Polish Houses), treated as a mechanism of social and political control and careful censorship. That explains close dependence of the Polish press in the Zaolzie region on the communist regime in Prague, lasting practically until the end of 1989<sup>61</sup>. This situation resembled the phenomenon observed in Polish minority in Lithuania, which manifested its susceptibility to Moscow slogans shortly after 1989<sup>62</sup>.

The new horizon for the development of bilateral relations opened only after the events of the second half of 1989. In order to establish real cooperation the countries needed fundamental, democratic social and political changes; transition from centrally-planned to free-market economy; decentralization and privatization; real opening of the border and mutual social education.

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59 More on this topic: H. Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, Berlin 1996, pp. 88–96.

60 PZKO – Polish Cultural and Educational Union, an organization of the Polish national minority in Czechoslovakia, established in 1947.

61 M. Borák, *Stosunki czesko-polskie w świadomości Polaków na Śląsku Cieszyńskim po 1989 roku*, [in:] K. Heffner, W. Drobka (ed.), *Strefa pogranicza Polska-Czechy. Procesy transformacji i rozwoju. Materiały z konferencji międzynarodowej Opole-Ostrawa 19–21 kwietnia 1995 r.*, Opole 1996, pp. 63–64.

62 More on this topic: K. Nowak, *Mniejszość polska w Czechosłowacji (1945–1989). Między nacjonalizmem a ideą internacjonalizmu*, Cieszyn 2012.

Jiří Kocian

## The Czech-Polish Relations after the Fall of the Iron Curtain

### Introduction

The paper explores the course and development of selected aspects of Czech-Polish relations, particularly in 1989–2004, completed with the accession of both nations into NATO (in 1999) and the European Union (in 2004). The fall of communism in 1989 placed the relations between the then Czechoslovakia and Poland into a different regional and European context. At the same time, the 1989 changes (spring and summer in Poland, November in Czechoslovakia) brought in new content into the relations between the two nations. The anchor points of new bilateral relations include the Treaty on Good Neighbourliness, Solidarity and Amicable Cooperation of 6 October 1991 as well as some related and follow-up treaties. Visegrad cooperation has also become a new platform for Czech-Polish relations. Political and social changes have affected the life of the ethnic Polish minority in Těšín Silesia, where the largest part of the ethnic Polish community still lives. Cross-border cooperation was initiated. It may be believed to have started with the establishment of Euroregion Nisa in December 1991. The Czech-Polish relations in the era after the fall of the Iron Curtain have been reflected in the daily lives of the Czech and Polish people, complementing the notions of common people on both sides of the border regarding their neighbours, what they are like, what is typical of them, where they are close and where their differences lie.

### 1. Czechs and Poles after the Fall of Communism

1989 became a turning point for most countries of the former Soviet bloc, including Czechoslovakia and Poland. After decades of directive state management, human rights abuses, absence of rule of law and independent foreign policies, Central European nations and their political elites had to come to terms with a new reality.

The end of the Cold War and bloc policy allowed the region to turn into a stable and secure zone. The first steps of the new governments were to sever ties to the Soviet Union as quickly as possible.

As early as November 1989, Polish prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki raised a topic in Moscow that was a trauma for Polish society: the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact involving a partition of Poland, and the crime denied by the Soviets, the murders of Polish officers in Katyn. For Czechoslovakia, 20 years of the Soviet occupation after 1968 were the same trauma. As early as 26 December 1989, the new Czechoslovak government headed by Prime Minister Marián Čalfa presented Moscow with a request to withdraw the Soviet occupation troops. Its implementation was not simple. In late February 1990, the new Czechoslovak president, Václav Havel, visited Moscow, and in addition to a declaration of relations between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, he also signed an agreement on the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia, which was completed in June 1991.<sup>1</sup> A year later, Poland and Hungary achieved the withdrawal as well.<sup>2</sup>

The key issue was to break out of the institutional ties, i. e. to dissolve the top institutions, which was only completed in 1991. The Council of Mutual Economic Assistance was dissolved in late June 1991 and the Warsaw Treaty Organization was dissolved in early July the same year. But the liberated countries have fallen into a security vacuum. According to historian Jan Křen, some “politicians, V. Havel included, did not contemplate the accession to NATO but a new security system”.<sup>3</sup> However, the USA and the then European Community insisted on maintaining NATO. Post-communist nations, including Czechoslovakia and Poland, adjusted to that, and the accession to NATO and the EU turned into their joint target. Association agreements with the EC already opened the European market to Czechoslovakia and Poland at the end of 1991.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Bilateral Relations after 1989 and Visegrad Cooperation

The fall of communism in 1989 set the “the Czechoslovak–Polish relations into a different regional and European context.”<sup>5</sup> According to Jindřich Dejmek, “within a few weeks, one of the most powerful turns in relations between the two republics took place, and they rapidly reached their best level since World War I”.<sup>6</sup> Both new political representations were well aware of the inevitable connection between

1 J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho soused.a velmoci ve XX. století (1918–1992). Vybrané kapitoly z dějin československé zahraniční politiky*, Praha 2002, p. 131.

2 J. Křen, *Čtvrt století střední Evropy. Visegrádské země v globálním příběhu let 1992–2017*, Praha 2019, p. 94.

3 *Ibidem*.

4 *Ibidem*.

5 R. Šimůnek, D. Janiš, J. Pánek, J. Valenta, J. Němeček, J. Vykoukal, R. Baron, *Česko–polské vztahy*, [in:] J. Pánek et al. (ed.), *Akademická encyklopedie českých dějin, sv. II, Č/1*, Praha 2011, p. 364.

6 J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé...., op. cit.*, p. 166.

the two countries. As early as January 1990, strong interest from top officials in strengthening mutual relations could be noted. In a speech delivered in the Polish parliament on 25 January 1990, Czechoslovak president Václav Havel expressed his admiration for Poles as well as his belief that communism fell in Czechoslovakia also thanks to Poland's struggle for democracy.<sup>7</sup> The shared issues of both nations in the early 1990s were the uncertainty over the future development of the then Soviet Union as well as the issue of Germany undergoing unification, as according to historian Jindřich Dejmek, "occasional revisionist tones" were addressed to both nations from there.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the coordination of joint actions in relation to a unifying Germany did not materialize as the option of bilateral arrangements for relations with Germany prevailed ultimately in Czechoslovak policy. However, Czechoslovak-Polish cooperation continued to develop successfully despite these differing opinions. This was clearly demonstrated within the context of Central European cooperation, especially in summer of 1991 when Poland joined Pentagonale, a loose association of Danubian nations, and in February 1991 when the Declaration of Cooperation was signed during the first summit of top statesmen from Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary in Budapest. The Budapest summit gave rise to the Visegrad platform, despite different expectations of the cooperation.<sup>9</sup>

The changes in Czechoslovakia in November 1989 essentially started a new chapter in relations between the two countries.<sup>10</sup> This can be also credited to previous contacts of the opposition leaders who were promoted to important government posts then.<sup>11</sup> The ideological concept of the new Czechoslovak foreign policy was based on a "return to Europe" and was rooted in the environment of the Czech and Slovak dissidents. The new top officials and also dissidents not long before, president Vaclav Havel and minister of foreign affairs Jiří Dienstbier, thus followed up on the thought patterns of the Czechoslovak opposition, underlined also by the principle of defending human and civic rights as the central motto of diplomacy in democratic Czechoslovakia. The direction towards the economic and political structures of the European Union became a permanent part of Czechoslovak, later Czech, foreign policy. In December 1991, Czechoslovakia, together with Poland and Hungary, signed an association agreement with the then European Community, demonstrating the will of the three Central European countries to cooperate.<sup>12</sup> Poland's importance to Czechoslovakia, but more broadly to Central Europe was un-

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7 *Ibidem*, p. 167.

8 *Ibidem*.

9 *Ibidem*, pp. 167-168.

10 J. Friedl, T. Jurek, M. Řezník, M. Wihoda, *Dějiny Polska*, Praha 2017, p. 614.

11 J. Dejmek, *Diplomacie Československa. Díl I. Nástin dějin ministerstva zahraničních věcí a diplomacie (1918-1992)*, Praha 2012, pp. 233-234.

12 M. Kopeček, *Český Visegrád*, [in:] J. Vykoukal a kol., *Visegrád: možnosti a meze středoevropské spolupráce*, Praha 2003, pp. 125-128.

derscored by president Havel's visit in 1990, as mentioned above. In a speech before the Polish deputies, V. Havel also invoked the need for closer cooperation of Central European nations and for coordination of policies in view of the disintegrating Soviet bloc, and because of that, the changing situation in Europe. As part of this visit, the then Polish president General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who served as Poland's minister of defense in 1968 and signed the order warranting the Polish army to invade Czechoslovakia, apologized for the involvement of the Polish army in the invasion of Warsaw Treaty Organization armies into Czechoslovakia in August 1968.<sup>13</sup>

The new situation was highly reflected in revived efforts to forge a closer Czechoslovak-Polish alliance on the Polish side as well. The notion of a joint federation or confederation was revived in Poland in the early 1990s. However, both V. Havel and J. Dienstbier turned down the idea during their first visits to Poland. Their idea was a wider all-round cooperation within a cooperation framework involving Poland and Hungary. According to historian Michal Kopeček, the ideas of Central European cooperation were made topical in particular in view of the then crisis in Yugoslavia and the complicated developments in the Soviet Union. At the end of 1990 during the Paris negotiations of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, president Havel held negotiations with the prime ministers of Poland and Hungary, Tomasz Mazowiecki and József Antall, about drafting a joint declaration on Central European cooperation.<sup>14</sup>

The period of revived Czechoslovak-Polish relations after 1989 was the moment when diplomacies of other Central European nations were intensively searching for the ways to make the most effective use possible of the decline of the Soviet Union as the superpower controlling the region, also seeking the maximum possible consolidation of their regional status. The first attempt to fill the security vacuum was made in November 1989 when Italy, Austria, Yugoslavia and Hungary founded an association of four Danubian nations for regional cooperation, known as *Quadragnale*. In 1990, Czechoslovakia joined them, with the group renamed to *Pentagonale*. The group, renamed to *Hexagonale* upon Poland's accession in 1991, was dissolved as a result of the breakup of Yugoslavia, and was replaced by the Central European Initiative based on an alternative concept.<sup>15</sup>

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13 Jaruzelski repeated his apology in August 2005 on the 37<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the invasion. Refer to: Former president Jaruzelski apologized for the involvement of Polish army in the occupation in August 1968 [online], [cit. 1. November 2020], available from: <https://cesky.radio.cz/byvaly-prezident-jaruzelski-se-omluvil-za-ucast-polske-armady-na-okupaci-v-srpnu-8628509>.

14 M. Kopeček, *Český Vísehrad... op. cit.*, pp. 128-130.

15 The original association of four Danubian nations was founded as *Quadragnale* in Budapest in November 1989. Its aim was to seek new forms of international cooperation in the days after the fall of the Iron Curtain. In 1990 Czechoslovakia acceded with the group changing its name to *Pentagonale*; upon Poland's accession a year later, it changed again to *Hexagonale*. The breakup of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union brought an influx of other members and a new name Central European Initiative (although in strict terms, most members do not fit the geographic definition of Central Europe). The group seeks a closer alignment of nations in the region, improvement of living standards and involvement of non-member nations in EU development programmes. The

Poland was not yet a member of Pentagone when a new regional association was established in Central Europe, known as the Visegrad Group (then still V3), providing also a new platform for Czechoslovak-Polish relations. To find a common language within the Visegrad Group, both nations cited the security issues mentioned above as well as the uncertainty prevailing upon the fall of the Soviet bloc and the cohesion crisis within the Soviet Union itself. When representatives of the three nations interested met in Hungary in February 1991, the coincidence of interests was obvious. This was confirmed by both the approved declaration and the Prague meeting of 6 May 1992 that described Visegrad as a stabilization model for new Central European relations. One of the most valuable results of Visegrad was believed to be the coordinated negotiation of terms for the EC association agreements that were signed with the V3 nations as early as December 1991. At the same time, the Visegrad framework allowed the issue of local border traffic to be settled between Czechoslovakia and Poland. The failed August coup in the USSR resulted in an impulse to close bilateral agreements on military cooperation, stipulated in the second summit of V3 nations in Krakow in October 1991. Owing to these new circumstances, the West showed interest in closer cooperation with the post-communist nations within the NATO framework. This could be seen as an important impetus towards a later expansion of the alliance to include former members of the Warsaw Treaty Organization.<sup>16</sup>

The overall framework for new bilateral relations was specified by the Czechoslovak-Polish Treaty of Good Neighbourliness, Solidarity and Friendly Cooperation of 6 October 1991. It was signed in the course of the second meeting of Visegrad representatives in Kraków. In addition to the declaration of readiness for mutual assistance should a signatory be under threat and a declaration of inviolability of the borders, it also contained a clause about the nullity of the Munich agreement. It also stipulated that the treaty parties support and coordinate the effort to achieve full participation in the institutions of integrated Europe.<sup>17</sup> A number of other agreements were made shortly before and after this treaty, including an agreement on visa-free travel of 19 May 1991, agreement on cultural and scientific cooperation of 16 September 1991, and agreement on cross-border cooperation of 8 September 1994. The Czech-Polish historical commission was relaunched in 1993, under the auspices of both ministries of education, officially as the Permanent Joint

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CEI establishes working groups processing cooperation projects for the fields of economy, tourism, development of science and culture, environmental protection and fighting against crime. Conf. Central European Initiative [online], [cit. 1 November 2020], available from: [https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Středoevropská\\_iniciativa](https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Středoevropská_iniciativa).

16 M. Kopeček, *Český Visegrád...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-132.

17 Conf. Memorandum of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated 21 August 1992, no. 416 Coll., on agreement between the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and the Republic of Poland on the Treaty of Good Neighbourliness, Solidarity and Friendly Cooperation. Collection of Laws of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, year 1992, item 83, issued on 21 August 1992, [online], [cit. 1 November 2020], available from: <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1992-416>.

Czech-Polish Board on Humanities. Every year, it published bilingual documents concerning the key issues of the history of the two nations; in 1995 and 2003, it published comprehensive critical reviews of scientific cooperation between the two nations regarding their mutual history and relations.<sup>18</sup>

According to some authors, the Czechoslovak foreign policy, represented by former dissidents Havel and Dienstbier and also applied within the Visegrad framework, seemed to have no alternative during the first two years after the fall of the communist regime, up to 1992. By that time, however, ideas of a new orientation were underway. As the historian Michal Kopeček pointed out, the differentiation of “foreign policy ideas, which profoundly influenced the future attitude towards Visegrád, occurred ... before the election to the Federal Assembly and the National Councils in 1992”.<sup>19</sup> Still before the 1992 elections, the Civic Democratic Party, who had broken away under the leadership of Václav Klaus from the Civic Forum in 1991, offered a comprehensive program of an economic and political transformation, complete with a specific version of the foreign policy and a criticism of its previous orientation. The difference lay in new accents and value bases. Criticism was particularly aimed at the notion of the Central European region turning into a base for a pan-European security system, as well as at regional initiatives such as Hexagonale (after Poland’s accession in 1991) and the Visegrad triangle. In clear terms, the Civic Democratic Party declared their priority to be the accession to NATO and West European integration, albeit good neighbourship was stressed as an integral element of the European integration effort.<sup>20</sup>

After the June elections of 1992, in the context of negotiations between V. Klaus and Vladimír Mečiar on the division of the Czechoslovak federation, there was a de facto beginning for new Czech-Polish international relations. A number of bilateral negotiations at the time clearly declared that for the new Czech state, Poland would continue to be one of the most important partners and allies in Central Europe.<sup>21</sup> The breakup of federal Czechoslovakia was noted by the Polish party without any specific comment on it. Thus, the Visegrad Troika changed into Visegrad Four (V4), with the membership transferred to and extended to include both successor states, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. Yet after 1992, cooperation within the Visegrad Group slowed down owing to a number of factors from national politics. M. Kopeček reminds of the fact that the decreasing cooperation within the Visegrad Group was a factor of increasing focus on domestic issues in all member nations. According to M. Kopeček, the main issue seems not to be the breakup of Czechoslovakia and the new foreign policy doctrine of the Czech Republic. As mentioned

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18 R. Šimůnek, D. Janiš, J. Pánek, J. Valenta, J. Němeček, J. Vykoukal, R. Baron, *Česko-polské vztahy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 364.

19 M. Kopeček, *Český Visegrád...*, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

20 *Ibidem*, p. 133.

21 J. Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-169.

above, this foreign policy doctrine focused on the development of cooperation with the West and the relations with Germany. However, bilateral cooperation with the neighbours, in particular concerning economic relations, were not disregarded by Czech diplomacy.<sup>22</sup>

However, a certain level of dissonance can not be denied within political relations inside the Visegrad group, in no small part to be blamed on the skepticism on part of the Czech right-wing government regarding Visegrad and just about any considerable involvement in Central Europe. The Central European policy of the then Czech government focused multilateral cooperation in economic issues specifically. This trend was confirmed by the conclusion of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). This agreement on a free trade zone was signed by ministers of foreign affairs of the Visegrad Group in Krakow on 21 December 1992, to be effective from 1 March 1993.<sup>23</sup> The Czech interest accentuated the liberalization of trade in industrial products. The effectiveness of CEFTA was proved by the fact that the mutual trade between the members doubled during the first five years of its existence. Interestingly, for the Czech Republic, one of the most dynamic items was the increase in trade with Poland.<sup>24</sup>

New momentum across the region was generated by the potential accession of the Czech Republic and Poland to the Western integration associations. According to some authors, it temporarily weakened Visegrad integration and marked Czech-Polish relations with the rivalry concerning the dominant “pre-accession status” in the region. A particular proof of this rivalry is seen in sources, in particular, in the circumstances for preparation and course of the visit to Prague in January 1994 paid by US president Bill Clinton. According to Michal Kopeček, this event, including a meeting with US president Clinton and V4 heads of state and governments, triggered the liveliest exchange of opinions concerning Visegrad cooperation so far, both nationally and internationally. President Clinton arrived in Prague to present the Partnership for Peace project, which was intended to be a temporary response to the request of NATO enlargement. The Czech government refused then to coordinate their course of action with the other Visegrad partners, holding a separate meeting with B. Clinton instead; a joint presentation of all V4 statesmen consisted of a mere final act.

This course of action on part of the Czech party was met with displeasure, voiced especially by the Polish delegation. President Walesa pointed out that Visegrad can do without the “number four”, or the Czech Republic, if they are not interested in cooperation. Czech diplomacy faced domestic criticism as well. It was rebuked for a narrow interpretation of national interests and the overestimation of macro-

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22 M. Kopeček, *Český Visegrád...*, *op. cit.*, p. 142. J. Křen, *Čtvrt století střední Evropy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

23 Conf. CEFTA [online], [cit. 1 November 2020], available from: <https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/CEFTA>.

24 M. Kopeček, *Český Visegrád...*, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

economic indicators, for limited interest in partnership in the joint defence of the democratic world, and through that, in becoming the stabilizing factor in Central Europe. According to M. Kopeček, Poland wanted to use the visit to show coordinated action that would convince the US about the need to incorporate the entire Visegrad Group in NATO. However, the Czech government tried to present it as merely a “Czech–American matter”, trying to make the most out of it in terms of the Czech accession to NATO.<sup>25</sup>

According to historian Jiří Vykoukal, statements made by some leading Czech politicians resonated strongly in Polish diplomacy and in political commentaries. The Polish press quoted V. Klaus who said that “he would make a bad politician if he put the Visegrad interest before the Czech interest”. Likewise, V. Havel was quoted saying that the times of the collapse of the Soviet bloc are gone, so there was “no need to pull together”. Once the Prague meeting with President Clinton in January 1994 was over, much publicity was given in Poland to a statement by Czech defence minister Antonín Baudyš who said “Visegrad Group didn’t exist” and that the Czech strategy consisted in individual course of action regarding the accession to NATO. These attitudes caused considerable disgust on the Polish side, largely stifling co-ordination within the Visegrad Group.<sup>26</sup>

According to J. Vykoukal, the Prague meeting that ultimately failed to produce any joint declaration on par with previous documents “was such a blow to the Visegrad format that the group took a couple of years to recover”.<sup>27</sup> However, the reasons behind the situation could be seen and interpreted both in a broader and narrower context. What was mentioned primarily was the “Czech egoism”, yet to a certain extent, the Czech attitude mirrored the dislike for and unwillingness to accept the Polish urge to speak on behalf of all four members. According to J. Vykoukal, there were several interpretation levels available for the Czech attitude. Obviously, the Czechs could not be denied their right to independent policies. Within the then context, the Czech stance could be perceived as realistic: the Czech argument was that Visegrad fulfilled its initial role to fill the vacuum in terms of economy and political security that prevailed upon the disintegration of the Soviet Union.<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand, these difficult issues failed to result in an ultimate decline of bilateral Czech–Polish relations. Still in that critical year of 1994, a range of state visits took place, from the top level down to representatives of different government branches: President Lech Wałęsa visited Prague in April 1994, chairman of the Polish parliament Józef Oleksy held negotiations in Prague still in February 1994.<sup>29</sup>

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25 *Ibidem*, pp. 144–145.

26 J. Vykoukal, *Polský Visegrád*, [in:] *Idem a kol., Visegrád: možnosti a meze středoevropské spolupráce*, Praha 2003, pp. 224–225.

27 *Ibidem*, p. 225.

28 *Ibidem*, pp. 225–228.

29 For the revival of Czech–Polish cooperation and diplomatic relations, refer also to: L. Lukášek, *Visegrádská skupina*

The visit paid by minister Igor Němec to the Czech minority in the Polish town of Żelów<sup>30</sup> should not be omitted (the first visit on this high level ever), nor that by Aleksander Łuczak, Polish minister of Education, to Český Těšín on the occasion of opening the local Polish-language secondary comprehensive school.<sup>31</sup>

Czech foreign policy, and through that, the approach to Central European cooperation and the Visegrad idea only started to change more substantially after the resignation of Václav Klaus' second cabinet in November 1997. Once the caretaker government of Josef Tošovský took over in early January 1998, with the post of the foreign affairs minister held by Jaroslav Šedivý, an experienced diplomat, we can note a return to close cooperation of the Czech Republic with Poland and Hungary. Still in late 1997, the foreign affairs ministers of these three nations agreed to coordinate foreign policy, also a distinct signal towards NATO. These shifts in Czech diplomacy were followed up by the new Czech Social Democratic government headed by Miloš Zeman that was sworn in the office in July 1998. In their keynote declaration, the government pledged to “coordinate the preparation for accession to NATO and the European Union with Hungary and Poland as well as to intensify and extend the Central European Free Trade Agreement”.<sup>32</sup>

A visible rebound for Visegrad cooperation was indicated by the Budapest summit of the three prime ministers, Jerzy Buzek, Viktor Orbán and Miloš Zeman, in October 1998. Their joint declaration invoked the 1991 Visegrad Declaration; on top of support for Central European values and joint cultural identity, it also stressed the joint interest and commitment to cooperation aiming at accession to the EU and NATO. Cooperation was to be significantly extended to the domains of culture, education and social affairs. A number of authors also note that the visible revival of Visegrad was also due to the invitation of Slovakia, ignored previously, as Vladimír Mečiar's cabinet was replaced by a coalition headed by Mikuláš Dzurinda. According to M. Kopeček as an instance, the motivation to invite Slovakia was more than a mere sign of solidarity: it was also a practical step to maintain approximately the same scope of integration request, starting from the very notion of establishing the Schengen border. This Visegrad revival was met with embarrassment in parts of the political spectrum in the Czech politics, both on part of politicians and political commentators. They spoke about a “Visegrad trap” and asked if this was not a return of sorts to vague debates on “the historic need to overcome negative stereotypes”.<sup>33</sup>

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*a její vývoj v letech 1991–2004*, Praha 2010, pp. 108–119.

30 Reportedly, 2, 831 persons identified as ethnic Czechs in Poland during the 2011 census. Most of Poland's ethnic Czechs (Polish nationals identifying with Czech ethnicity) live around Żelów in Łódź Voivodeship. Estimated to be several hundred of people, these are descendants of Czech exiles from the post-1620 era. Conf. Czechs in Poland [online], [cit. 1. 11. 2020], available from: [https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Češi\\_v\\_Polsku](https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Češi_v_Polsku).

31 R. Šimůnek, D. Janiš, J. Pánek, J. Valenta, J. Němeček, J. Vykoukal, R. Baron, *Česko-polské vztahy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

32 M. Kopeček, *Český Visegrád...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 146–147.

33 *Ibidem*, pp. 148–149.

At a meeting in Bratislava in May 1999, invoking a return to Visegrad cooperation in “a comprehensive historical dimension”, a whole range of topics for specific cooperation was presented, starting from coordination of diplomatic activities, through migration and visa policy, cultural and scientific exchange, up to plans of traffic integration and cross-border cooperation. Following that in October 1999, the International Visegrad Fund was agreed on, with its secretariat located in Bratislava. The fund became the first institutionalized form of this cooperation. This was also a specific response to earlier calls to establish an institution that would provide, for instance, grants for joint scientific projects, translations, and specialist scholarships.<sup>34</sup>

The revival of Visegrad in the late 1990s also helped continue and expand the agenda of bilateral Czech-Polish relations. In February 2000, Polish president Aleksander Kwaśniewski visited the Czech Republic while in March 2000, a delegation of Czech MPs visited the Polish Sejm. The October meeting of ministers of foreign affairs and defence in Kraków reaffirmed the previous declarations of will to cooperate within NATO and to exchange information about the accession to the EU. In January 2000 the Agreement on Scientific and Technical Cooperation was signed. In June 2000 the Agreement on Joint Procedure in Case of Natural Disasters as well the Agreement on Modifications in the Movements of People in the Border Zone.<sup>35</sup>

Intensive meetings continued to take place in the following years as well. The traditional topics of the negotiations were the development of Czech-Polish bilateral relations and, in particular, “cooperation within the EU, V4 and NATO”.<sup>36</sup> Considered to be an important result, the accession to the EU had “both nations face previously unseen potential opened for economic cooperation while the liberalization of labour markets helped to raise workforce mobility”.<sup>37</sup>

### **3. Polish Minority in the Czech Republic and Těšín Silesia after the Fall of Communism**

The changes in Czechoslovakia after November 1989 (and in the Czech Republic since 1993) also had an impact on lives of ethnic Poles in Těšín Silesia, where most members of the ethnic Polish community live. Historian Mečislav Borák pointed out a discussion on the current previous development, current status and future trends of the Polish minority when analyzing the Polish-language press in Těšín Silesia in the early 1990s. He noted a number of issues that the ethnic Poles found unsolved and disputed. He listed issues such as the makeup of their representative

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34 *Ibidem*, p. 149.

35 R. Šimůnek, D. Janiš, J. Pánek, J. Valenta, J. Němeček, J. Vykoukal, R. Baron, *Česko-polské vztahy...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 365-366.

36 *Ibidem*, pp. 366-367.

37 J. Friedl, T. Jurek, M. Řezník, M. Wihoda, *Dějiny Polska*, *op. cit.*, pp. 615-616.

bodies, modification of the legislation ensuring the rights of ethnic minorities, including the right to bilingualism, sufficient provision of ethnic Polish education and culture, and elimination of a range of manifestations of ethnic discrimination.<sup>38</sup> A number of these issues were solved, partly also thanks to the activity of the Polish minority and its organizations. As mentioned above, even after the breakup of Czechoslovakia the interest in lives of the Polish community in Těšín Silesia continued to manifest itself in numerous visits of state officials of both nations and the institutional interest in the life of the local ethnic Polish minority.

After the fall of the communist regime, an urgent task was perceived to set up bodies that would represent the Polish minority in relations with the majority society, something that could not be done without disputes concerning their structure and makeup. As a visible symbol of the new reality after 1989, activities of the ethnic Polish community in Těšín Silesia spread beyond the previous framework and auspices of the Polish Cultural and Educational Union (PZKO) established in 1947. The platform where the new arrangement of the Polish minority was decided was the Polish section of the Civic Forum (OF). Based on its initiative, the first Polish Meet was held on 3 March 1990. It gave rise to a new nine-member representation of the ethnic Polish minority, Council of Poles, transforming later in the executive agency of the Congress of Poles. As stated by historian Dušan Janák, the congress brings together 31 Polish organizations, clubs and associations, primarily from Těšín Silesia, but also from Prague and Brno.<sup>39</sup> Notwithstanding that, PZKO has still remained the largest ethnic Polish organization (in terms of the membership) but has no longer its previous dominant status. PZKO continues to unite some 12 000 members in 84 local chapters operating in 12 local districts.<sup>40</sup> The main committee of the PZKO represents this organization in both the Czech Republic and Poland, holds traditional festivals and publishes magazines. D. Janák points out that “despite a relatively high extent of social involvement, there is still a large segment of the Polish community, in particular the young and school-age generations, outside the framework of ethnic Polish cultural and social organizations”. According to D. Janák, for a long time, the situation has been affected by tensions between the PZKO and the Congress of Poles in the Czech Republic resulting from the status of PZKO within the Congress and differences in opinions concerning its activity. Also worth remembering is the fact after November 1989, a number of Poles were active in political parties and movements, for whom some of them stood as candidates for national representative institutions.<sup>41</sup>

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38 M. Borák, *Polská menšina v České republice*, [in:] I. Gabal a kol., *Etnické menšiny ve střední Evropě*, Praha 1999, pp. 126–127.

39 D. Janák, *Polská menšina na Těšínsku v letech 1945–2016*, [in:] O. Kolář, D. Janák a kol., *Polská a německá menšina ve Slezsku a na severní Moravě*, Opava 2019, pp. 46–47.

40 *Ibidem*, p. 47.

41 *Ibidem*, p. 48; S. Zahradník, *Nástin historického vývoje*, [in:] K. D. Kadlubiec a kol., *Polská národní menšina na Těšín-*

Despite differences in opinions and stances, the objectives of ethnic Polish organizations align on principal matters, as pointed out by J. Szymeczek and R. Kaszper: “In spite of their different opinions and political objectives, all Polish bodies agreed after 1989 on the priorities for the Polish community in the new circumstances: to preserve the ethnic identity and the cultural heritage of the Polish community in the Czech Republic in its broadest sense; to set up a joint representation in the relations with Polish and Czech authorities; to turn Zaolzie in Těšín Silesia into a cultural bridge between Poland and the Czech Republic.”<sup>42</sup>

As stated earlier, unlike the other minorities spread across the whole Czech Republic, the Polish minority is concentrated in Těšín Silesia (in particular in Zaolzie). The 1991 census in the then Czech and Slovak Federal Republic showed 61 542 ethnic Polish people, of which 58, 573 persons lived in the Czech part of the federation, now the Czech Republic. The vast majority of ethnic Poles lived in Těšín Silesia, in this Zaolzie. Józef Szymeczek and Roman Kaszper report that these were 43, 479 persons in total, or 71% of all ethnic Poles in the Czech Republic. The 2001 census already showed a decrease in the size of the ethnic Polish community in the districts of Karviná and Frýdek-Místek, lower by 7, 995 persons.<sup>43</sup>

The concentration of the Polish community in Těšín Silesia is an advantage, compared to other minorities, but this homogeneity constantly weakens and, according to Szymeczek and Kaszper, it undergoes a gradual erosion. According to these authors, as a result of the economic migration waves of the Czechs, Slovaks and Romani after World War II to man the industrial plants in Těšín Silesia, the Polish minority has been exposed to a permanent pressure that weakens its homogeneity. “The minority sought to preserve a distinct ethnic identity by nurturing own traditions through activities both within and outside the framework of associations as well as the preservation of the minority education system.”<sup>44</sup>

The ethnic Polish education system, as part of the national education system, has a special status in the Czech Republic. In spite of the constant tendency towards assimilation, where in 1960, “there were 10 700 pupils and students in all ethnic Polish schools combined.while in 1989, there were only 5400 pupils and students, this remains a non-negligible system of schools, unique within the context of the Czech Republic.”<sup>45</sup> According to Szymeczek and Kaszper, at the beginning of the 2002/2003 academic year, the system consisted “of 28 primary schools, including 16 incomplete ones, one grammar school, and classes with

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*sku v České republice*, Ostrava 1997, p. 33.

42 Szymeczek, R. Kaszper, *Poláci v České republice v době transformace společnosti po roce 1989*, [in:] R. Kaszper, B. Małysz (ed.), *Poláci na Těšínsku. Studijní materiál*, Český Těšín 2009, pp. 82–83.

43 *Ibidem*; conf. B. Małysz, *Od většiny k menšině. Poláci na Těšínsku ve světle statistiky*, [in:] R. Kaszper, B. Małysz (ed.), *Poláci na Těšínsku.... op. cit.*, p. 113.

44 J. Szymeczek, R. Kaszper, *Poláci v České republice...., op. cit.*, p. 83.

45 *Ibidem*, p. 87.

instruction in Polish in 4 additional secondary schools”.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, these authors report additional 36 kindergartens in operation. “In the academic year of 2003/2004, there were a total 718 children in the kindergartens, 2, 192 pupils in primary schools and 708 students of secondary schools (3, 618 persons combined, who received instruction in the Polish language. In the academic year of 2008/2009, there were only 1, 670 primary school pupils and 577 secondary school students, with the number of kindergarten children remaining roughly the same.”<sup>47</sup> As an important change to be noted, a new legal framework was adopted in 2005 for the education system, as specified in the law on preschool, primary, secondary and junior college education and other types of education (Education Code). “The law specifies that the minimum class size is different for ethnic Polish schools, as compared to Czech schools: it is 12 pupils for the Polish-language schools while it is 17 pupils for Czech schools.”<sup>48</sup>

D. Janák pointed out the current demographic tendencies in the ethnic Polish schools in the Czech Republic. He specified that the decline in numbers of children in Polish minority schools “has been a result of both adverse demographic trends in the Czech Republic and an increase in mixed marriages where 80–90% of children go to Czech schools”. Likewise, he points out that the later increase in numbers of Polish children in Czech schools is also due to the presence of children from Poland. He provides examples such as the interest in the primary school in Český Těšín as well as in some other schools. D. Janák also claims that Polish parents, in particular from Cieszyn and its immediate surroundings, are “motivated to send children to schools in Těšín Silesia by a good quality of education first ... as well as a rich choice of cultural and supplemental events, integration of parents and discipline”.<sup>49</sup>

The specific role of the channel of live Polish culture and language is played by the Polish-language media, especially the Polish-language periodicals published in Těšín Silesia. These are a bi-daily *Głos Ludu*, a monthly *Żwrot*, a bi-weekly for children and teenagers *Nasza Gazetka*, monthlies for school-age young people used also as school aids, *Żutrzenka* and *Ogniwó*. Radio broadcasting in Polish language is provided by the Czech Radio in Ostrava. The Czech Television in Ostrava provides regular time slots in Polish as part of its regional programming. The Polish people in the Czech Republic also struggle to keep books available in Polish language that are provided by 15 municipal libraries with about 40 branches. In terms of methodology, they are managed by the Regional Library in Karviná which manages the largest stock of Polish-language books.<sup>50</sup> In the domain of culture, an important

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46 *Ibidem*.

47 *Ibidem*.

48 *Ibidem*.

49 Regarding the issue of the ethnic Polish education system, refer to D. Janák, *Polská menšina na Těšínsku...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 51–52.

50 *Ibidem*, p. 52.

role is played by the Polish Stage of the Těšín Theatre, the world's only professional Polish theatre outside Poland.<sup>51</sup>

The right to bilingual signage has faced problems since the onset of political changes after 1989. The legal definition of the issue from 2002 seems not to have been a wise choice. The new legal framework accommodated the requests by the Polish minority in Těšín Silesia, yet bilingual signage continues to arouse negative emotions.<sup>52</sup>

#### 4. Cross-border Cooperation

A significant element of the bilateral relations, still in the “federal period”, was the launch of cross-border cooperation; its beginnings can be identified as the launch of Euroregion Nisa (in December 1991) that included border districts in Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic. This cooperation continued on various institutional levels after the breakup of the federation. It has intensified with the international treaty on coordination in research into the Czech–Polish border issue since November 1993. Cross-border cooperation intensified owing to the 1994 treaty. In 1995, the Czech–Polish committee for this cooperation was established, with its work culminating in November 1996 in the bilateral treaty on border crossings on intersections of the border and hiking trails.<sup>53</sup>

Cross-border cooperation continued within the framework of agreements and organisational structures that continued to be established until 1998, at which time there were five Euroregions (Nisa, Kladsko, Praděd, Těšín Silesia, Silesia). At its meeting in October 2000, the Czech–Polish intergovernmental committee for cross-border cooperation assessed the development and quality in relations in this domain as good. In 1999, the domain merged with the agenda of the European Union through the PHARE fund, creating thus a joint Czech–Polish programme.<sup>54</sup>

Presently, Těšín Silesia is a territory involved in one of these Euroregions. The agreement on Euroregion Těšín Silesia was signed on 22 April 1998 by the Association for Regional Development and Cooperation “Olza” and the Regional Association for the Czech–Polish Cooperation of Těšín Silesia. It is a voluntary association of Polish and Czech associations of municipalities and towns in Těšín Silesia in its broader interpretation.<sup>55</sup>

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51 J. Szymeczek, R. Kaszper, *Poláci v České republice...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 88–89.

52 J. Szymeczek, *Prosazování práv polské menšiny v České republice na příkladu dvojjazyčnosti a dvojjazyčných názvů*, [in:] R. Kaszper, B. Małysz (ed.), *Poláci na Těšínsku. Studijní materiál*, Český Těšín 2009, pp. 91–92.

53 R. Šimůnek, D. Janiš, J. Pánek, J. Valenta, J. Němeček, J. Vykoukal, R. Baron, *Česko-polské vztahy...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 364–365.

54 *Ibidem*, p. 366.

55 M. Olszewski, *Euroregion Těšínské Slezsko jako příklad polsko-české přeshraniční spolupráce*, [in:] R. Kaszper, B. Małysz (ed.), *Poláci na Těšínsku...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 95–100.

## 5. Prospect of Neighbourliness and Cooperation

Most certainly, it is beneficial that the relations between the Czech and Polish people are examined not merely with the optic of international agreements and contacts and bilateral political and economic relations, but also attention is paid to them within the context of mundane daily neighbourliness. A number of sociological surveys have confirmed and verified the notorious fact that the Czechs do not really know much about their northern neighbours. Unlike this, there has been a recent surge in popularity of the Czech Republic, its culture and language, resulting in a notion of certain “Czechophilia”. Beyond doubt, this has been due to the writing of Mariusz Szczygieł, a Polish writer and journalist, whose book *Gottland* published in 2006 covers the latest hundred years of Czech history, eagerly read in both countries.<sup>56</sup> A great deal of fiction is translated. Czech films and concerts by Czech musicians enjoy great acclaim. Literary cafes and pubs are established in styling referring to the Czech Republic; apart from the Czech beer and the Mole from cartoons, popular items include Smarties. The internet is rife with references to political and cultural events in the Czech Republic.<sup>57</sup>

Beyond doubt, providing a more comprehensive description of Czech–Polish relations is far from easy in this era we live through together. The historian needs some time to lapse before being able to capture the essential tendencies in events. We may observe that in the first decades of the third millennium, the Czech and Polish people jointly face new challenges in a broad international context, beyond the context of their bilateral relations and the V4.<sup>58</sup> These challenges arise from transformations within the European integration process. Both nations respond to the globalization of the current world and, not least, to the calls for environmental protection; presently, in addition, to the pandemic threat. Both the Czech Republic and Poland intensively discuss all problems, seeking joint solutions even within V4. They look for ways of dealing with the security threats, in that regard also respecting their different perspectives on possible solutions.

At the same time, members of both nations in new contexts are aware of their distinctive features, the peculiarities of their position in Central Europe and the importance of their neighbourliness. The issue of national languages and cultures along with the status of minorities are discussed again, in particular the status of the Polish minority in Těšín Silesia and a comprehensive provision of its rights. Additional issues involve religious life and its civilization manifestations, the role

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56 Conf. Mariusz Szczygieł [online], [cit. 1 November 2020], available from: [https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mariusz\\_Szczygieł](https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mariusz_Szczygieł).

57 A. Leix, *Pepíki a Pšonci – jak se vidí Češi a Poláci*, [in:] S. Graf, M. Hřebíčková, M. Petrjánošová, A. Leix, *Češi a jejich sousedé. Meziskupinové postoje a kontakt ve střední Evropě*, Praha 2015, pp. 235–253.

58 J. Pánek, *Sousedství a soužití v dějinách střední Evropy. Tisíc let vztahů mezi Čechy a Poláky*, [in:] J. Kohnová (ed.), *Lidé a národy. Vztahy a soužití: XVIII. –XIX. letní škola historie*, Praha 2007, pp. 39–40.

of mass media in international communication, and some more. The Czech-Polish relations develop in an environment that is of particular interest because this is the meeting line for nations with similar languages and cultures as well as similar experience of losing statehood and threat to their national existence; but also with widely different approaches to historicism, patriotism, and the religious and agnostic interpretation of the European civilization. Still, these are the ethnic communities whose mutual understanding should matter to the Polish people, and even more so, to the Czech people. Understanding common points and an increasingly solid convergence with Poles is our essential interest.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40.

Antoni Dudek

## The Relations between Poland and the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic in the first Years after the Collapse of the Communism System in the Context of the European Integration Process (1990-1993)<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

In the second half of 1989 new governments were established, first in Warsaw, then in Prague, in which communists no longer played the major role. It might have seemed at that time that there was an opportunity to achieve new quality in mutual relations. Instead of alleged friendship between the nations building socialism, declared by consecutive leaders of the Polish United Workers' Party (Polish abbreviation: PZPR) and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ), an opportunity emerged to build real and close cooperation, initiated by Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity, an opposition organization referring to the tradition of two meetings of activists of Charter 77 and KSS "KOR" in the Karkonosze Mountains in 1978.<sup>2</sup> In the second half of the 1980s its members tried to strengthen the relations between opposition environments in both countries and at the beginning of November 1989 – literally on the eve of the outbreak of the Velvet Revolution – they managed to organize the Festival of Independent Czechoslovak Culture in Wrocław, as well as an international seminar titled "Central Europe. Culture at the Crossroads – between Totalitarianism and Commercialism", attended by approximately a thousand of Czechoslovak citizens. Almost immediately after the collapse of the communist dictatorship by the Vltava River, on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1989 a meeting was held in Czech

1 The article was written as part of NCN grant "Coalition governments in Poland in 1989-2001" UMO-2019/35/B/HS3/02406.

2 P. Blažek, *Setkání představitelů československé a polské opozice na státních hranicích 1978-1989*, [in:] Dalibor Hrodek (ed.) *Česká a polská historická tradice a její vztah k současnosti. Pardubická konference (18. –20. duben 2002)*, Praha 2003, pp. 177–209.

Teschen of “Solidarity” members of parliament and representatives of Civic Forum, at which prospects of close cooperation between both countries were discussed.

In spite of these actions, it remained clear that the history of mutual relations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was burdened with such dramatic events as the military conflict of 1919, the annexation of the Zaolzie region in 1938, another border dispute after the end of the Second World War, or the participation of the Polish People’s Army troops in the military intervention of the Warsaw Treaty in Czechoslovakia in 1968.<sup>3</sup> The last burden was eased by the declaration of the Contract Sejm of 17<sup>th</sup> August 1989, in which the above military operation was explicitly condemned<sup>4</sup>. Although the official reaction of the authorities in Prague, where the communists were still in power, was icy, the situation changed a few weeks later, when the Velvet Revolution opened the way to forming a new government by the Vltava River.

## 1. The First Contacts

However, the past problems were not the only elements hampering cooperation between Poland and Czechoslovakia after 1989. The new head of the Polish diplomacy, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, considered regional cooperation with Czechoslovakia and Hungary to be one of priorities of the Polish foreign policy. However, the summit meeting in Bratislava on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1990, in which Presidents, Prime Ministers and Ministers of Foreign Affairs of these three countries participated, did not end with any significant agreements, and Czechoslovak President, Václav Havel later stated that “the most significant thing about the Bratislava talks was that they took place”<sup>5</sup>. Reporting the course of the meeting at the government sitting, Minister Skubiszewski claimed, “Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected our offer to prepare the Bratislava summit well (...). As a result, at some moments the talks were rather chaotic and some issues were not closed.(...) The difficulties faced by the Hungarian delegation were obvious, the election was coming, and it was clear that the government would change. The Czechs avoided topics which would specify the tri-lateral cooperation”<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, inter alia, the proposal put forward by Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, to gradually eliminate restrictions in personal movement between Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary did not cause any reactions.

The next months brought three-sided meetings of, for example, Ministers of Finance and Defense, but they did not lead to the establishment of real political or eco-

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3 L. Kamiński, P. Błażek, G. Majewski, *Ponad granicami. Historia Solidarności Polsko-Czechosłowackiej*, Wrocław 2009; M. Przeperski, *Nieznosny ciężar braterstwa. Konflikty polsko-czeskie w XX wieku*, Kraków 2016.

4 *Stenography report from the 5<sup>th</sup> sitting of the Sejm of the Polish People’s Republic on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> August 1989*, pp. 135–136.

5 G. Lipiec, *Grupa Wyszehradzka: powstanie – rozwój – rozkład*, „Ad Meritum” 1995 No. 1, p. 72.

6 Archive of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers’ Office [AKPRM], *Transcript of the course of the sitting of the Council of Ministers on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1990*, pp. 5–7.

conomic cooperation until the end of 1990. It turned out that although Havel and the new head of the Czechoslovak diplomacy, Jiří Dienstbier participated in the activities of the Polish–Czechoslovak Solidarity in the 1980s, including also the secretive meetings of oppositionists from both countries in the Karkonosze Mountains, once they gained power after the Velvet Revolution, they were not inclined to implement the policy of rapprochement with the government in Warsaw. This was despite the fact that as early as in January 1990 Minister J. Dienstbier and then, several days later, V. Havel visited Warsaw. Havel was awarded with the possibility to address the joint sitting of both chambers of the Polish Parliament. “We should not compete to see who overtakes whom and who wins the place in one or another European organ” – Havel appealed in the speech which earned him a burst of tumultuous applause. He argued, “If each of us tries to return to Europe individually, this will probably last considerably longer (...) than when we do it in mutual agreement”<sup>7</sup>. The new President of Czechoslovakia aptly diagnosed then one of the main threats, since it was the rivalry between the countries to be the closest to the European Communities that hindered the development of regional cooperation.

In January 1990 Prime Minister T. Mazowiecki also visited Prague. The surprisingly frequent first contacts did not, however, yield any concrete results. It seems that apart from the already mentioned burden of difficult history, this situation could be caused also by Prague fears of Polish domination, which was probably strengthened by the idea of the Polish–Czechoslovak confederation suggested by Zbigniew Brzeziński. It was heavily criticized by both Havel and Dienstbier<sup>8</sup>. Although nobody in Poland considered it seriously, and even though during his January visit Mazowiecki clearly declared that his government had no such plans, his subsequent idea of establishing a free trade zone by three countries was initially resisted by the influential then Minister of Finance, Václav Klaus. “I remember when we were visited by Václav Klaus, (...) who was at that time afraid of opening the borders, as he believed that in the blink of an eye Poles would clear their market of all goods” – reported Jerzy Osiatyński, who was head of Central Planning Office in Mazowiecki’s government<sup>9</sup>.

Paweł Ukielski aptly observed that at that time both Prague and Budapest “paid more attention to cooperation within the *Quadrangonale* (and after Czechoslovakia accession in May 1990 – *Pentagonale*), an organization in which neither Hungarians nor Czechs or Slovaks saw a place for Poland”<sup>10</sup>. President Havel justified that at the already mentioned summit in Bratislava in 1990 in the following way, referring to distant history: “Since the zone of the Danube and the Adriatic cooperation was

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7 Stenography report from the 19<sup>th</sup> sitting of the Sejm on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> January 1990, p. 85.

8 L. Lukášek, *Visegrádská skupina a její vývoj v letech 1991–2004*, Praha 2010, pp. 16–17.

9 A. Hall, J. Onyszkiewicz, J. Osiatyński, *Rząd Mazowieckiego widziany od środka*, „Więź” 2009 No. 8–9, p. 130.

10 P. Ukielski, *Europa Środkowa w polskiej myśli politycznej po 1989 roku*, [in:] P. Waingertner (ed.) *Polska wobec południowych sąsiadów w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w XX wieku*, t. II, Łódź 2020, p. 121.

established. Poles know that they do not belong to this historic space”<sup>11</sup>. He suggested that Poland should concentrate on building a separate alliance of the Baltic Sea states. Such suggestions did not earn much sympathy or understanding among Poles, but there were far more differences.

The new ambassador, professor Jacek Baluch (specialist in Czech studies from Jagiellonian University, who replaced the former member of the Politburo of the Polish United Workers' Party, Włodzimierz Mokrzyński), sent to Prague in April 1990, recalled that the beginning of his assignment was marked with a serious problem of “terrible image of Poland and Poles, imposed by the Czech and Slovakian communist propaganda on the society. (...) The condition of our border passes and our communication was terrible after years of mutual isolation. Our neighbors believed that Poles were buying out attractive goods in Czechoslovakia; the Polish side accused its neighbors of polluting the Oder River and causing the ecological catastrophe in the Poland–Czechoslovakia–East Germany triangle. Also the national minority issues called for regulation”<sup>12</sup>. The new ambassador of Czechoslovakia in Poland, a signatory of Charter 77 and an activist of Polish–Czechoslovak Solidarity, Markéta Fialková–Němcová, who arrived in Warsaw roughly at the same time as Baluch, did not have an easy task, either. She had to take part in a complicated game played by the governments in Warsaw, Prague and Budapest with the Kremlin, which, while agreeing to dismantle the communist regimes in Central Europe, assumed that it did not have to lead to the automatic liquidation of the Warsaw Treaty and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon).

## 2. The Dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty

On 7<sup>th</sup> June 1990 the Advisory Political Committee of the Warsaw Treaty met in Moscow. At the meeting, the Hungarian Prime Minister, József Antall stated that “the Warsaw Treaty should join the European system, whereas the military organization of the Warsaw Treaty is not needed and should be dissolved by the end of 1991”<sup>13</sup> Antall first presented this view on 22<sup>nd</sup> May in the Hungarian parliament. An opposite opinion was expressed by President Wojciech Jaruzelski, who headed the Polish delegation. He, like Gorbachev, believed that until the Europe-wide security system is established. “the existence of the Warsaw Treaty, treated as an agreement on collective self-defense, which covers both the military and political spheres, is justified”. President of Czechoslovakia, Václav Havel, presented a compromise, emphasizing that the

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11 Quoted after: M. Szczepaniak (ed.), *Państwa wszechradzkie. Systemy polityczne, gospodarka, współpraca*, Poznań 1996, p. 88.

12 J. Baluch, *Praga do wzięcia!*, [in:] M. Maruszkin, K. Szaladziński (ed.), *Krzysztof Skubiszewski i dyplomacja czasów przelomu*, Poznań 2016, pp. 92–93.

13 Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [AMSZ], case number 11/95, line 1, Information note on a meeting of the Advisory Political Committee of the Warsaw Treaty states in Moscow on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1990, p. 2.

Warsaw Treaty is “of temporary nature” and may still exist “as long as it is changed in a way that respects sovereignty of the parties and ceases to be a form of subordinating national armies”<sup>14</sup>. The most important agreement of the Moscow meeting was the appointment of a special commission which was to prepare the assumptions for reforming the Warsaw Treaty. The commission met three times (in Prague, Sofia and Warsaw), but the meetings revealed fundamental differences which made it impossible to develop a coherent project.

Commenting on the course of the summit, Minister Skubiszewski wrote in a confidential note: “Czechoslovakia and Hungary aim at quick dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty as an alliance and military structure. (...) Both countries seem to be ready to unilaterally move out of the Warsaw Treaty if the changes do not satisfy them”. In this context he believed that “the Polish government should not engage in the reconstruction of the disappearing alliance or support any proposals of structural changes voiced by the Polish People’s Republic in the past”<sup>15</sup>. Although Skubiszewski did not declare clear support for Budapest or Prague, the overtone of his arguments was unambiguous: Poland did not intend to defend “the disappearing alliance”. Skubiszewski expressed a similar opinion on this subject in mid-June at the sitting of the government, stating: “The Warsaw Treaty at this stage remains. But not for ever (...) In my opinion, Poland cannot perceive the role of the Warsaw Treaty differently. The Treaty may play some role in the reunification of Germany. As long as it exists, certain structural and doctrinal changes are needed (...) Therefore, Poland is sometimes presented on the international stage as a supporter of the further existence of the Treaty. Such an opinion cannot be expressed in one sentence. The picture which I have presented here is much more complex”<sup>16</sup>.

At the end of June 1990, in a conversation with the Czechoslovak Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Luboš Dobrovský, Minister Skubiszewski stated that “Poland will not prolong the existence of the Warsaw Treaty and does not consider it to be the base for future cooperation. Instead, we see bilateral cooperation with particular states, cooperation in the Poland-Czechoslovakia-Germany triangle, the Baltic cooperation and the European cooperation, especially leading us towards the European Communities”<sup>17</sup>. The evolution of the Polish position, significantly determined by fears related to the process of Germany reunification<sup>18</sup>, was a slow process, in line with the principle expressed by Minister Skubiszewski in a cryptogram sent at that time to ambassador Baluch: “I am against all contests in politics and diplomacy: who will be the first to join an organization or similar ones. I am for very concrete and close

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14 *Ibidem*, pp. 5–7.

15 *Ibidem*, pp. 12–13.

16 AKPRM, *Transcript of the course of the sitting of the Council of Ministers on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1990*, p. 8.

17 AMSZ, reference number 44/92, line 15, *S. Przygodzki’s cryptogram to J. Baluch*, No. 4247 from 29<sup>th</sup> June 1990, p. 98.

18 See A. Dudek, *Problem zachodniej granicy Polski oraz zjednoczenia Niemiec w polityce zagranicznej rządu Tadeusza Mazowieckiego (1989–1990)*, „Prace Historyczne. Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego” 2018 No. 145 (1).

cooperation with the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, as well as with Hungary”<sup>19</sup>. This was visible, inter alia, in the position adopted by the Polish delegation in mid-July 1990 at the sitting of the Commission for changes to the Warsaw Treaty. It still tried to find the middle ground between the position of Hungary, which wanted to dissolve the Treaty completely before the end of 1991, and the USSR, which upheld the postulate of preserving it as a military alliance at least till the end of 1991, and further on as a political alliance. “The passivity of Hungary and the opportunism of Czechoslovakia hinder our negotiation activities, as they do not contribute to weakening the conservative approach of the USSR at this stage” – complained Jerzy M. Nowak, head of the Polish delegation, in a note summarizing the talks in Prague. However, in the light of the events that took place a few weeks later, it was him who adopted an opportunistic position towards the weakening Kremlin<sup>20</sup>.

The progressing internal crisis in the USSR, the signing of the Polish-German border treaty in November 1990, followed by the change of the government in Poland, which was the consequence of T. Mazowiecki’s loss in the presidential election, accelerated the evolution of the Polish position concerning the ultimate dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty. In reaction to the events in Lithuania, where in January 1991 Gorbachev decided to use force to stop independence aspirations, the authorities in Prague proposed to Hungary and Poland a joint withdrawal from the Warsaw Treaty. Although Poland objected to connecting what happened in Vilnius with the dissolution of the alliance, finally – at the meeting in Budapest on 21<sup>st</sup> January – Ministers of the above three countries supported the dissolution of the Treaty before the end of 1991, with a possibility of delaying this decision until March 1992. Simultaneously, in order to exert pressure on Moscow, it was decided that the three countries would withdraw from the Warsaw Treaty if the sitting of the Advisory Political Committee is not convened before the end of February 1991.

### 3. The Birth of the Visegrád Triangle

The rapprochement of Warsaw, Prague and Budapest was facilitated by the crisis of Pentagone, caused by the outbreak of the conflict in Yugoslavia. Therefore the governments in Budapest and, most of all, in Prague, once again looked more favorably to the proposals of formalizing three-sided cooperation put forward by the Polish authorities. Therefore, at the summit of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Paris, in November 1990, Mazowiecki managed to convince both Havel and Antall to start negotiations on the declaration of regional cooperation<sup>21</sup>. Its content

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19 AMSZ, reference number 44/92, line 15, *The manuscript of K. Skubiszewski’s cryptogram to J. Baluch from 10<sup>th</sup> June 1990*, p. 78.

20 *The note from the sitting of the Commission for changes to the Warsaw Treaty, Prague 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> July 1990*, p. 5. I would like to thank professor S. Cenckiewicz for the access to this document from the Central Military Archive.

21 L. Lukášek, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

was the subject of the talks between heads of diplomacy of the three countries held at the end of January and the beginning of February 1991, with their final on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1991 in Visegrád near Budapest, where Wałęsa, Havel and Antall signed a declaration on “aspiration for European integration”. It announced that the agreeing countries would aim at eliminating the remains of the totalitarian system, building parliamentary democracy and free market economy and joining the European political and economic system”<sup>22</sup>. “Not resigning from our main goal, namely the full integration with Western Europe, through >small< integration we are offered an opportunity to prove our maturity and prepare for the meeting” – Jan Krzysztof Bielecki evaluated the summit<sup>23</sup>. In the light of this statement of the new Polish Prime Minister, we are forced to agree with Paweł Ukielski, who claims that in the Visegrád declaration “the field of cooperation was narrowed down to aspiration for the European integration. Obviously, this limitation cannot be analyzed separately from the geopolitical situation at that time – the signatories of the Declaration were afraid of the concept of establishing a separate integrating organization in Central Europe, whose existence could rule out the possibility of participating in Western integration processes. However, regardless of justifiable reasons for self-limitation of cooperation fields, one cannot fail to notice that it was not a community of identities but a community of goals”<sup>24</sup>. Another goal shared by Prague and Warsaw was the willingness to finally break formal ties with the USSR, which plunged into the aggravating internal crisis.

The February declaration gave rise to the Visegrád Triangle and then the Visegrád Group, which constituted another signal to the Kremlin that the alternative to the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty, compromising to the USSR prestige, would be the withdrawal of consecutive countries from this alliance, especially as at the beginning of February Bulgaria signaled such an option. Therefore, Mikhail Gorbachev issued a letter to heads of member states in which he proposed quick liquidation of all military structures of the alliance and agreed to hold the meeting of the Advisory Political Committee. The Committee met in Budapest on 25<sup>th</sup> February and ended with the signing of the “protocol of repealing military agreements concluded within the Warsaw Treaty and the dissolution of its bodies and military structures”, which became effective on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1991. The USSR did not manage to preserve the Treaty as an alliance of purely political nature and on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1991 the protocol on its final dissolution was signed in Prague. On that day all Visegrád Group countries took a major step towards Western political and defense structures, but while the dissolution of the Treaty was preceded by the withdrawal of the soviet troops from the territories of Czechoslovakia and Hungary, in Poland this process was only beginning.

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22 P. Deszczyński, M. Szczepaniak, *Grupa Wyszehradzka. Współpraca polityczna i gospodarcza*, Toruń 1995, pp. 12–13.

23 *Interview with Prime Minister J. K. Bielecki*, „Biuletyn Informacyjny Kongresu Liberalno-Demokratycznego” 1991 No. 2, p. 4.

24 P. Ukielski, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

The Polish diplomacy reached a major success when it convinced the Czech and Slovak and Hungarian governments to refrain from giving their consent for the transit of the soviet troops from Germany through their territory until an agreement in this matter was reached with Poland. In the case of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic the success was due to unofficial contacts established by Mirosław Jasiński, chargé d'affaires in the Polish embassy in Prague with the Czechoslovak Minister of Internal Affairs, Ján Langoš, whom he had known from the activities in Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity. He easily convinced Langoš that Prague consent for letting the soviet military transports from Germany through its territory would bring negative consequences for Poland. The matter was difficult because Germany – rightly fearing the collapse of Gorbachev and insisting on getting rid of the Russians from their territory as quickly as possible – had already promised the Czech and Slovak authorities significant amounts of money for the consent for the transit. However, Langoš managed to bring the matter at the meeting of the Czechoslovak National Security Council chaired by President Václav Havel at the beginning of February 1991. “As a result, the Czechoslovak side did not accept the German proposal – observes Andrzej Grajewski – what is more, it closed the border with Germany to all soviet military vehicles”<sup>25</sup>. This was probably the most significant action taken by Prague in solidarity with Warsaw in the whole decade of the 1990s and we should remember it in Poland.

#### 4. The Problem of neo-COMECON

The future of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) was in the background of the issue of the withdrawal of the soviet troops and the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty. Soon after his appointment, Prime Minister Bielecki learnt that following the decision of Mazowiecki's government, work was being conducted on establishing the Organization for International Economic Cooperation, which was to include Comecon member-states. The new Polish Prime Minister opposed that, therefore he obliged the Minister for Economic Cooperation with Foreign Countries, Dariusz Ledworowski, “to conduct consultations in the discussed matter with relevant authorities of Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic”<sup>26</sup>. Ledworowski recalls that “Czechoslovakia and Hungary agreed to withdraw their support for the new organization, some sort of Comecon-bis, on condition that Poland would initiate such a step and would assume the responsibility for it in its relations with Russia. And that is what happened”<sup>27</sup>. However, the above-mentioned summit in Visegrád on 15<sup>th</sup> February, where the preliminary decision to dissolve the Comecon was taken, did not determine the issue of establishing an organization that would replace it.

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25 A. Grajewski, *Solidarny w wielu wymiarach. Jan Langoš (1946-2006)*, „Biuletyn IPN” 2017 No. 12, pp. 149-150.

26 AKPRM, *Protocol of agreements No. 9/91 from the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1991*, p. 2.

27 D. Ledworowski, [in:] S. Gomułka (ed.), *Transformacja polska. Dokumenty i analizy 1991-1993*, Warszawa 2013, p. 31.

The Polish government returned to the Comecon-bis issue on 26<sup>th</sup> February, when Minister Ledworowski informed the government about the hesitant positions of Prague and Budapest (in fact, this was true only for the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic), and presented three options available after dissolving the Comecon. The first one, radical in his opinion, assumed resignation from establishing any multilateral forms of economic cooperation between former Comecon member-states. The second one, favored by him, assumed establishing an organization of “consultation-information” nature, which, apart from the former Comecon countries, would associate other countries of Central Europe (Austria, Finland, Yugoslavia). The last option stipulated that the place of an organization would be taken over by “a system of mutual consultations, without institutionalizing this cooperation through any types of organizations”. In the discussion that followed Minister Skubiszewski favored the first option, while Deputy Prime Minister Balcerowicz pointed out that its adoption would negatively affect economic relations with the USSR and suggested waiting to see how the situation developed. He was supported by Eysymontt, who explicitly mentioned Poland’s dependence on supplies of oil and especially gas from the USSR. Bielecki diplomatically did not openly support the first variant and asked the head of the Polish diplomacy to develop a concept of “some consultation and information forum”, but this was supposed to be just an elegant form of burying the idea of the Comecon-bis<sup>28</sup>.

The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs developed a project of establishing the Advisory Economic Committee, which was discussed at the sitting of the government on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1991. This organ would not have any material or legal ties with the dissolved Comecon and the authors proposed to invite other countries of broadly understood Central Europe, not belonging to the disintegrating soviet bloc to work on it. The forms and aims of the Committee activities were presented in a rather general way, which was connected with the tactic the Polish side wanted to adopt during the meeting of the regular representatives of the Comecon member-states in Moscow planned for 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> March. When formulating it, Leszek Balcerowicz emphasized that the Polish delegation could not be alone in its position and should aim at developing a formula shared at least by the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic and Hungary. Moreover, “it should not be in sharp conflict with the Soviet Union”<sup>29</sup>.

The Russians, however, as Vitaly Churkin, spokesman for the Russian Foreign Ministry, declared on the eve of the Moscow meeting, did not see “any real reasons for resigning from establishing an open, politics and ideology-free organization”<sup>30</sup>. They believed that it was sufficient to remove non-European countries, such as

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28 AKPRM, *Transcript of the course of the sitting of the Council of Ministers on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1991*, pp. 11-12, 14-23.

29 *Ibidem*, p. 102.

30 „Rzeczpospolita” from 15<sup>th</sup> March 1991.

Cuba, Mongolia and Vietnam from the organization. A few days earlier, the soviet Deputy Prime Minister Stiepan Sitaryan was arguing in a conversation with the Polish ambassador in Moscow, Stanisław Ciosek, that “a new organization is needed as a framework structure which will be filled with bilateral agreements. The joint element would be the analysis of economic processes and inspiring economic ventures. It is extremely difficult to recreate an organization that once has been demolished”<sup>31</sup>. However, the meeting in Moscow ended with a very general decision that it was necessary to continue preparatory works by experts, who did not manage to reach any agreement. The situation was not changed by the next meeting of regular representatives of the Comecon member-states in mid-May in Moscow, and on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1991 in Budapest, Ministers of Trade of member states finally signed “Protocol on the dissolution of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance”.

## 5. The Treaty of 6<sup>th</sup> October 1991

Parallel to these negotiations, Warsaw and Prague conducted talks on signing a bilateral agreement regulating relations between both countries. This was the result of the initiative of the Polish diplomacy head, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, who aimed at signing agreements with all neighbors of Poland. In June 1991 such an agreement was signed with Germany, and on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1991 in Kraków, President Wałęsa and President Havel signed a treaty on good neighborhood, solidarity and friendly cooperation between the Republic of Poland and the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic. It replaced the treaty between the Polish People’s Republic and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic from 1<sup>st</sup> March 1967. It confirmed the inviolability of the border between the countries and renounced any territorial claims (Article 2). It also declared the willingness to conduct joint consultations on the level of Prime Ministers and Ministers of Foreign Affairs “at least once a year” (Article 3). Such consultations were particularly to be conducted in the event of threats to sovereignty or territorial integrity of one of its signatories. The treaty did not assume any military alliance, only “cooperation in military areas” and the possibility of providing the attacked side with “support in line with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter” (Article 5). It stipulated cooperation on the regional level, respect for the rights of national minorities (Article 8) and development of trade between the countries, which was aided by increasing the number of border passes and streamlining communication (Article 11). The treaty also contained declarations of willingness to cooperate in culture, science, education as well as in sport and tourism. It included a reference to the Treaty of Munich from 1938, stating that it was “invalid from the very beginning, with all consequences of such invalidity” (Article 2 section

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31 AMSZ, reference number 45/93, line 11, chart 134, S. Ciosek’s *cryptogram from Moscow from 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1991*.

3)32. It is worth observing that the treaty signed in Kraków, concluded for the period of 15 years, with the option of prolonging it for further 5-year periods, is still the foundations of the relations between Poland and the Czech Republic as well as between Poland and Slovakia33.

## 6. The Preliminary Efforts made to join the NATO and the EU

Once the Warsaw Treaty and the Comecon were dissolved, the most significant issue in the relations between the two countries was the development of regional cooperation in the context of the countries' efforts to join the European Union and the NATO. The process of pro-Western orientation of both Prague and Warsaw was accelerated by the deepening internal crisis in the USSR, symbolized by the coup in Moscow in August 1991. Although the attempted coup, led by the USSR Vice-President, Gennady Yanayev, failed after three days, Mikhail Gorbachev never regained full control of the state. Boris Yeltsin, President of Russia, rapidly became the most significant politician. Independence aspirations intensified in many republics, especially in the Baltic states and in Ukraine. Poland and Czechoslovakia rightly feared that the whole post-soviet region would quickly become an area of deep destabilization which would threaten Central Europe.

After the failure of the Moscow coup, Prime Minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki was the first person to declare Poland's desire to join the NATO. This happened during his September visit to the USA. In his address to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York on 10<sup>th</sup> September 1991 Bielecki stated, "It is time the NATO spread its protective umbrella over Central and Eastern Europe". He also stated that "it was obviously a mistake of the first Solidarity government to delay pressure on the date of the withdrawal of soviet troops from Poland". However, the reaction of the White House was very reserved. Although Bielecki was met by George Bush, the announcement made by the American side was limited to the claim that "Western support for transformations and reforms in Poland and in other new democracies will remain unchanged"34.

Bielecki's speech revealed that skeptical views concerning our attempts at joining the NATO were in minority and contributed to the next joint step of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, taken at the above-mentioned summit in October in Kraków. It was then that apart from signing the Poland-Czechoslovakia treaty and the Poland-Hungary treaty, Presidents Havel and Wałęsa and Prime Minister Antall signed a declaration stipulating the initiation of institutional cooperation with the NATO. This was a reaction to an American initiative, as a result of which in December 1991

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32 "Journal of Laws" 1992 No. 59, item 296.

33 W. S. Staszewski, *Polityka traktatowa Polski w zakresie umów o przyjaźni i współpracy po „jesieni ludów” 1989 r.*, „Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej” 2019 Volume 1, p. 286.

34 *Bielecki w USA*, „Gazeta Wyborcza” from 12<sup>th</sup> September 1991.

all three countries joined the newly-formed North-Atlantic Cooperation Council<sup>35</sup>. However, the road to the NATO was just beginning and the military cooperation between Warsaw and Prague – even though it was stipulated in the treaty from October 1991 – did not go beyond purely symbolic ventures.

1991 was also a year filled with negotiations between the countries of the Visegrád Triangle concerning the association with the European Economic Community. During these talks Brussels skillfully used the rivalry between Warsaw, Prague and Budapest over which country would obtain the most favorable terms. Anna Fornalczyk, head of the Anti-Monopoly Office, at the meeting of the government referred to her contacts with the Czech and Hungarian counterparts, stating: “The EEC says that we as Poland have already agreed. they say it to the Czechs and they say that the Hungarians have also agreed. while in fact this is not true, they just play us, saying that other sides have agreed to something”<sup>36</sup>. Formally, the countries of the Visegrád Group were to cooperate with each other in ways of negotiating with the EEC and to agree their positions earlier, but in practice it was not feasible. This situation was taken advantage of especially by France, which tried to save its agriculture from the effects of the imports of cheap food from Central Europe.

Nevertheless, in spite of difficulties in coordinating positions, finally in December 1991 all three countries signed an agreement on their association with the European Communities. This was considered to be an incentive to further coordinate activities in this field and therefore on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1992 another Visegrád Triangle summit was held in Prague. Its participants decided to start trans-border cooperation and adopted joint appeals to the G-7 countries and to the European Union. This constituted an introduction to the next joint move, made on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1992, when Poland, the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic and Hungary appealed to the European Union to provide them with terms and schedule of talks concerning full membership. It was postulated that in 1996, following the EU assessment of the European system, formal negotiations in this matter could start. However, at the meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrád Group with heads of diplomacy of the EU countries in Luxemburg on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1992 it turned out that the Twelve (the number of the EU countries at that time) was not willing to determine any time schedule. Instead, the EU promised further trade facilitations and quicker ratification of the association agreements concluded in 1991, which stretched out until 1994. This position – in spite of another joint memorandum of Warsaw, Prague and Budapest from 11<sup>th</sup> November – was upheld at the December summit of the EU in Edinburg<sup>37</sup>.

On 21<sup>st</sup> December 1992 in Kraków, the Visegrád Group countries signed the Central

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35 Z. Veselý, *Zahraníční politika polistopadového Československa jako součást vyrovnání se s minulostí*, „Studia Politica Slovaca“ 2018 No. 2, p. 90.

36 AKPRM, *Transcript of the course of the sitting of the Council of Ministers on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1991*, p. 74.

37 See also: A. Grajewski, *Grupa Wyszehradzka – narodziny i zmierzch*, „Przegląd Polityczny” 1996 No. 32.

European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). Further negotiations between the agreement signatories resulted in signing the declaration on the principles of establishing free trade zones in Prague on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1994. On its basis, over 60% of Polish industrial exports gained duty-free access to the Czech, Slovakian and Hungarian markets. The gradual liberalization of custom duties did not include agriculture products and the so-called exceptional items, whose list was different for each country. However, the remaining custom duties on industrial goods were to be abolished by the end of 2000.<sup>38</sup>

The Prague summit in May 1992 and the establishment of the CEFTA were the last significant successes of the Visegrád Group. At the beginning of 1993 the regional political cooperation was weakened, which was caused by a few factors. Firstly, on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1993 two independent states: the Czech Republic and Slovakia were established. Their interests differed in many issues, including the direction of the Central European policy. The Czech Republic, governed by Prime Minister V. Klaus, lost interest in the development of the Visegrád Group. Jozef Zieleniec, Minister of Foreign Affairs in his government stated explicitly: "The conviction that before we join Europe we have to integrate with Poland and Hungary is fundamentally wrong. This idea was not the best one, as it delayed the accession of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic to the Western world"<sup>39</sup>. The position adopted by Prague was strengthened after the European Union announced that it would consider individually the countries aspiring for full membership. Therefore the *aide-mémoire* of the governments of the Visegrád Group from June 1993, issued in connection with the EU summit of 21<sup>st</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1993 in Copenhagen, turned out to be the last significant joint venture related to efforts to join the EU. Formal applications in this matter were submitted by each country of the Group separately.

At the Copenhagen summit the European Council formulated five conditions to be met by the countries of Central Europe in order to be admitted to the community. The so-called Copenhagen criteria concerned: 1) a functioning market economy; 2) the capacity to cope with competition and market forces in the EU; 3) the ability to take on and implement effectively the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union; 4) stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law. Poland and the Czech Republic were then relatively close to meeting all these criteria, therefore, as observed by Roman Kuźniar: "the fifth criterion was of more discretionary nature, the enlargement of the EU could take place as long as it did not bring any threats to the EU coherence (the achieved level of integration)"<sup>40</sup>. In practice this meant that twelve Member States retained the right to ar-

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38 A. Wach, *Żnaczenie oraz rola Grupy Wyszehradzkiej w latach 1991-2007*, „Ślupskie Studia Historyczne” 2010 No. 16, pp. 219-220.

39 Quoted after: G. Lipiec, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

40 R. Kuźniar, *Polityka zagraniczna III Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 2012, p. 69.

bitrarily block membership aspirations, which was painfully experienced by Turkey, whose first efforts to associate with the EEC date back to the 1960s and whose official application for the membership was submitted in 1987, the time when Poland and Czechoslovakia were deeply rooted in the Comecon structures.

The fact that the joint action for the membership in the EU broke down, the skeptical comments made by Prime Minister Klaus on regional cooperation and, later on, the policy of Slovakian Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, who was reluctant to establish closer ties with the West, did not result in the deterioration of Poland's relations with its southern neighbors which would resemble the return to the aversion from the period between the wars. The weakening political cooperation in the second half of the 1990s was accompanied by regular development of trade, facilitated by the CEFTA. The later cooperation between Warsaw, Prague and Budapest within the NATO and especially within the European Union – where the Visegrád group still plays a significant role as a regional alliance – has proved that the foundation of mutual relations built in 1990-1992 is solid.

## **Conclusions**

The capital built by the cooperation of Czech and Polish oppositionists in the 1980s was insufficient to establish a permanent alliance between Warsaw and Prague after the collapse of the communist regimes. The burden of difficult past and the gravity of stereotypes were strengthened by two factors. The first one was the conviction of the Polish side that it is a natural leader of Central Europe, which aroused some fears in our southern neighbor that it would be dominated. The second one was related to the belief commonly held by the Czechs that their country – due to its higher level of economic development and more favorable geopolitical location – had better chances to integrate quickly with the Western military and political structures.

Piotr Bajda

## The Polish-Czech Relations on the Eve of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of signing the Treaty on Friendly Neighborhood

### Instead of an Introduction – a few Words of Explanation

Contrary to appearances, it is not easy to write about the Polish-Czech relations, especially if we do not want to limit our text to contemporary statistics showing the level of cooperation or sympathies expressed in opinion surveys. In our mutual contacts, one can find a full spectrum of attitudes, ranging from cold indifference to cooperation combined with elements of curiosity or even slight fascination. In order to fully evaluate and even appreciate the current situation, we need to define the starting point, which will provide us with some kind of a comparison scale. We can base this evaluation exclusively on the analysis of current data, on the review of the current state of bilateral relations after regaining independence by both countries in 1989, supplemented with the evaluation of cooperation within the Visegrád Group, the European Union or the NATO. Such perspective, however, would only be partial and simplifying, since the Polish-Czech neighborhood has lasted for many centuries. Obviously, the size of the article does not allow me to focus on the beginnings of the statehood in both countries, Christianity received from the Czech hands and the introduction to the Latin community, the role of saint Adalbert (who, *in fact*, was a political refugee) in spreading new faith in the country of Bolesław the Brave, the raid of the Czech king, Bretislav, into Poland, which, according to historians ruled out the possibility of voluntary creation of one state and started the period of rivalry to win the status of the most important partner of Germany in the east<sup>1</sup>.

In this situation, our analysis of the contemporary relations shall begin with the images the two counties had of each other at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centu-

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1 More on this topic: A. Nowak, *Dzieje Polski. Tom 1 do 1202. Skąd nasz ród*, Kraków 2014, pp. 150–151.

ries, the period when modern national identity was formed and with two people: a Galician activist of national democracy, Stanisław Głąbiński, and an icon of Czech literature, Jaroslav Hašek. In Głąbiński's opinion, "there was no ideological connection between Poles and other Slavs, especially the Czechs. The Czechs were Russophiles and Pan-Slavic in their own interest, wanting to have political support of powerful Russia. (...) In pre-constitutional times<sup>2</sup> the most annoying Germanizers were Czech clerks, sent to Galicia due to their knowledge of the Slavic language"<sup>3</sup>. The future author of *Good Soldier Švejk* was not one of such clerks, but a journalist writing about Galicia for various journals (such as "Národní listy" or "Svetozor") who, as observed by Aleksander Kaczorowski in the preface to his texts, built his image of Poles on the basis of poor little towns and villages in Galicia, as he had no opportunity to visit gentry houses and experience their culture due to his role and his plebeian origin<sup>4</sup>. That explains why he frequently wrote about highlanders – poachers or drunk parish priests rather than about Polish independence aspirations<sup>5</sup>. The moment of regaining independence was not a good time for building neighbor community due to the conflict over the disputed areas in Teschen Silesia and, on a smaller scale, in the Polish–Slovakian border area of Spiš and Orava. It was only during the Second World War, when the Polish and Czech nations' right to exist was questioned, that the countries pressed on both governments in exile to develop closer cooperation, which resulted in the finally aborted plan of creating a confederation of two countries after the war. Instead, as soon as military activities ended, the dispute over the border broke up, not only in its Teschen section, but also over the Kłodzko Valley, and Stalin became a mediator in it<sup>6</sup>.

However, it was this border area that gave rise to a phenomenon of the "Polish–Czechoslovak Solidarity" movement and community, something that had not emerged in relations with any other neighbors, though it must be admitted that this cooperation, especially on the Polish side, was limited to communities living close to the border. Nevertheless, it constituted the foundation for building new relations after the collapse of the soviet regime in the region. As a result, in time of the covid-19 pandemic, when the borders were closed, a large banner appeared on the Polish bank of the Olza River, announcing: "I miss you, Czech" (*Stýská se mi po tobě, Čechu*), something unimaginable in the period between the wars<sup>7</sup>. The banner

2 He speaks of the period between 1869, when Galicia finally received autonomy.

3 S. Głąbiński, *Wspomnienia polityczne*, Kraków 2017, pp. 45–46.

4 J. Hašek, *O Podhalu, Galicji i ... Piłsudzkim. Szkice nieznanne*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 7–8.

5 *Ibidem*, pp. 78–84.

6 Readers interested in this topic are referred to probably the best publication describing these issues, written by a younger generation historian: M. Przeperski, *Nieznosny ciężar braterstwa. Konflikty polsko-czeskie w XX wieku*, Kraków 2016.

7 The whole event took place in mid-March 2020, shortly after closing the Polish–Czech border due to the fight with SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the Czechs responded quickly with a similar banner on their side of the river, <https://tvn24.pl/katowice/cieszyn-tesknie-za-toba-czechu-mowia-mieszkanicy-podzielonego-miasta-4377252> [30. 08. 2020].

is a good example of the long way Poles and Czechs have come in their history to feel some sympathy towards each other.

Taking all the above into consideration, in order to emphasize the new level of mutual relations we should also mention a regular trend of specific new interpretation of history. Politicians revel in pointing out the common historical experience. For example, recently the Polish Minister of National Defense, Mariusz Błaszczak, at the ceremony of the Visegrád Battle Group in June 2019, pointed at the common fate of Central European nations<sup>8</sup>. It is hard to say what the minister had in mind, was it the Nazi occupation, the installation of the communist system, or the type and degree of military defense against the communists or the mass nature of opposition movements? In each of these cases, when we take closer look, we will see more differences (and not only in the Polish-Czech history) than the community of experiences, but it is currently good manners to emphasize everything that unites us in the context of contemporary relations.

## 1. A Look at the Geopolitical Map

The border, undoubtedly, encourages contacts, building relations and, consequently, good neighbor relations. The Republic of Poland and the Czech Republic are in a privileged position, for both countries these are the longest state borders (796 kilometers), but the least historical ones. Only a section of several kilometers in Teschen Silesia constitutes the pre-war border, the rest being new post-German territories Poland acquired after the war, and for the Czechs this is an area where they were a small minority before relocating the Sudetes Germans. These are very interesting areas where we can observe how new contacts were made between people who had not had an opportunity to meet before. An additional element constructing the image of the neighbor is geopolitical auto-definition, namely what orientation is declared and what orientation is assigned to the neighbor. In this case we observe lack of full understanding. The Czechs adopt an identity of a Western or Central European nation, the latter being identical with the declared geopolitical declaration of Poland. But from Prague perspective, the orientation assigned to Poles is often defined in Eastern European categories. On the other hand, it is difficult to find any Polish politicians, analysts or scientists who would describe the Czechs as Western Europeans.

The Polish-Czech borderland (to a greater extent than the Polish-Slovakian one) was an area of unique phenomena in the soviet bloc. Although the agreement on the so-called small border traffic was signed very late in real socialism and although friendship routes were established very late, it was the Sudetes section that enjoyed great popularity, and going off the route “for Czech beer” was the greatest

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8 The Union command in Kraków, <http://polska-zbrojna.pl/home/articleshow/28667?t=Unijne-dowodztwo-w-Krakowie#> [31. 08. 2020].

attraction of student trips. The Polish-Czech borderland was also used by oppositionists, who used to meet there and who created an exceptionally good climate for rebuilding mutual relations after the collapse of the communist regime, as most participants of those meetings later became outstanding politicians or opinion leaders. Those border talks transformed into the Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity movement, which at the beginning of November 1989 was the main organizer of the Festival of Independent Czechoslovak Culture in Wrocław, the biggest meeting of this type beyond the reach of the Czechoslovak censorship<sup>9</sup>.

The festival of Czechoslovak culture in Poland was the result of not only good contacts, cultivated for years by the community of Lower Silesia democratic opposition, but also of the delayed process of system transformation in Prague, which broke out in mid-November 1989, and whose dynamics and course earned it the name of “Velvet Revolution”. It would seem then that having completed their system transformations, both countries should be flooded with initiatives aimed at developing Polish-Czechoslovak relations. In reality, these movements were limited to part of political elites and few people representing opinion-forming circles. This generated nice gestures, such as the speech of President V. Havel in the Polish parliament in February 1990, literally a week weeks after he had taken the post of the President of Czechoslovakia, in which he emphasized that the shared experience of communism put aside all historical disputes and let us hope for new bilateral relations. He emphasized that true friendship was born between the nations, allowing them to make joint decisions to bring them back to Europe<sup>10</sup>.

Another result of these good relations at the top was the title of the Good Neighborhood Treaty signed in Kraków in October 1991, the only one in which the significance of solidarity between Poland and Czechoslovakia was emphasized. The preamble to the treaty evoked centuries of friendship, but also the awareness of “the need of solidarity in order to secure a decent place in Europe for two nations”<sup>11</sup>.

All these actions and gestures did not translate into building stronger interpersonal relations. This article offers an in-depth analysis of this phenomenon, but it would be interesting to analyze a working hypothesis, still requiring further confirmation, namely that the limited development of friendly relations between Poles

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9 Though, unfortunately, this did not mean that it was beyond the reach of the Czechoslovak secret service. At that time general Kiszczak was still head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and head of still existing Security Service (it was renamed into the Office of State Protection at the end of July 1990), which organized special consultations for their peers from the Czechoslovak ŠtB before the event and during the festival it provided technical and operational support in invigilation of festival participants, quoted after: Ł. Kamiński, P. Blažek, G. Majewski, *Ponad granicami. Historia Solidarności Polsko-Czechosłowackiej*, Wrocław 2009, s. 227-228.

10 *Projev prezidenta CSSR Václava Havla v polském Sejmu a Senátu* (Varšava, 25. ledna 1990), [https://www.cvce.eu/obj/projev\\_prezidenta\\_cssr\\_vaclava\\_havla\\_v\\_polskem\\_sejmu\\_a\\_senatu\\_varшава\\_25\\_ledna\\_1990-cs-d639c9ab-79ce-41d9-8767-4a9bd804ec35.html](https://www.cvce.eu/obj/projev_prezidenta_cssr_vaclava_havla_v_polskem_sejmu_a_senatu_varшава_25_ledna_1990-cs-d639c9ab-79ce-41d9-8767-4a9bd804ec35.html) [02. 09. 2020].

11 The Treaty between the Republic of Poland and the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic on Good Neighborhood, Solidarity and Friendly Cooperation, *Journal of Laws* 1992. 59. 296.

and Czechs in the first post-transformation years resulted partly from the fact that these contacts were monopolized by political centers, which soon moved out of the main stage of political life, therefore their influence on social attitudes was limited.

## 2. Great Opinion Polls, however, only Polls

Taking into account historical disputes and conflicts from the period between the wars as well as weak interpersonal relations, one can see a positive sign in growing sympathies of Poles towards Czechs and vice versa, declared in public opinion polls. According to the latest polls, 53% of Poles like Czechs, which gives out southern neighbors the leading position, followed by inhabitants of Slovakia (52%), Italy (51%), the USA (50%), the UK (49%) and Hungary (32% – only the sixth place). What is worth observing is the change in the attitudes of Poles towards Czechs over the years, as in 1991 only 38% of Poles declared sympathy for them, while the most favored nation at that time were Americans (62%). It should be emphasized that the current results are not the best ones achieved by the Czechs – in 2018 as many as 59% of Poles declared they liked them, so there is still room to improve<sup>12</sup>.

In the Czechs' opinion, Poles have even more to make up for. A few years ago we were the second favorite nation by the Vltava River, preceded only by Slovaks. But according to Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění (the Czech counterpart of CBOS), in the recent survey conducted in November 2019 we fell as low as to the tenth position in the ranking. We were overtaken not only by Slovaks (it is probably impossible to compete with them), but also by Austrians, Swedes, and even Greeks and Japanese<sup>13</sup>. It is difficult to understand this dramatic decline of our popularity; after all, the survey was conducted before all restrictions connected with fighting the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic were implemented. It should probably be attributed to the unfavorable opinion Poland has in the Czech Republic, as opinion-forming circles define us as a model conservative and anti-European state trying to play the role of a regional superpower. One could say that old resentments and stereotypes, hidden temporarily, have come alive again. Indeed, it is difficult to find an article in the Czech media that would offer a positive description of the Polish politics. It seems that this is partly connected with the fact that Czech foreign correspondents and main opinion-forming centers sympathize with the opposition to the parties of the right which are in power in Poland. The picture of Poland by the Vltava River is mostly built on the narration created by "Gazeta Wyborcza", TVN or oko. press; there are no Polish conservative communities that could regularly ensure that the picture of the events by the Vistula River is more balanced.

12 CBOS Center for Public Opinion Research. Research report. Attitude to other nations, No. 31/2020, March 2020, [https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2020/K\\_031\\_20.PDF](https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2020/K_031_20.PDF) [02. 09. 2020].

13 Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění. Sympatie české veřejnosti k některým zemím – November 2019, [https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com\\_form2content/documents/c2/a5069/f9/pm191213.pdf](https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c2/a5069/f9/pm191213.pdf) [02. 09. 2020].

Another factor hindering the process of building better interpersonal relations is the specific disproportion of interest. Poles have become real Czechophiles. A few years ago (2011–2012) a series of publications of Czech literature, including the works of, inter alia, Bohumil Hrabal, Ota Pavel, Zdenek Svěrák, Vladislav Vančur or Jaroslav Hašek, accompanied by their film adaptations, was extremely popular. Książkowe Klimaty, a publishing house from Wrocław, has published a series of translations from Czech and Slovak literature; people connected with this environment are also editors of [czeskieklimaty.pl](https://czeskieklimaty.pl) portal, where one can buy practically every book by a Czech author offered on the Polish market<sup>14</sup>. Speaking about the Czech culture influence one should also mention the popularity of Jaromir Nohavica, whose Polish concerts sell out immediately and whose songs are regularly played by Polish radio stations. To make this picture complete, we should mention unabated enthusiasm for Czech movies, whose fans meet every year at the Cinema on Border Film Festival.

The position of the Polish culture by the Vltava River is much worse. One cannot find a similar movement popularizing the Polish culture or publishing houses specializing in Polish literature. Statistics and research show that our southern neighbors are greater bookworms than Poles and if we take a close look at the data from bookshops, we may find some translations from Polish. Undoubtedly, the most popular Polish writer in the Czech Republic is Mariusz Szczygieł. However, if we check which books took the Czech Republic by storm, we will find such novels as *Gottland*, *Żrób sobie raj*, or reportages: *Pepiki. Dramatyczne stulecie Czechów* and *Ach, te Czeszki!*<sup>15</sup>. One can, therefore, have an impression that the Czechs are most interested in those Polish writers who write about them, and in nobody else.

Smaller disproportions can be observed on the academic level. Admittedly, there are more universities offering Czech studies in Poland than those offering Polish studies in the Czech Republic, but taking into consideration the differences in population size, this is not as worrying as in the area of cultural exchange. Research interests and studies devoted to neighbor countries have had impressive traditions on both sides of the border. The first lectures on the Czech language and literature were offered at the Jagiellonian University as early as in 1818<sup>16</sup>, whereas a bit later, in 1848, Polish literature studies were initiated at Charles University in Prague<sup>17</sup>. Currently, Polish studies are offered at four universities in the Czech Republic: in Prague, Brno, Ostrava and Olomouc, in Slavic Departments or, as in the Czech capital, in Department of Central European Studies. In Poland the network of Czech

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14 <https://czeskieklimaty.pl/> [04. 09. 2020].

15 An interesting analysis of Polish and Czech cultural relations on the publishing level was presented by: E. Kupczak, *Czeski i polski czytelnik*, <https://nowynapis.eu/tygodnik/nr-31/artykul/wspolczesna-literatura-polska-w-czechach-i-czeska-w-polsce> [04. 09. 2020].

16 Quoted after: M. Balowski, *Ośrodku bohemistyczne w Polsce*, „Bohemistyka” 2008 No. 1–4, p. 449.

17 R. Rusin Dybalska, *Polonistyka na Uniwersytecie Karola w Pradze – historia i współczesność*, „Postscriptum polonistyczne” 2015 No. 1 (15), p. 119.

studies is denser, four universities offer full master's degree philological studies (Poznań, Wrocław, Katowice, Kraków), whereas at the University of Warsaw Czech studies are limited to cultural studies and in four centers in the south Czech Philology is offered on first-degree studies (Opole, Nysa, Racibórz, Bielsko-Biała). Moreover, one can attend Czech language courses in Szczecin, Toruń and Lublin<sup>18</sup>.

A relatively new phenomenon in the bilateral scientific cooperation is the establishment of branches of Polish private universities in the Czech Republic. This might be seen as a response to the trend noticed in the Czech media, namely that Czechs living close to the border took advantage of a wide offer of Polish private universities and supplemented their education, as reported in 2009 by Zuzana Zlinská, a journalist of *idnes.cz* portal<sup>19</sup>. Today, one of higher schools which have branches in the Czech Republic is Humanitas University from Sosnowiec, which opened Faculty of Social Studies in Vsetína, where students can obtain a first-degree diploma in Pedagogy and Psychology and the second-degree diploma in Psychology<sup>20</sup>. Another example could be Katowice Business University and its branch in Ostrava, which offers studies in International Relations, whereas in Katowice studies in the Czech language are offered<sup>21</sup>. An even more interesting case are the studies offered by the Jagiellonian College – Toruń Higher School in Uherské Hradiště, where thanks to the offer of the Polish university one can obtain a first-degree diploma in Apiculture, Real Estate Agency Services, but also complete an MBA program or an MPA public administration program<sup>22</sup>. We can clearly see that the university from Toruń considers the studies it offers in the Czech Republic an important element of its activity and it tries to take care of and develop Polish-Czech relations by, for example, giving its annual Jagiellonian awards to such prominent figures as Tomáš Petříček, Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs (2020) and former President Václav Klaus (2017)<sup>23</sup>.

### 3. The Political and Economic bilateral Cooperation

The lack of intense interpersonal relations one could expect from two neighboring nations does not disturb good, and in some periods excellent political cooperation both in bilateral relations and within international organizations and in various formats of regional activities.

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18 M. Balowski, *op. cit.*, p. 451.

19 Z. Zlinská, *Titul snadno a levně. Stačí navštívit „víkendovou univerzitu“ v Polsku*, <https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/titul-snadno-a-levne-staci-navstivit-vikendovou-univerzitu-v-polsku>. A091203\_105520\_studium\_bar [04. 09. 2020].

20 More on this topic: <http://www.huni.cz/o-nas> [04. 09. 2020].

21 More on this topic: <https://www.gwsh.pl/index-cz.php> [04. 09. 2020].

22 The offer of the university from Toruń can be found here: <https://www.fves.eu/> [04. 09. 2020].

23 The Czech direction is not the only important area for the authorities of the university from Toruń; it also has a branch of Confucius Institute, promoting Chinese language and culture. More on the university: <https://kj.edu.pl/> [04. 09. 2020].

An important element shaping mutual relations is very impressive economic cooperation. The Polish–Czech trade is characterized not only by high volume of products and services turnover but also (except for the food market) by the fact that it covers areas in which the countries do not compete. Military and defense industry cooperation seems to be keeping up with political and economic relations.

Political cooperation has its obvious dynamics, largely dependent on the type of elites in power in Prague and Warsaw, as they sometimes paid less attention to bilateral relations. However, the diary of bilateral meetings at the highest level (Presidents, Prime Ministers, major Ministers) proves that even if there were some cooler periods, they were only temporary. It should also be mentioned that such good relations did not only stem from the meetings of oppositionists in the Sudetes before 1989 (as I have already mentioned), but the same good atmosphere of relations was maintained by post-communists or other political parties which did not have the dissident history. A good illustration of these relations might be President Havel's words, who, during his visit in Warsaw in 1998, pointed at deeper foundations of good Polish–Czech relations: “we now have common values, interests (...) and we have the same goals in our foreign politics”. And a few years earlier, Władysław Bartoszewski, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, in an interview for “Týden” magazine evaluated bilateral relations as “generally the best ones over the past millennium, since the baptism of Poland in 966”<sup>24</sup>. An interesting explanation for such good bilateral relations was offered by the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karel Schwarzenberg, who said that “our relations are the best in history (...) in the past the Czechs were puzzled and irritated by those aristocratic and belligerent passions of Poles, whereas Poles did not like our petit bourgeois attitudes. Now we finally have come to respect each other”<sup>25</sup>. These are only a few quotes, but typical of the state of the current Polish–Czech relations after 1989, in which it is difficult to find any crisis moments which would question our achievements.

There is no doubt that a good foundation for bilateral contacts was the fact that after the system transformation both countries were ruled by people who had known each other from the dissident times and who had liked each other. However, it was the common interests and goals that was of crucial importance. Firstly, both countries wanted to get rid of the institutional framework of soviet supervision in shape of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the Warsaw Treaty. Then they conducted consultations and cooperated in processes of integration with European and Transatlantic institutions. In those first years we can distinguish the period of 1989–1999 and very good relations, frequent consultations and cooperation on the road to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. However, the next months preceding

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24 Both quotes after: J. Mlejnek jr., *Bezplodny sojusz*, [in:] O. Krutilka, A. Wolek (ed.), *Bezplodny sojusz? Polska i Czechy w Unii Europejskiej*, Kraków–Brno 2011, pp. 9–10.

25 Quoted after: A. Wolek, *Stosunki polsko-czeskie: wszystko w pohodě*, [in:] *Ibidem* p. 25.

accession to the European Union brought the cooling of contacts. As aptly observed by Artur Wolek, with some encouragement of the strongest European countries and EU leaders, the EU accession negotiations marked the time of rivalry, competition and attempts at winning the title of the best prepared candidate, a favorite of Brussels<sup>26</sup>. But as early as in the first years following the accession the prevailing opinion was that it was useful to consult and continue cooperation, especially visible in the period when both countries were governed by the parties with similar conservative views on the European community and the importance of maintaining strong transatlantic relations, which was also seen by external observers (for example in 2005–2007). But even later, after the liberals took the power in Poland, good contacts were maintained. The best example of which is the memorandum, signed in November 2008, on establishing the Polish–Czech Forum – a special program for financing bilateral cultural and scientific projects, but also a place where various communities from both countries could meet. What is interesting, the significance of the Forum to the Czech diplomacy can be seen in the fact that information about this initiative was placed on the main website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, next to the Czech–German Strategic Dialogue or the Visegrád Group<sup>27</sup>.

The Polish–Czech bilateral political relations are more than correct and only slightly depend on fluctuations caused by government changes in Warsaw and Prague. These relations are consolidated with the network of horizontal relations, especially in the new border area established as a result of moving the Polish–German border west. There, a whole network of Euro–regions was established. This picture, however, would not be complete if we did not supplement it with the regional cooperation dimension as well as cooperation on the level of international organizations.

In February 2021 we celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishing the Visegrád Group, the first autonomous format of regional cooperation in Central Europe<sup>28</sup>. Autonomous, because it was proposed by President of Czechoslovakia, Václav Havel to leaders of Poland and Hungary and implemented independently of other political centers. What is interesting, it is this authenticity and originality of the Visegrád cooperation that determined the durability of the V4, especially when we compare this format with the Central European Initiative, which undoubtedly had greater potential. It is the V4 (the abbreviation was formed after Czechoslovakia split into independent Czech Republic and Slovakia) that complements bilateral relations for all involved states and constitutes the foundation for their operation in the region.

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26 *Ibidem* p. 23.

27 [https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni\\_vztahy/cr\\_v\\_europe/index.html](https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni_vztahy/cr_v_europe/index.html) [05. 09. 2020].

28 The phenomenon of the Visegrád Group calls for a separate publication, but what is important in our considerations of the Polish–Czech relations is the fact that the history of regional cooperation could easily have been different. The first idea that President Havel proposed at the regional conference in Bratislava in June 1990 was to create new Central Europe, identified with the Danube countries, whereas Poland in this concept belonged to Northern Europe. Today it is the V4 that stands for Central European character.

The Polish–Czech forms of Central European cooperation, however, have their specific limitations. For Prague the Visegrád Group is an optimal format, allowing it to strengthen its position on, for example, the European forum, which is particularly important to a small country which would otherwise be easily obscured by more powerful international actors. Moreover, this exclusive membership in a well-recognized structure makes it stand out in the region. For Poland, on the other hand, the V4 format is sometimes insufficient, hence the idea of the Three Seas Initiative, which was initially coldly received in Prague and it would be difficult to argue that the Czechs are fully convinced that this is a good idea, even though they have recently begun to send some signals of greater interest in the project. It must be admitted though, that they were one of the first countries to declare participation in the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund, and they even have a seat in the Supervisory Board (in spite of failing to pay their contribution to the budget, which is only now being negotiated), 3SIIF, registered in Luxemburg, which is to be an institution supervising the implementation of particular projects<sup>29</sup>.

Another evidence that there are no everlasting alliances or exclusive forms of cooperation is the Slavkov Trilateral, established in January 2015 on the Czech initiative, and associating Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, which, in the opinion of some analysts, was to become an alternative to the V4 Group, as both Prague and Bratislava were experiencing some problems in their relations with both Budapest and Warsaw<sup>30</sup>. However, as long as both countries do not implement their new ideas for the regional activity at the costs of the V4, there is a chance that the current state of the Polish–Czech relations will not deteriorate.

An interesting element characterizing the contemporary Polish–Czech relations is the relatively frequently emphasized similarity of evaluation of how the European Union functions. Cold reception of all sorts of novelties imposed on the peripherals by the “enlightened center in Brussels was correlated not only with the periods when both countries were governed by the conservatives. Prague is even more consistent in its distance to the European project than Warsaw. Obviously, when social democrats ruled the Czech Republic, relations with the European Commission were friendlier than when the parties of the right were in power. But even today, when the Czech Republic is governed by Andrej Babiš and his populist ANO formation, whose representatives in the European Parliament joined the new Renew Europe formation focused around En Marche! of French President Emmanuel

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29 Fundusz Inwestycyjny Inicjatywy Trójmorza – czym jest nowa inicjatywa BGK?, <https://300gospodarka.pl/explain-er/fundusz-inwestycyjny-inicjatywy-trojmorza-czym-jest-nowa-inicjatywa-bgk-explainer> [05. 09. 2020].

30 Those interested in the subject are referred to two, slightly differing, comments of experts following these events and prepared in Polish state think tanks: Center for Eastern Studies and Polish Institute of International Affairs. J. Groszkowski, Deklaracja sławkowska. Nowy format współpracy regionalnej, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2015-02-04/deklaracja-slawkowska-nowy-format-wspolpracy-regionalnej> a D. Kałan, *Trójkąt sławkowski: konkurencja dla Wyszehradu?*, „Biuletyn PISM” No. 18 (1255), 16 February 2015, [https://pism.pl/publikacje/Tr\\_jk\\_t\\_s\\_awkowski\\_\\_konkurencja\\_dla\\_Wyszehradu\\_](https://pism.pl/publikacje/Tr_jk_t_s_awkowski__konkurencja_dla_Wyszehradu_) [both 05. 09. 2020].

Macron<sup>31</sup>, and Věra Jourová (the face of the dispute between the European Commission and the Republic of Poland concerning the rule of law) is the Czech commissioner, these relations are far from harmonious. In spite of these differences, one element bringing Poland and the Czech Republic close to each other is a similar way of defining the strong European Union. If they have to choose between two main models, as defined by Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski, of the EU possessing administrative efficiency to make decisions and the politically coherent community, supported by the countries creating it and interested in continuing the integration project<sup>32</sup>, Prague and Warsaw most frequently favor the latter model. Hence the joint Polish-Czech criticism of bureaucracy, the multitude of regulations which in an increasingly technical way attempt at regulating every aspect of European citizens' life, but above all, criticism of the unjustified exchange of roles in the principal-agent model. In the Polish-Czech concepts, member states should determine tasks for the EU, not the other way round, at least until the moment when the European community becomes really legitimate<sup>33</sup>. This view also expresses fears that far-reaching integration of the European community may at some point constitute an obstacle which countries applying for the EU membership may not be able to overcome. Warsaw and Prague are among those capitals which consistently try to maintain the principle of "open doors" for new members. After 2004 this mainly concerned support for Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia, now the completion of the integration process of Western Balkan states with the European Union is at stake, as well as maintaining membership prospects for Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, and potentially other countries. In this context, the history of the Eastern Partnership is characteristic, as it was established on the Polish-Swedish initiative and was inaugurated during the Czech presidency, at the European Union summit in Prague on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2009.

There is, however, a certain crack in this joint position adopted by Prague and Warsaw towards the European project. The axis of the Polish view is the willingness to uphold the right to build a stronger, sovereign state of conservative nature (especially in 2005-2007 and after 2015). For our southern neighbors, on the other hand, this is mainly the fight for the right to take advantage of the original form of (conservative) liberalism, namely to ensure that others do not tell the Czechs "how to live".

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31 Renew Europe in the current European Parliament is the continuation of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), the party which most severely criticized the current Polish government and accused Warsaw of violating the rule of law, its member being, for example, Guy Verhofstadt, the Polish party belonging to it was *Nowoczesna* of Ryszard Petru.

32 Quoted after: P. Żurawski vel Grajewski, *Geopolityka – siła – wola. Rzeczpospolitej zmagania z losem*, Kraków 2010, pp. 217-218.

33 More on this topic: O. Krutílek, *Pogłębienie integracji europejskiej jest fatalnym błędem*, [in:] O. Krutílek, A. Wolek (ed.), *Bezplodny sojusz? ... op. cit.*, pp. 43-47.

Contrary to political relations, it is difficult to clearly evaluate the Polish-Czech cooperation in the area of defense. On the one hand, both countries have been members of the NATO since March 1999. Within the North Atlantic Treaty, the Czechs participate in various foreign missions. Czech soldiers are currently present on the east flank of the NATO, and are stationed in Lithuania and Latvia. They do not form large, but rather specialized contingents, especially in the Lithuanian mission, where Prague sent its cyber-soldiers. In Latvia, the Czech presence is of more classical nature, and consists of a platoon of mortars of the light motorized battalion<sup>34</sup>. Moreover, there is good cooperation in other regional formats, such as the Bucharest Nine<sup>35</sup>, or the Visegrád EU Battle Group, established in 2016, in which the Czech contingent is the second largest one<sup>36</sup>. Therefore, it is hard to criticize the Polish-Czech military cooperation in the multilateral format, but experts claim that it does not translate into bilateral relations. An attempt at purchasing modern fighter planes for air forces failed (the Czechs finally chose Swedish Gripen planes, whereas Warsaw decided to buy American F-16), we were more competitors than collaborators when negotiating the missile defense system installation with G. W. Bush administration in Washington. However, the most serious stain on the image of our relations was a suspicious transaction of exchanging ten Czech MIG planes for eleven Polish Sokół helicopters, which, according to many experts, was a result of gaining material profits by Czech politicians<sup>37</sup>. After a few years of exploitation, Prague had to resign from using them, due to high costs of repair and maintenance<sup>38</sup>.

Compared to only partially utilized possibilities of bilateral cooperation in the defense area, the Polish-Czech trade exchange looks significantly better. Especially, if we take into account historical reasons or even more conspicuous differences in economic development in the period of communist dictatorship, the current level of trade between the countries must be considered more than satisfactory. Even a quick look at basic statistics shows that Poland and the Czech Republic are key trade partners for each other.

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34 More on Czech foreign military missions on the website of the Ministry of Defense: <http://www.mise.army.cz/aktualni-mise/default.htm> [05. 09. 2020].

35 Established in November 2015 out of Polish-Romanian initiative informal platform associating nine Central European countries (apart from Poland and Romania also Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia), which use this format of cooperation to promote the importance of defending the eastern flank of the NATO. The main dimension of the Bucharest Nine activities are annual meetings of Ministers of defense, the last one was held in Warsaw in April 2019, the meeting in 2020 was postponed due to the COVID pandemic.

36 The idea of enrolling the V4 states into the EU project of creating regional battle groups has longer history. A letter of intent in this matter was signed by Ministers of Defense of the Visegrád Group states during the Polish presidency in the V4 in March 2013, the text of the declaration [in:] P. Bajda (ed.), *Raport polskiego przewodnictwa w Grupie Wyszehradzkiej lipiec 2012 – czerwiec 2013*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 50-53.

37 J. Mlejnek Jr., *Bezplodny sojusz ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

38 The Communication of the Altair Aviation Agency: [https://www.altair.com.pl/news/view?news\\_id=9140](https://www.altair.com.pl/news/view?news_id=9140) [05. 09. 2020].

**TABLE NO 1.****THE VALUE OF IMPORTS OF GOODS AND SERVICES FROM PARTICULAR COUNTRIES (IN EUR THOUSAND)**

<b>Countries</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>Germany</b>				
Value of goods	42 151 043	47 681 159	51 464 602	51 835 810
Value of purchased services	6 773 080	7 397 822	7 969 077	7 731 535
<b>China</b>				
Value of goods	21 665 188	24 271 628	26 467 083	29 253 527
Value of purchased services	297 861	408 079	406 327	478 664
<b>Russia</b>				
Value of goods	10 443 017	13 092 830	16 276 506	14 453 884
Value of purchased services	340 941	393 364	435 262	449 151
<b>The Netherlands</b>				
Value of goods	6 951 305	7 872 818	8 286 022	8 983 376
Value of purchased services	1 599 629	1 806 018	2 048 379	2 176 804
<b>The Czech Republic</b>				
Value of goods	6 550 629	7 430 975	7 859 611	7 895 001
Value of purchased services	1 577 607	1 629 653	1 799 622	1 862 678
<b>Slovakia</b>				
Value of goods	3 616 563	3 696 480	4 115 647	4 245 739
Value of purchased services	720 248	734 000	769 959	766 489
<b>Hungary</b>				
Value of goods	3 249 127	3 576 146	3 697 521	3 906 114
Value of purchased services	321 115	384 875	420 016	406 687
<b>The USA</b>				
Value of goods	5 091 898	5 865 539	6 482 018	7 645 217
Value of purchased services	1 631 730	1 744 998	1 935 269	2 212 290
<b>The UK</b>				
Value of goods	4 682 311	4 949 604	5 566 888	5 415 329
Value of purchased services	2 699 468	2 838 201	3 028 793	3 236 996

Source: [http://swaid.stat.gov.pl/HandelZagraniczny\\_dashboards/Raporty\\_predefiniowane/RAP\\_DBD\\_HZ\\_3.aspx](http://swaid.stat.gov.pl/HandelZagraniczny_dashboards/Raporty_predefiniowane/RAP_DBD_HZ_3.aspx)

**TABLE NO 2.****THE VALUE OF EXPORTS OF GOODS AND SERVICES TO PARTICULAR COUNTRIES (IN EUR THOUSAND)**

<b>Countries</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>Germany</b>				
Value of goods	50 621 335	56 794 072	63 073 871	66 043 282
Value of purchased services	10 567 546	12 034 370	13 448 332	14 945 781
<b>China</b>				
Value of goods	1 727 606	2 053 423	2 115 530	2 649 315
Value of purchased services	190 865	277 527	378 216	390 456
<b>Russia</b>				
Value of goods	5 216 434	6 176 858	6 762 925	7 430 926
Value of purchased services	796 670	786 412	886 025	761 938
<b>The Netherlands</b>				
Value of goods	8 282 090	9 087 190	10 100 671	10 428 157
Value of purchased services	2 463 214	3 069 287	3 796 598	4 214 123
<b>The Czech Republic</b>				
Value of goods	12 151 026	13 300 930	14 257 157	14 582 126
Value of purchased services	1 444 806	1 549 838	1 681 959	1 759 670
<b>Slovakia</b>				
Value of goods	4 555 108	5 189 335	5 790 396	6 209 203
Value of purchased services	724 988	799 314	852 815	864 988
<b>Hungary</b>				
Value of goods	4 901 001	5 460 413	5 959 750	6 572 004
Value of purchased services	392 291	464 907	502 369	559 004
<b>The USA</b>				
Value of goods	5 091 898	5 865 539	6 482 018	7 645 217
Value of purchased services	2 587 145	3 184 817	3 793 617	4 364 731
<b>The UK</b>				
Value of goods	12 296 409	13 298 446	13 946 727	14 244 239
Value of purchased services	3 236 632	3 816 924	4 420 389	4 899 955

Source: [http://swaid.stat.gov.pl/Handel%zagraniczny\\_dashboards/Raporty\\_predefiniowane/RAP\\_DBD\\_H%4.aspx](http://swaid.stat.gov.pl/Handel%zagraniczny_dashboards/Raporty_predefiniowane/RAP_DBD_H%4.aspx)

A simple analysis of the Polish data shows that the Czech Republic is one of major economic partners, second (after Germany) recipient of Polish goods in 2019 and fifth exporter to our country. Looking at these figures we should not forget that if we took into account the population potential, the Czech Republic would turned out to be the most important trade partner of Poland. The data from the Czech Statistical Office (Český statistický úřad, ČSÚ) presented in the table below, also looks interesting.

**TABLE NO 3.**

**THE VALUE OF IMPORTS AND EXPORTS OF GOODS TO THE CZECH REPUBLIC FROM SELECTED COUNTRIES (IN KČ MILLION) IN 2018 AND 2019, DIVIDED INTO THE TURNOVER, EXPORTS, IMPORTS AND TRADE BALANCE**

Country	TOTAL TURNOVER		EXPORTS		IMPORTS		TRADE BALANCE	
	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
<b>Germany</b>	2433487	2454921	1426361	1449410	1007127	1005510	419234	443900
<b>Poland</b>	574884	585069	266503	275348	308381	309721	-41878	-34373
<b>China</b>	624656	672362	56158	56617	568498	615745	-512341	-559128
<b>Slovakia</b>	533113	526446	332935	346468	200178	179978	132757	166489
<b>Hungary</b>	228311	244130	132129	149199	96182	94931	35947	54269
<b>Austria</b>	314335	309380	196303	195727	118032	113653	78271	82074
<b>Netherlands</b>	273764	291923	162340	173796	111424	118127	50915	55669
<b>Great Britain</b>	286932	273255	203751	205514	83181	67740	120571	137774
<b>Russia</b>	217368	213057	89672	98775	127696	114282	-38024	-15507
<b>USA</b>	192290	214663	90938	106430	101352	108233	-10414	-1803

Source: own elaboration on the basis of the data from the Czech Statistical Office (ČSÚ), quoted after: <https://www.mpo.cz/cz/zahranicni-obchod/statistiky-zahranicniho-obchodu/zahranicni-obchod-1-12-2019--252686/>

As we can see, as far as turnover is concerned. Poland is the third biggest trade partner for the Czech Republic and one of the few partners with whom it has negative trade balance. The above data, however, does not reveal the dynamics of the Polish-Czech economic relations, as we cannot see how the role of Poland has grown over the recent years in the total balance of trade exchange with foreign countries.

When analyzing the causes of this situation and trying to find the foundations of these good business relations, we should not forget about one detail. In my opinion, the success of the trade lies in the fact that the Polish-Czech trade is generally

non-competitive in the most sensitive areas, except for food industry, which I will describe below. It should be noted that the biggest Czech investor in Poland is ČEZ a. s., present in our country since 2012, owner of, inter alia, the power stations in Skawina and Chorzów, investor in renewable energy sources. Admittedly, the latest press reports inform that ČEZ a. s. is planning to abandon foreign markets, but so far no action has been taken in this area<sup>39</sup>. Another large investor is Energetický a průmyslový holding, a. s. belonging to Daniel Křetínski, owner of Silesia coalmine in Czechowice-Dziedzice and it seems that this investment is not the last word of one of the richest Czechs. In spite of a short episode of purchasing Radio ZET by Křetínski (he took over the shares in the Polish station as part of another transaction), it is obvious that he is more interested in buying out other Polish coalmines in difficult financial situation, such as Tauron KWK Janina in Lubiąż, than in entering the Polish media market<sup>40</sup>. Outside the energy market in Poland one can find the capital presence of Kofola SA, which took over the Polish producer of popular soft drinks, HOOP company, as well as Penta – the Czech and Slovakian capital group of dubious reputation<sup>41</sup>, which is co-owner of EMPIK bookshops and has shares in the Polish office real estate market<sup>42</sup>. If we add here one of the most popular anti-virus software, developed by AVAST company, we will have a broad review of the Czech business presence in Poland. According to the statistics presented by one of specialist portals, over 500 business entities from the Czech Republic operate in Poland<sup>43</sup>.

If we analyze the other side – Polish companies' involvement in the Czech market, we will first of all find Orlen, owner of Unipetrol a. s. holding (processing and distribution of oil derivatives) and leader in the petrol station market<sup>44</sup>. PKO BP offers its corporate services, whereas stock exchange investors use the services of the Broker House of BOŚ; mBank, which belongs to the German financial consortium, has an offer for individual clients, though it entered the Czech market through its affiliate company. In the clothes market we can find LPP and CCC stores; Maspex from Wadowice became the owner of a major Czech producer of juice, Walmark; Mokate has a strong position on the coffee market.

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39 <https://www.fio.cz/zpravodajstvi/zpravy-z-burzy/235127-prodej-elektroaren-skupiny-cez-v-polsku-by-mohl-zacit-v-dubnu-pisi-hospodarske-noviny-komentar> [10. 09. 2020].

40 <https://byznys.ihned.cz/c1-66646840-kretinsky-touzi-rozsirit-sve-imperium-v-polsku-od-zadluzene-statni-firmy-chce-koupit-uhelny-dul> [10. 09. 2020].

41 Penta Group often appears in media reports in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in connection with accusations of using corruption practices. It was, inter alia, involved in secret sponsoring of Slovakian political parties, which contributed to the outbreak of the so-called Gorilla Affair which led to weeks of social demonstrations. More on this topic: <https://www.salon24.pl/u/domniemanieniewinności/387508,slowacka-wiosna-protest-gorila> [10. 09. 2020].

42 More on Penta Group investment in Poland on its official website: <https://www.pentainvestments.com/pl/about.aspx> [10. 09. 2020].

43 *Polsko: Obchodní a ekonomická spolupráce s ČR*, <https://www.businessinfo.cz/navody/polsko-obchodni-a-ekonomicka-spoluprace-s-cr/> [10. 09. 2020].

44 <https://www.orlen.pl/PL/OFirmie/OrlenWEuropie/Strony/OrlenWCzechach.aspx> [10. 09. 2020].

However, it is not the list of companies with capital involvement on both sides of the border that affects most the Polish-Czech economic relations, but the nature of their business ventures. One may argue that one of the most significant foundations of good economic cooperation is the fact that the Polish business in the Czech Republic (and vice versa) does not compete with its counterpart in strategic sectors, which would have to generate conflicts. We can even argue that this capital involvement is also largely complementary.

This nearly ideal picture of cooperation is spoilt by an issue whose political weight occasionally causes crises in bilateral relations, namely competition in food industry, resulting from totally different agricultural policy. In Poland agriculture is based on family-run farms and only a small part of them can be classified as large production enterprises. In the Czech Republic, on the other hand, as a result of various historical experiences, including communist collectivization, the average size of arable fields is the highest in the European Union, unlike in Poland, where it is one of the lowest. What is even more interesting, since Prague joined the EU, this indicator nearly doubled<sup>45</sup>. This obviously determines Prague position in the debate on the Common Agricultural Policy conducted on the EU forum, manifested, for example, in the lack of consent for excluding the highest farms from the system of direct subsidies or favorable treatment of experiments with genetically modified crops<sup>46</sup>. An equally serious political challenge in this context is a nearly monopolistic position of the Czech Prime Minister, Andrej Babiš (owner of Agrofert holding) on the production market. For him, Polish food exported to the Czech Republic and Slovakia constitutes serious competition. The Polish media reported ten years ago that the image campaign discrediting the quality of Polish food products was coordinated by the companies of the current Czech Prime Minister, who controls the most popular newspapers, such as: “Mladá fronta DNES” and “Lidové noviny”<sup>47</sup>.

We could also mention here some differences of opinion on energy issues, the Czech support for the Nord Stream project, which is no longer as strong as a few years ago, or a local conflict over the opencast lignite coal in Turów, but they seem to be of lesser importance for the bilateral relations than the above-mentioned dispute over Polish food and its access to the Czech market.

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45 According to the data from the agricultural census, the average area of arable lands in the Czech Republic in 2003 was 79.3 hectares, whereas in 2010 it was 152.4 hectares, while in Poland it was, respectively: 6.6 hectares in 2003 and 9.6 hectares in 2010, with the EU average in 2010 being 13.8 hectares. Quotes after: W. Poczta (ed.), *Gospodarstwa rolne w Polsce na tle gospodarstw w Unii Europejskiej – wpływ WPR. Powszechny Spis Rolny 2010*, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Warszawa 2013, p. 23.

46 More on this topic: P. Havel, *Fiskalna droga donikąd. Jak powinna wyglądać reforma wspólnej polityki rolnej UE po 2013 roku?*, [in:] O. Krutílková, A. Wolek (ed.), *Bezplodny sojusz? ...*, op. cit., pp. 163–169.

47 C. Kowanda, *Zły Czech – Andrej Babiš*, <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/rynek/1552361,1,zly-czech--andrej-babi.read> [10.09.2020].

## Conclusions

Although the Polish–Czech relations in many areas could be more intense, bring the communities on both sides of the border closer and build new relations on various levels and in various environments, taking into account the past, we may argue that we are witnessing a qualitative breakthrough, though admittedly, it has not been the result of working out our (often painful) history, but the result of pragmatic attitudes of political elites, who decided to wave them aside. The joint partnership in the EU, the NATO, and, above all, positive experience of thirty years of cooperation within the Visegrád Group, significantly contributed to eliminating deeply rooted distrust, which, in some Polish communities turned into Czechophilia. This, however, does not solve all problems, does not substitute simple fascination with the West of the overwhelming majority of the societies on both banks of the Olza River, though it overcomes specific indifference. There is strong probability that political relations will remain on a stable, good level, economic cooperation will thrive and, who knows, we may even see an advertising campaign of Czech “kofola” in Polish shops and Polish apples in the Czech Republic, and in a couple of years we might hear of joint Polish–Czech projects of armaments industry.

The biggest danger lies in the unsolved dilemma concerning the roles the countries play as well as those assigned to them in international relations. From the very beginning the Czech Republic has wanted to be treated as a small country, and at the same time, according to the declarations of the first President of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš G. Masaryk, it has always aspired to play the role of a moral leader of Central Europe. It tried to take this position on the international stage by questioning the rights of other actors in the region to be a medium-sized country. This trait of the Czech political tradition is still resonating. It constitutes a major challenge to the Polish diplomacy, which does not depreciate the roles of other actors, but openly aspires to maintain the right to play a more serious role in Central Europe, namely that of a builder of new formats of cooperation, such as the Three Seas Initiative or being a partner to global superpowers, such as the United States. These differences of opinion form one of the last barriers to building even better bilateral relations. And I would even venture to claim that they are of vital importance, because it is the Polish–Czech relations (equally with the Polish–Romanian relations), rather than the Polish–Hungarian relations, that will determine the shape and level of Central European cooperation in years to come.

## Conclusion

This publication accomplishes several goals of the international research project. First of all, it points at the significance of history politics in the contemporary world and makes certain predictions concerning its role and function in the nearest decades. It also emphasizes key elements, stages and problems of both Polish and Czech history politics. Secondly, the authors presented a broad panorama of the history of Polish-Czech relations, practically from the beginnings of the Polish and the Czech statehoods, with particular emphasis, however, on the period after 1918, that is when both countries regained independence – Poles 123 after the last partition of Poland (1795), the Czechs – 298 years after the tragic events related to the battle of White Mountain (1620). Thirdly, the authors of this publication took stock of the past three decades of the Polish-Czech relations after the fall of the Iron Curtain (1989–2019).

Undoubtedly, this publication will serve well those interested in the history of the Polish-Czech relations, in which one can easily find signs and periods of conflicts, competition and cooperation. Preserving scientific objectivity, the authors tried to provide detailed descriptions of these aspects, though it should be remembered that, as in any other history of bilateral relations, accents could be placed differently and different questions could be asked concerning the same historical events or processes. Therefore this publication does not constitute any definite summary, conclusion or “complete” analysis of the Polish-Czech relations. On the contrary, it constitutes an invitation to further discussions devoted both to the past and the prospects for development of these relations.

From the political science point of view present in this publication, it is worth adding a few things referring to the results of the analyses conducted by the authors. They are connected with the question of what internal and external factors will shape the Polish-Czech relations in the nearest future.

The Polish-Czech relations are characterized by high development dynamics both in the economic area and – though to a smaller extent – in the political area. Both countries belong to the most important regional and global international or-

ganizations, including the European Union and the NATO, and constitute the most western post-communist area of great development potential. For both countries Germany is and will probably remain for a long time the main economic and political partner among the so-called old Union states. The German factor, therefore, plays a key role in taking political and economic decisions in Warsaw and Prague. At the same time it should be remembered that although these three economies closely cooperate with each other, Poland and the Czech Republic are determined to maintain their own currencies and not to enter the Euro-zone, which is expected from them by Germany. One could put forward a thesis that close economic and political cooperation between Poland and the Czech Republic is beneficial to Germany as long as it does not turn out to be a “flywheel” of broader integration projects, such as V4, V4+ (closer cooperation between the Visegrád Four and selected partners) or the Three Seas Initiative, which assume, apart from political cooperation, also collaboration in building infrastructure allowing development of the region based on own resources. Then the position of Germany as a privileged partner, having *de facto* the hegemonic position, would be weakened. This is the main reason why the government in Berlin is interested in the state of development of cooperation between Central and Eastern European states. In order to build good relations with the Czech Republic, Poland should present itself to Prague as a major international player, deeply rooted in the European Union and NATO structures, and playing the role of a “keystone” between the old and the new Union, not as an author of a sphere of cooperation that is alternative to the European Union. Therefore, the Three Seas Initiative promoted by Poland should become rather a development impulse and a factor consolidating the whole Union than a regional project aiming at gradually becoming independent from the West. It is also important in the perspective of Russia’s imperial ambitions and its actions disintegrating the European Union.

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## Authors' biographical notes

### **Piotr Bajda**

DSc, political science expert, professor at Department of International Relations, Chair of International Relations and European Studies. In 2005–2009 worked for the Eastern Studies Center, in 2000–2004 deputy head of the Polish Institute in Bratislava. Scientific interests: transformation of political elites in post-communist states; national and nationality issues in Central and Eastern Europe; the place and role of small states on the international stage; Central and Eastern Europe as a specific geopolitical area; the Republic of Slovakia – its political system, political culture, national identity, foreign relations. Correspondence address: p. bajda@uksw.edu.pl

### **Adam Buława**

PhD, military historian, employee of Chair of the Military History at Department of History Science at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw; former head of the Polish Army Museum /2016–2019/. His scientific interests include military history, history of Poland and Polish nation in the period of fight for independence and defending it /1795–1921/ and the fate of Poles abroad. Correspondence address: a. bulawa@uksw.edu.pl

### **Krzysztof Cebul**

Professor at UKSW, DSc, political scientist and sociologist; head of Chair of Security Policy at Institute of Political Science and Administration at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. His scientific work focuses on: analysis of parliament discourse and analysis of political parties manifestos; conditions, organization and dysfunctions of the international order; inter-structural conditions guaranteeing stability of a democratic system and methodology of social research focused on the area of state security. Correspondence address: k. cebul@uksw.edu.pl

### **Jarosław Drozd**

DSc, professor at Chair of International Relations and European Studies at Institute of Political Science and Administration at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. Experienced Polish diplomat. Polish consul-general in Sankt Petersburg and in Lvov. Titular ambassador. Author of numerous publications on international politics and security. Correspondence address: j. drozd@uksw.edu.pl

## **Antoni Dudek**

Born in 1966 – professor of humanities, employee of Department of History Science at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. Author and co-author of several books on Polish history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and history of Polish political thought. His most important publications deal with Poland's history during the communist reign, the system transformation and the transformations of the political system of contemporary Poland. Recently he published “Od Mazowieckiego do Suchockiej. Pierwsze rządy wolnej Polski (Kraków 2019). Correspondence address: a. dudek@uksw.edu.pl

## **Bartłomiej Dźwigala**

Born in 1987, lecturer at Chair of Medieval History at Institute of History at UKSW; obtained Master's (2011) and PhD (2015) degree in history at UKSW, as well as Master's degree (2014) at Institute of Classical Philology of Warsaw University. His interests include: crusades and history of Latin states in Middle East, as well as literature, liturgy and art of Latin Europe in Middle Ages and the issue of the place occupied by Central Europe in history of Latin civilization. Correspondence address: b. dzwigala@uksw.edu.pl

## **Dušan Janák**

Professor, PhD, born in 1956, historian, head of Institute of Central European Studies at department of Public Politics in Opava, University of Silesia in Opava, former dean of this department (2008–2016). Author and co-author of scientific works on Czech and Czechoslovak history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the context of Central and Eastern Europe, devoted to political and economic history and political repressions exerted by totalitarian regimes, recently: *Průmyslovědělnictvo v českých zemích 1938 – 1948* (with S. Kokoškou et al., 2019). Correspondence address: dusan.janak@fvp.slu.cz

## **Jiří Kocian**

Professor, PhD, CSc, born in 1956 in Pardubice; historian, researcher at Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Republic Academy of Science, also works for Department of Public politics at University of Silesia in Opava. Scientific interests: history of the Czech Republic and Czechoslovakia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, author of the book on history of the Czechoslovak and Czech political system and political parties after 1945; author of “Czechoslovak National Socialist Party in 1945–1948. Organization – manifesto – politics; member of the editorial board of *Acta Historica Universitatis Silesianae Opaviensis*; member of the editorial and the scientific board of National Archives (Národní archiv); chairman of the Association of the Czech Republic Historians. Correspondence address: kocian@usd.cas.cz

## **Tomasz Skibiński**

Priest, DSc, professor at UKSW; theologian, patrologist and historian; employee of Chair of Ancient History at Institute of History at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. Scientific interests: history of the Roman Empire in late ancient times, barbarians in late ancient times and early Middle Ages – their migrations, relations with the Roman Empire

and barbarian states, history of the Church in late ancient times and early Middle Ages. Correspondence address: t. skibinski@uksw.edu.pl

## **Lukáš Vomlela**

PhD, born in 1981, political scientist, employee of Institute of Public Administration and Regional Policy, Department of Public Politics in Opava, University of Silesia in Opava. His scientific research focuses on political systems, political transformation in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989, political parties and political elites. Correspondence address: lukas.vomlela@fvp.slu.cz

## **Radosław Zenderowski**

Professor, DSc, born in 1974, political scientist and sociologist; head of Chair of International Relations and European Studies at Institute of Political Science and Administration at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński university in Warsaw, professor at W. Korfanty Upper Silesia Business University in Katowice; member of the Scientific Board of the Polish Association of European Studies. Author of publications devoted to the issues of national identity, nationalism, ethnic politics, borders and border areas and relations between politics and religion in Europe. Lives in Cieszyn. Correspondence address: r.zenderowski@uksw.edu.pl

## **Rudolf Žáček**

Professor, PhD, historian, dean of Department of Public Politics at University of Silesia in Opava, in 1991-1993 head of the Silesian Institute of the Czech Republic Academy of Science in Opava, until 2000 head of the Silesian Institute of the Silesian Museum in Opava and deputy head of the Silesian Museum; pro-rector of the University of Silesia (2001-2007), from 2007 to 2015 – Rector of the university of Silesia in Opava. Chairman of the Conference of Silesian Universities Rectors (2008-2014). Has always dealt mainly with history of Silesia, author of publication titled Silesia, published in a series: Short Histories of Countries. Author of numerous articles and publications on Czechoslovak-Polish relations, devoted mainly to the conflict over Cieszyn Silesia and the preparations to the establishment of the Czechoslovak-Polish confederation during the Second World War. Correspondence address: rudolf.zacek@fvp.slu.cz



# Abstracts

**RADOSŁAW ZENDEROWSKI:**

## **POLITYKA HISTORYCZNA DZIŚ I JUTRO – PRÓBA KONCEPTUALIZACJI I PROGNOZY**

Celem artykułu jest nakreślenie najważniejszych wyzwań, przed którymi „tu i teraz” staje polityka historyczna oraz tych, które w nieodległej przyszłości najprawdopodobniej będą determinowały kształt poszczególnych polityk historycznych. W pierwszym przypadku (wyzwania aktualne), wskazuję po pierwsze, że mimo iż nadal państwo pozostaje głównym podmiotem odpowiedzialnym za prowadzenie polityki historycznej, zaobserwować można wzrost zjawiska pluralizacji kreatorów omawianej polityki (organizacje pozarządowe, stowarzyszenia pasjonatów historii, np. uczestnicy grup rekonstrukcyjnych, celebryci itd.). Po drugie, wydaje się, że w odróżnieniu od klasycznej polityki historycznej skoncentrowanej na „edukacji historycznej” własnego społeczeństwa, współczesna polityka historyczna w coraz większym stopniu adresatami polityki historycznej są inne państwa i ich społeczeństwa, a polityka historyczna staje się wówczas niejako częścią wspomnianej już szeroko pojętej dyplomacji publicznej. Po trzecie, dynamicznym przemianom podlegają środki (narzędzia, kanały) przekazu treści związanych z polityką historyczną. Niebagatelne znaczenie ma w omawianym przypadku rozwój mediów społecznościowych, które niejako przekształciły rzesze niedysyjszych odbiorców komunikatów przekazywanych przez tradycyjne media drukowane i elektroniczne, w coraz bardziej aktywnych twórców informacji i samowłańczych ekspertów w niemal każdej dziedzinie życia społecznego. Po czwarte, zmianom ulega forma komunikowania treści związanych z polityką historyczną, co jest ściśle związane ze zmianą narzędzi i kanałów komunikowania. W przekazach z

zakresu polityki historycznej coraz częściej swoją obecność zaznaczają krótkie przekazy: twitty, filmiki, memy itp. W drugim przypadku (wyzwania potencjalne) wskazuję po pierwsze na to, że coraz większą rolę odgrywać będą polityki historyczne Chin oraz Rosji, które w wielu wymiarach staną się poważnym wyzwaniem dla Europy. Po drugie, w warunkach rodzącej się „nowej zimnej wojny”, będącej alternatywą dla otwartego konfliktu zbrojnego, wzrastać będzie znaczenie różnych form niemilitarnej konfrontacji, w tym tzw. wojen pamięci. Po trzecie, dwie wojny światowe XX wieku, które ustanowiły nowy porządek światowy, przyznając Stanom Zjednoczonym Ameryki najpierw rolę mocarstwa, a następnie supermocarstwa, stanowią coraz słabszy punkt odniesienia i dla polityki międzynarodowej, i dla pamięci historycznej wielu doświadczonych tą hekatombą narodów. Po czwarte, coraz wyraźniej w zachodnim kręgu kulturowym widać pewną zmianę w sposobie rozumienia historii i budowania pamięci zbiorowej. Historia coraz częściej pojmowana jest przez paradygmat postpozytywistyczny. Postmodernistyczna wizja historii cechująca się skrajnym konstruktywizmem i relatywizmem kładzie nacisk na badanie narracji, jednostkowych i grupowych przeżyć, rezygnując z dążenia do ustalenia obiektywnych faktów. Analizy te poprzedzone są wprowadzeniem dotyczącym sposobów rozumienia polityki historycznej, jej rodzajów, form i uwarunkowań.

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**RADOSŁAW ZENDEROWSKI:**

## **THE HISTORY POLITICS TODAY AND TOMORROW – AN ATTEMPT AT CONCEPTUALIZATION AND PROGNOSIS**

The article aims at outlining the major challenges which “here and now” face the historical politics, as well as those which in the near future will probably determine the shape of particular historical politics. As far as the former (current challenges) are concerned, the author indicates, firstly, that although

the state remains the main entity responsible for historical politics, we can observe the growing phenomenon of the pluralization of the politics creators (non-governmental organizations, associations of history enthusiasts, for example members of reenactment groups, celebrities, etc.). Secondly, it seems that contrary to the classical historical politics, focused on “historical education” of our society, the contemporary historical politics is increasingly choosing other states and their societies the recipients of the information, thus becoming part of broadly understood public diplomacy. Thirdly, dynamic transformations involve the means (tools, channels) of passing the content related to historical politics. The development of social media is of major significance here, as they transformed recipients of messages passed by traditional print and electronic media into more active information creators and self-appointed experts in nearly every single area of social life. Fourthly, the form of communicating the content related to historical politics is changing, which is closely related to the fact that different tools and communication channels are used. In the messages concerning historical politics we can observe the increasing popularity of short messages: tweets, videos and memes. For the latter (potential challenges), the author emphasized that, firstly, the historical politics of China and Russia will play a vital role, in many dimensions becoming a serious challenge to Europe. Secondly, in conditions of the budding “new cold war”, being an alternative to an open military conflict, the significance of various forms of non-military confrontation will grow, including the so-called memory wars. Thirdly, two world wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which determined the new global order, giving the United States of America first the role of a power, then a superpower, are becoming a weakening point of reference both for international politics and for historical memory

of many nations suffering from this hecatomb. Fourthly, we can observe, increasingly visible in the western cultural circle, a certain change in the way of understanding history and building collective memory. History is frequently perceived through the post-positivist paradigm. The post-modernist vision of history, characterized by extreme constructivism and relativism, focuses on analyzing narration, individual and collective experiences, resigning from determining objective facts. These analyses are preceded by an introduction explaining ways of understanding historical politics, its types, forms and conditions.

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**LUKÁŠ VOMLELA:**  
**HISTORICKÁ POLITIKA V ČESKOSLOVENSKU  
A ČESKÉ REPUBLICE**

Cílem předloženého textu je přiblížení proměn historické politiky a představení hlavních témat spojených s procesem dekomunizace, které zásadním způsobem ovlivnily formování historické politiky v České republice, resp. v Československu po roce 1989, kdy byly započaty procesy rozsáhlých politických, ekonomických a sociálních změn, které nastaly v zemích střední a východní Evropy v důsledku pádů komunistických režimů. Součástí těchto procesů byla rovněž redefinice náhledu na dějiny, které byly od druhé poloviny 40. let 20. století do roku 1989 dominantně vykládány v souladu s ideologií marxismu-leninismu. Předložený text se v první části zaměřuje na analýzu, jež zahrnuje hlavní roviny mnohvrstevného procesu dekomunizace, přičemž hlavní pozornost je věnována představení zásadních proměn historické politiky a zachycení postojů a požadavků k historické politice hlavními aktéry v České republice, resp. do roku 1993 v Československu. V procesu dekomunizace byla přijata řada zákonů umožňující legitimizaci politických změn, z nichž nejvýznamnější byly zákon o rehabilitaci politických vězňů z roku 1990, lustrační zákon a zejména zákon

č. 198/1993 Sb., o protiprávnosti komunistického režimu. Všechny tyto kroky doprovázely četné diskuze a neshody mezi hlavními aktéry historické politiky, mezi něž patří politické strany. V počátečním období mezi lety 1989 až 1991 se jednalo především o spory mezi Komunistickou stranou Československa, pozdější Komunistickou stranou Čech a Moravy s dřívější opozicí, kterou mezi lety 1989–1991 reprezentovalo především Občanské fórum. Výrazný antikomunismus je stále patrný zejména u ODS a KDU–ČSL. Mezi zásadní aktéry patří kromě politických elit také novináři, intelektuálové a vědci, kteří spoluutvářejí historickou kulturu. Nejzásadnější úlohu sehrávají politické elity, které jsou etablovány v relevantních politických stranách, proto se příspěvek zaměřuje na hlavní politické proudy a relevantní politické strany, působící v české politice po roce 1989 a jejich percepci historických událostí v Československu, vztahů se sudetskými Němci v meziválečném období, odsun Němců, proměna vztahů s Polskem, o čemž pojednává druhá část příspěvku. K zásadním proměnám historické politiky a politiky paměti přispěla rovněž v období transformace změna celkové geopolitické konstelace v Evropě i ve světě. Česká republika usilovala o členství v NATO a Evropské unii. Zejména procesy evropské integrace ovlivnily řadu aktérů historické politiky a politiky paměti.

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**LUKÁŠ VOMLELA:**

### **THE HISTORY POLITICS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

The aim of the presented text is to approach the changes of the politics of history and to present the main topics associated with the process of decommunization, which fundamentally influenced the formation of the politics of history in the Czech Republic, respectively in Czechoslovakia after 1989, when the processes of extensive political, economic and social changes that occurred in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe

as a result of the fall of communist regimes began. A part of these processes was also the redefinition of the view of history, which from the second half of the 1940s to 1989 was dominantly interpreted in accordance with the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. In the first part, the presented text focuses on the analysis, which includes the main levels of the multi-layered process of decommunization, while the main attention is paid to the presentation of fundamental changes in the politics of history and the depiction of attitudes and requirements to the politics of history by major actors in the Czech Republic, respectively in Czechoslovakia until 1993. In the process of decommunization, a number of laws were passed enabling the legitimization of political changes, the most important of which were the Act on the Rehabilitation of Political Prisoners of 1990, the Lustration Act and especially No. 198/1993 Coll., Act on the Illegality of the Communist Regime. All these steps were accompanied by numerous discussions and disagreements between the main actors in the politics of history, including political parties. In the initial period between 1989 and 1991, these were mainly disputes between the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, later the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, with the earlier opposition, which was represented between 1989 and 1991 mainly by the Civic Forum. Significant anti-communism is still evident especially in the Civic Democratic Party (in Czech abbreviated as ODS) and Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party (in Czech abbreviated as KDU–ČSL). In addition to political elites, key actors include journalists, intellectuals and scientists who co-create historical culture. The most fundamental role is played by political elites, which are established in relevant political parties, so the paper focuses on the main political currents and relevant political parties operating in Czech politics after 1989 and their perception of historical events

in Czechoslovakia, relations with Sudeten Germans in the interwar period, expulsion of Germans, the transformation of relations with Poland, which is discussed in the second part of the paper. The change in the overall geopolitical constellation in Europe and in the world also contributed to fundamental changes in the politics of history and memory during the period of transformation. The Czech Republic sought membership in NATO and the European Union. In particular, the processes of European integration have influenced a number of actors in the politics of history and memory.

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**KRZYSZTOF CEBUL:**  
**POLITYKA HISTORYCZNA W POLSCE**

Celem artykułu jest prześledzenie obecnych w dyskursie sposobów konceptualizacji polskiej polityki historycznej oraz próba rekonstrukcji uwarunkowań determinujących jej kształt/kształty. Za początkową cezurę czasową przyjmuje się rok 1989, a więc początek przeobrażeń ustrojowych i społecznych – będących następstwem niewydolności systemu komunistycznego oraz załamania się dotychczasowego układu geopolitycznego, w którym Polska znalazła się po drugiej wojnie światowej, a w zasadzie od zakończonej 11 lutego 1945 roku konferencji w Jałcie, w trakcie której potwierdzono zasięg sowieckiej strefy wpływów. Przy czym należy tu podkreślić, że Polska nie znalazła się w sowieckiej strefie wpływów w wyniku samostanowienia, ale na mocy porozumienia mocarstw, które poprzez taką decyzję usankcjonowały nowy, powojenny ład. Należy wskazać, że w przypadku polskiej polityki historycznej po 1989 roku, mimo wielu elementów wspólnych, raczej nie łatwo jest mówić o jednej polityce. Nie mamy tu bowiem do czynienia z ustabilizowanym podmiotem państwowym, lecz widzimy w istocie szereg skomplikowanych współzależności będących wynikiem oddziaływania wewnętrznych i zewnętrznych czynników

o zróżnicowanej sile – kształtujących transformujące się państwo. W rzeczy samej proces ten w zasadzie nie utracił na swojej dynamice i trwa nadal. Z tego też powodu interesującym zabiegiem badawczym będzie rozpatrywanie polityki historycznej przez pryzmat kryteriów różnicujących, jakimi niewątpliwie są między innymi: 1) dokonujące się na przestrzeni kolejnych lat zmiany w obrębie konfiguracji sił politycznych sprawujących rządy w Polsce; 2) wpływ czasu jako czynnik determinujący percepcję; 3) działań zewnętrznych podmiotów państwowych i niepaństwowych w przestrzeni międzynarodowej i ich oddziaływania na polską politykę historyczną; 4) zmian w obrębie narzędzi, form oddziaływania na pamięć historyczną – kształtowania jej. Szukając kategorii zbiorczych pozwalających uchwycić główne tendencje w zakresie polskiej polityki historycznej można wyróżnić: 1) politykę poszukiwania ciągłości; 2) politykę ucieczki w przyszłość; oraz 3) politykę konfrontacji.

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**KRZYSZTOF CEBUL:**  
**THE HISTORY POLITICS IN POLAND**

The aim of the article is to analyze the ways of conceptualizing the Polish historical politics found in the discourse and to attempt at reconstructing the determinants of its shape(s). The starting point of the analysis is 1989, marked with the beginnings of the system and society transformations – resulting from the deficiencies of the communist system and the collapse of the geopolitical system to which Poland belonged after the World War II, and to be precise, to which it belonged since the Yalta conference, ended on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1945, where the Soviet zone of influence was confirmed. It should be emphasized that Poland did not join the Soviet zone as a result of its independent decision, but on the basis of the agreement of the superpowers which, through this decision, legitimized the new, post-war order. It should be noted that in the Polish historical

politics after 1989, in spite of many common elements, unanimity was never achieved. We do not have a stabilized state entity, but in fact a series of complicated interdependencies being the result of internal and external factors of various force – which shaped the transforming state. This process actually has not lost its dynamics and has never stopped. That is why it will be interesting to analyze the historical politics through the prism of differentiating criteria, which, undoubtedly, include: 1) changes in the configuration of political forces governing Poland over the years; 2) the passage of time as a factor determining perception: strengthening memory due to some sort of involvement in specific events, weakening memory, or changing memory; 3) activities of external state and non-state entities in the international space and their influence on the Polish historical politics; 4) changes in tools and forms of affecting the historical politics – shaping it. Seeking collective categories enabling us to capture the main tendencies in the Polish historical politics, one can distinguish: 1) the politics of seeking continuity; 2) the politics of the escape into the future; and 3) the politics of confrontation.

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**RUDOLF ŽÁČEK:**  
**ČESKOSLOVENSKO-POLSKÉ VZTAHY**  
**DO ROKU 1945**

Cílem příspěvku je rekapitulace událostí formujících vývoj česko- (československo-) polských vztahů do roku 1945. Prvotní krátkodobá spolupráce mezi Čechy a Poláky v době vzniku jejich států byla brzy převrstvena soupeřením o území pozdějšího Slezska. Soupeření o Slezsko vyvrcholilo ve 14. století jeho přivtělením k českým korunním zemím. V období husitském i za vlády Jiřího z Poděbrad se vzájemné vztahy vyvíjely bez větších turbulencí. Příčinou pozdějšího nesouladu byly odlišné zájmy obou států. Polsko orientovalo svou politiku směrem k Baltu a k východu a česká politika se zamě-

řovala spíše do oblasti Podunají. Po porážce českého stavovského povstání v roce 1620 došlo k likvidaci politické moci české stavovské obce a k prudké redukci počtu jejich příslušníků v důsledku majetkových konfiskací a nucené emigrace. Polsko se postupně přetvářelo ve stavovskou republiku. Koncem 18. století byl polský stát rozdělen mezi tři sousední mocnosti a před polským sebevědomým politickým národem stál základní cíl: obnova polské státnosti. Český politický národ se v té době teprve znovu utvářel z nearistokratických vrstev společnosti. Cíle a mentalita Čechů a Poláků se výrazně odlišovaly a nalézt společnou řeč bylo mimořádně obtížné. V novodobých dějinách byly česko-polské vztahy ovlivněny zejména odlišným postojem k tzv. slovanské myšlence a k Rusku, představujícímu pro Poláky okupanta, pro Čechy potenciální oporu proti sílícímu pangermanismu. Za první světové války se mezi exilovými představiteli obou národů projevoval nesoulad v cílech a prostředcích, mimo jiné také v otázce budoucí příslušnosti Těšínska. V roce 1919 se Těšínsko stalo příčinou československo-polského vojenskému střetu. Jeho důsledky poznamenaly vzájemné vztahy po celé meziválečné období. Těšínsko však nebylo jedinou příčinou napjatých vztahů. Oba státy soupeřily o dominantní vliv ve střední Evropě a nedůvěřovaly ve schopnost svého souseda úspěšně přežít budoucí otřesy. Po přechodném uklidnění v polovině 20. let vzrostlo napětí po roce 1934 a konflikt vyvrcholil na podzim roku 1938 polským ultimátem a zánosem větší části Těšínska. I přes až extrémní zátěž událostí podzimu 1938 se Polsko stalo první zemí, v níž se formoval československý exil, zejména jeho vojenská část. Mezi polským a československým londýnským exilem byly navázány přes vzájemnou nedůvěru relativně blízké kontakty. Obě strany si uvědomovaly potřebu vzájemného spojení. Vyvrcholením snah o přípravu budoucí spolupráce bylo publikování společné deklarace

oznamující vůli vytvořit po válce konfederativní územní celek. S obtížemi probíhající další jednání ukončilo sovětské veto. Československá vláda byla Sověty donucena ukončit vztahy s polskou londýnskou vládou a uznat vládu dosazenou sovětskými orgány. Ani tato vláda však nebyla ochotna se nároků na Těšínsko vzdát. Spor o část jeho území hrozil bezprostředně po skončení války novým ozbrojeným střetnutím.

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**RUDOLF ŽÁČEK:**  
**THE CZECHO(SLOVAK)-POLISH RELATIONS**  
**UNTIL 1945**

The aim of the paper is to recapitulate the events shaping the development of Czech-(Czechoslovak-) Polish relations until 1945. The initial short-term cooperation between the Czechs and Poles at the time of the establishment of the states was soon dominated by competition for the territory of later Silesia. The rivalry for Silesia culminated in the 14th century with its incarnation into the Czech crown lands. In the Hussite period and during the reign of George of Poděbrady, the mutual relations developed without major turbulence. The cause of the later disagreement was the dissimilar interests of both states. Poland has oriented its policy towards the Baltic and the East, and Czech politics has focused more on the Danube region. After the defeat of the Czech Estates Uprising in 1620, the political power of the Czech estates community was eliminated and the number of their members was sharply reduced due to property confiscations and forced emigration. Poland was gradually transforming into a republic of the Estates. At the end of the 18th century, the Polish state was divided between three neighbouring powers, and the Polish self-confident political nation faced a basic goal: the restoration of Polish statehood. At that time, the Czech political nation was only being re-formed from nonaristocratic classes of the society. The goals and mentality of

the Czechs and Poles differed strongly, and creating a common language was extremely difficult. In modern history, Czech-Polish relations have been influenced mainly by a different attitude towards the so-called Slavic idea and towards Russia, which represents the occupier for the Poles, a potential support for the Czechs against the growing Pan-Germanism. During the First World War, there was a discrepancy between the exile representatives of both nations in the goals and means, among other things also in matters of the future affiliation of the region of Cieszyn Silesia. In 1919, Cieszyn Silesia became the cause of the Czechoslovak-Polish military conflict. Its consequences affected mutual relations throughout the interwar period. However, Cieszyn Silesia was not the only cause of tense relations. Both countries competed for dominant influence in Central Europe and did not trust their neighbour's ability to successfully survive future shocks. After a temporary calm in the mid-1920s, tensions increased after 1934, and the conflict culminated in the autumn of 1938 with the Polish ultimatum and the occupation of most of Cieszyn Silesia. Despite the extreme burden of the events of the autumn of 1938, Poland became the first country in which the Czechoslovak exile was formed, especially its military part. Relatively close contacts were established between the Polish and Czechoslovak exiles in London, despite mutual distrust. Both sides were aware of the need for a mutual alliance. The culmination of efforts to prepare future cooperation was the publication of a joint declaration announcing the will to create a confederate territorial unit after the war. The next negotiations, ongoing with difficulties, were ended by the Soviet veto. The Czechoslovak government was forced by the Soviets to end relations with the Polish London government and to recognize the government established by the Soviet authorities. However, even this government was not willing to give

up claims to Cieszyn Silesia. A dispute over a part of its territory became a thread of a new armed conflict immediately after the end of the war.

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**BARTŁOMIEJ DŹWIGAŁA:**

**RELACJE POLSKO-CZESKIE (X-XVI W.) W RE-  
FLEKSJI HISTORYCZNEJ OSKARA HALECKIEGO**

Przedmiotem dociekań przedstawionych w niniejszym artykule jest miejsce relacji polsko-czeskich w wizji historii Polski sformułowanej przez Oskara Haleckiego – jednego z najbardziej rozpoznawalnych polskich historyków na arenie międzynarodowej. Jego synteza historii ojczystej pt. „Historia Polski” kształtowała i kształtuje spojrzenie na dzieje Polski i Europy środkowej w Europie zachodniej i Ameryce północnej. Oskar Halecki pokazuje wzajemne splątanie losów narodów Europy środkowej i ich walkę o suwerenność wobec zewnętrznych imperializmów. Narracja Haleckiego opowiada o zmiennych układach sił w regionie położonym pomiędzy morzami Bałtyckim, Adriatyckim i Czarnym i pozwala wyciągnąć wniosek, że łączenie potencjałów organizmów politycznych Europy środkowej wpływa na zwiększenie zakresu ich suwerenności.

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**BARTŁOMIEJ DŹWIGAŁA:**

**THE POLISH-CZECH RELATIONS  
(10-16 CENTURIES) IN OSKAR HALECKI'S  
HISTORICAL REFLECTION**

The subject of the analyses presented in this article is the place of Polish-Czech relations in the vision of the history of Poland formulated by Oskar Halecki – one of the most internationally renowned Polish historians. His synthesis of Poland's history titled “The History of Poland” has shaped the views on the history of Poland and Central Europe in Western Europe and North America. Oskar Halecki presents the tangled history of the Central Europe nations and their fight for independence against external imperialisms. Halecki's narrative describes the

ever-changing powers in the region located between the Baltic, the Adriatic and the Black Seas. It allows us to conclude that combining the potentials of political organisms in Central Europe increases the scope of their sovereignty.

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**ADAM BUŁAWA:**

**STOSUNKI POLSKO-CZECHOSŁOWACKIE  
DO 1945 ROKU**

Przedmiotem artykułu są stosunki polsko-czechosłowackie w latach 1918-1945, pomiędzy zakończeniem I i II wojny światowej. Otrzymamy panoramę wzajemnych odniesień w układzie chronologicznym, następnie ich syntetyczne podsumowanie. Struktura. Konflikt sąsiedzki (1918-1920). Kwestia Śląska Cieszyńskiego, Orawy i Spiszu oraz paraliż relacji Warszawa-Praga / pertraktacje, wojna siedmiodniowa, zajęcie spornych terenów przez Czechów/, postawa południowego sąsiada wobec Polski odzyskującej niepodległość, walczącej o granice, następnie z Rosją bolszewicką. Chłodne sąsiedztwo, czyli załamujące się próby zbliżenia (1921-1933). 1921- umowa polityczna i traktat handlowy nieratyfikowane wskutek sporu o Jaworzynę; 1925 -umowa likwidacyjna, traktat koncyliacyjno-arbitrażowy i konwencja handlowa bez zbliżenia wobec rozbieżności nt. paktu reńskiego; 1927-umowa tranzytowa i kontakty Sztabów Generalnych; 1932 –koniec współdziałania w Lidze Narodów w sprawach mniejszościowych; 1933 – krótkotrwałe zbliżenie na tle stosunku do tzw. Paktu Cztereich. Narastanie kryzysu (1934-1938). 1934-1935 - wielopłaszczyznowe napięcia (polsko-niemiecki pakt o nieagresji i układ sojuszniczy ČRS-ZSSR; polska krytyka czechizacji Zaolzia i wsparcie autonomistów słowackich, storpedowanie Paktu Wschodniego); 1936 –niezdecydowane próby ocieplenia; 1938 –apogeum niezrozumienia: organizowanie Polaków na Zaolziu, wywiad polski na Słowacji i czeskim Śląsku; próby przełamania impasu – propozycje

posła ČSR Slavika, list prezydenta Beneša do prezydenta Mościckiego; polska zbrojna rewindykacja Zaolzia i dywersja na Rusi Zakarpackiej, wątek słowacki. Uwarunkowania konfliktu międzynarodowego (1939-1945). 1939 – formacje zbrojne ČSR w II RP i agresja słowacka; kooperacja militarna na frontach II wojny światowej, 1940-1943 – rozmowy rządów emigracyjnych w/s konfederacji; 1943-1945 – odmienność postaw wobec ZSRR aż do przeniesienia czeskiego poparcia na TRJN. Résumé. Zestawiając listy punktów spornych i spraw łączących obydwa państwa, okazuje się, że ilość kwestii dzielących wzrastała: stereotypy wzajemne, spory terytorialne; alianse regionalne/dominacja środkowoeuropejska; stosunek do Niemiec, ZSRR, Francji, Ligi Narodów, narodowego ruchu słowackiego, mniejszości narodowych. Próba odpowiedzi, czy istniała szansa na sojusz oraz wspólne powstrzymanie III Rzeszy w 1938-1939 r. stymuluje inspirujące rozważania nad historią alternatywną. Nie tyle antagonizm był nieunikniony, co występował permanentny brak determinacji do zawarcia trwałego aliansu (politycznego i militarnego). W 2. połowie lat 30. XX w. sternicy polityki I Republiki i II RP, tracąc z pola widzenia, to co najistotniejsze, zablokowali porozumienie, które mogło ocalić ich integralność i suwerenność. Podobnie było w latach 1940-1943. Na relacje bilateralne rzutowały rozbieżne interesy i odmienne postrzeganie rzeczywistości w wymiarze geopolitycznym.

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**ADAM BUŁAWA:**  
**THE POLISH-CZECHOSLOVAK RELATIONS**  
**UNTIL 1945**

The subject of the article are Polish-Czechoslovak relations in 1918-1945, the period between the ends of the First and Second World Wars. It brings a picture of mutual references, presented chronologically, with their synthetic summary in the concluding section. The structure. Neighbor conflict (1918-

1920). The issue of Cieszyn Silesia, Orava and Spiš and paralyzed Warsaw-Prague relations /negotiations, 7-day war, occupation of the disputable areas by the Czechs/, the attitude of the southern neighbor to Poland regaining independence, fighting for its borders, then with the Bolshevik Russia. Cold neighborhood, that is unsuccessful attempts at warming the relations (1921-1933). 1921 – political agreement and trade treaty – not ratified as a result of the conflict over Jaworzyna; 1925 – liquidation agreement, conciliation and arbitration treaty and trade convention, without achieving any progress concerning divergence over the Rhineland Pact; 1927 – transit agreement and contacts of General Staffs; 1932 – end of cooperation in League of Nations on minority issues; 1933 – a short warming of relations caused by attitude to the so-called Four Power Pact. The growing crisis (1934-1938). 1934-1935 – multi-level tensions (Polish-German non-aggression pact and ČRS-USSR alliance agreement; Polish criticism of the czechization of the Zaolzie region and support granted to Slovakian autonomists, scuttling the Eastern Pact); 1936 – weak attempts at warming relations; 1938 – the climax of disagreement: organizing Poles in the Zaolzie region, Polish intelligence in Slovakia and Czech Silesia; attempt at breaking the deadlock – proposals of ČSR Member of Parliament, Slavik, a letter from President Beneš to President Mościcki; Polish military repossession of the Zaolzie region and sabotage in Carpathian Ruthenia, the Slovakian thread. Conditions of the international conflict (1939-1945). 1939 – military forces of ČSR in Poland and Slovakian aggression; military cooperation on the Second World War fronts, 1940-1943 – talks between emigration governments on confederation; 1943-1945 – different attitudes to the USSR up to the point when the Czechs shifted their support to Provisional Government of National Unity. If we list the moot points and matters uniting both countries, it turns out that the number

of issues dividing them was increasing: mutual stereotypes, territorial disputes, regional alliances/Central-European dominance; attitude to Germany, the USSR, France, the League of Nations, nationalistic Slovakian movement, national minorities. An attempt at analyzing whether there was a chance to form an alliance and to stop the German Reich in 1938–1939 stimulates inspiring thoughts on alternative history. The antagonism was not unavoidable, but there was permanent lack of determination to form a permanent (political and military) alliance. In the second half of the 1930s the politics makers in the 1<sup>st</sup> republic and 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic of Poland lost sight of the most important things, thus blocking the agreement which could save their integrity and sovereignty. A similar situation occurred in 1940–1943. The bilateral relations were affected by different interests and perceptions of the reality in the geopolitical dimension.

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**DUŠAN JANÁK:**

### **ČESKOSLOVENSKO-POLSKÉ VZTAHY V LETECH 1945-1989**

Cílem referátu je stručně charakterizovat a periodizovat vývoj československo-polských vztahů ve sledovaném období. Pozornost je věnována především oficiálním vztahům v politické, částečně i hospodářské oblasti, včetně proměn příhraničních vztahů v českých zemích, zaměstnávání zahraničních pracovníků a cestovního ruchu. Jako protipól oficiálních politických vztahů, které v letech 1956, 1968 a 1980 – 1981 měly specifický charakter, hraničící s antipatií až otevřeným nepřátelstvím k průběhu celospolečenských změn ve druhém státě, které naopak nacházely porozumění a podporu u nezanedbatelné části veřejnosti, jsou připomenuty aktivity protikomunistické opozice a disentu, vrcholící v 80. letech působením Polsko-československé solidarity. V závěru jsou stručně shrnuty hlavní rysy jednotlivých etap a stav jejich zpracování.

Výklad vychází hlavně ze stávající české literatury a je strukturován chronologicky, podle šesti orientačně vymezených hlavních etap vzájemných vztahů s předělou v březnu 1947, na sklonku roku 1950, v říjnu 1956, srpnu 1968 a na podzim 1980. Od května 1945 do března 1947 dominoval územní spor o Těšínsko a další území, který ukončilo uzavření spojenecké smlouvy pod nátlakem Moskvy. Proklamované přátelské kontakty však záhy nabyly formální charakter a až příliš velkorýse koncipovaná ekonomická spolupráce byla do roku 1950 omezena v rámci RVHP podle sovětských direktiv. V první polovině 50. let existovala mezi oběma státy obdoba „železné opony“, začínající obnovu sousedských vztahů pak přerušila liberalizace poměrů v Polsku v roce 1956. V dalších letech však došlo k definitivní úpravě státní hranice, uvolnění pohraničního styku a cestovního ruchu i rozšíření ekonomické spolupráce, což po urovnání vztahů mezi komunistickými elitami i přes některé rozdílné politické a ekonomické názory v podstatě pokračovalo až do poloviny roku 1967. Následný vývoj vyústil v účast polské armády na okupaci Československa v srpnu 1968, kterou odmítla rozhodující část polské menšiny na Těšínsku a přes nepřátelskou propagandu i značná část polské společnosti. V první polovině 70. let se politické i ekonomické kontakty znovu rozšířily, zůstávaly však podřízeny plánům Moskvy a RVHP a od roku 1976 je negativně ovlivnily narůstající ekonomické i sociální problémy v Polsku. Zatímco komunistická vedení se od sebe spíše vzdalovala, intenzivnější pracovní i osobní styky umožnily rozšíření kontaktů katolické církve v obou zemích i spolupráci KSS „KOR“ s Chartou 77. Po vzniku Solidarity v létě 1980 se Husákovy vedení snažilo ovlivnit situaci v Polsku včetně snah o ozbrojenou intervenci Varšavské smlouvy. Od vyhlášení výjimečného stavu v prosinci 1981 pak podporovalo režim gen. W. Jaruzelského až do jeho pádu v roce 1989. Přes omezení cestování občanů vznik-

la v roce 1981 Polsko-česká solidarita, která v roce 1984 obnovila činnost a od roku 1987 jako Polsko-československá solidarita koordinovala iniciativy opozičních seskupení v sovětském bloku.

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**DUŠAN JANÁK:**  
**THE CZECHOSLOVAK-POLISH RELATIONS**  
**IN THE PERIOD 1945-1989**

The aim of the paper is to briefly characterize and periodize the development of Czechoslovak-Polish relations in the observed period. Attention is paid mainly to official relations in politics, partly also in the economic field, including the transformations of border relations in the Czech lands, employment of foreign workers and tourism. The activities of the anti-communist opposition and dissent, culminating in the 1980s with Polish-Czechoslovak solidarity, are recalled as the opposite of official political relations, which in 1956, 1968 and 1980-1981 had specific character, bordering on antipathy to open hostility to the course of society-wide changes in the other state. In the conclusion, the main features of individual stages and the state of their processing are briefly summarized. The discourse is based mainly on existing Czech literature and is structured chronologically, according to six, indicatively defined, main stages of mutual relations with divisions in March 1947, at the end of 1950, in October 1956, August 1968 and in autumn 1980. The first of them, from May 1945 to March 1947, was dominated by a territorial dispute over Cieszyn Silesia and other territories, which was ended by the conclusion of alliance agreement under pressure from Moscow. The proclaimed friendly contacts in various areas of social life quickly became formal, and until 1950 too generous economic cooperation was limited within the CMEA to the exchange of goods and raw materials under the Soviet directives. In the first half of the 1950s, there was an analogue of "Iron Curtain" between the two countries, and the

beginning of the resumption of neighbourly relations was temporarily halted by the liberalization of conditions in Poland in 1956. In the following years, however, the state border was definitively modified. border traffic and tourism were relaxed, and economic cooperation was expanded, which, after settling relations between communist elites and in spite of some different political and economic views, essentially continued until mid-1967. Subsequent development has resulted in participation of the Polish army in the occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, which was rejected by a decisive part of the Polish minority in the region of Cieszyn Silesia and, despite hostile propaganda, a large part of Polish society felt solidarity with the Czechs and Slovaks. In the first half of the 1970s, the political and economic contacts expanded again, but remained subject to the plans of Moscow and the CMEA, and since 1976 they have been negatively affected by growing economic and social problems in Poland. While the communist leaders tended to distance themselves, more intensive working and personal contacts enabled the expansion of contacts between the Catholic Church in both countries and the cooperation of the Committee for Social Self-Defence "Workers' Defense Committee" (in Polish abbreviated as KSS "KOR") with Charter 77. After the establishment of Solidarity in the summer of 1980, Husák's leadership sought to influence the situation in Poland, including efforts for armed intervention by the Warsaw Pact. Since the declaration of a state of emergency in December 1981, it has supported the regime of gen. W. Jaruzelski until his fall in 1989. Despite the restrictions on citizens' travel, Polish-Czech solidarity emerged in 1981, which resumed its activities in 1984, and since 1987, as Polish-Czechoslovak solidarity, has coordinated the initiatives of opposition groups in the Soviet bloc.

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**JAROSŁAW DROZD:**  
**STOSUNKI POLSKO-CZECHOSŁOWACKIE**  
**W LATACH 1945-1989**

Prezentowany artykuł jest swoistą politologiczną refleksją nad skomplikowanymi polsko-czechosłowackimi relacjami w latach 1945–1989. W okresie tym Polska i Czechosłowacja były w istotny sposób ograniczone w swojej suwerenności przez komunistyczny system organizacji obu państw i ich społeczeństw. Autorytarnym szafarzem gotowych wzorców ideologicznych, gospodarczych i organizacyjnych był hegemonistyczny partner – Związek Socjalistycznych Republik Radzieckich – dystrybuujący obu państwom recepty i uważnie nadzorujący ich wykonanie. Dominujący partner uzurpował sobie także rolę ostatecznego arbitra w przypadku sporów bilateralnych lub stwierdzonych odchylenia politycznych. Autoryzowany przez Moskwę sowiecki, polityczno-ustrojowy model rozwoju narzucał Polsce i Czechosłowacji zasady działania i w dotkliwy sposób ograniczał swobodę realizacji indywidualnych rozwiązań, tudzież szukania nowych formuł bilateralnej współpracy. Mimo posiadania bardzo atrakcyjnych i realnych koncepcji zbliżenia obu krajów z czasów II. Wojny Światowej (dialog federacyjny Sikorskiego/Benesza, współpraca wojskowa) wykorzystanie ich było nierealne w warunkach komunistycznych. Istotne były również przeszkody indywidualne wynikające z prób geopolitycznego ukształtowania sytuacji granicznej (podnoszona przez Pragę kwestia poprawek do Umowy Poczdamskiej). Zasadniczo różna siła i znaczenie partii komunistycznych w Polsce i Czechosłowacji oraz wpływ ugrupowań tworzących rządy emigracyjne w Londynie na powojenną, wewnętrzną i zagraniczną politykę determinowały także kształt stosunków dwustronnych. Kolejnym specyficznym utrudnieniem dla rozwoju wzajemnych stosunków była wyraźna różnica dynamiki wewnętrznych cykli politycznych, która powodowała, że ważne,

przełomowe wydarzenia w Polsce nie natrafiały na wsparcie i zrozumienie w Czechosłowacji i odwrotnie. Symboliczne daty węzłowych wydarzeń w obu krajach układają się w szachownicę, a nie w sprzyjające synergii ciągi (Polska: 1956, 1970, 1980/1981; Czechosłowacja: 1948, 1953, 1968). Klasycznym przykładem bilateralnego rozminięcia się celów i oczekiwań społecznych w obu krajach były wydarzenia 1968 r. w Czechosłowacji, na które Polska zareagowała udziałem w wojskowej interwencji Układu Warszawskiego (operacja „Dunaj”). Wewnętrzne problemy rozwojowe i napięcia polityczne w obu państwach spowodowały, że w latach 70 i 80 zainteresowanie władz rozwojem współpracy bilateralnej było relatywnie ograniczone. Na tym tle o wiele bardziej żywe i politycznie perspektywiczne były kontakty środowisk dysydenckich obu krajów. Nie miały one jednak istotnego przełożenia sprawczego na ówczesną szeroko rozumianą współpracę dwustronną. Natomiast należy odnotować, że istotnym elementem aktywności dwustronnych w omawianym okresie był bardzo interesujący proces wzajemnego lepszego poznawania i uczenia się obu społeczeństw, nie pozbawionego sympatii krytycznego postrzegania, szukania wzajemnych fascynacji kulturowych i nieco prozaicznego oraz jednostronnego spełniania w aktywnościach zakupowych (lentilki, itp.).

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**JAROSŁAW DROZD:**  
**THE RELATIONS BETWEEN POLAND**  
**AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1945-1989**

The presented article offers a specific political reflection on complicated Polish-Czechoslovak relations in 1945–1989. In that period both Poland and Czechoslovakia suffered from significantly reduced sovereignty imposed by the communist system of organization of their states and societies. The Union of Soviet Socialist republics – an authoritarian dispenser of ready ideological, economic and organizational patterns

– was a hegemonic partner providing both countries with prescriptions to their ailments and supervising their application. The dominant partner also usurped the role of the final arbitrator in the event of bilateral disputes or observed political deviations from the norm. The soviet political model of development authorized by Moscow forced Poland and Czechoslovakia to adopt the principles of behavior and painfully limited their freedom to implement their own solutions or to seek new forms of bilateral cooperation. In spite of having very attractive and realistic concepts of close cooperation between the countries, dating back to the Second World War (Sikorski/Beneš federation dialogue, military cooperation), the countries could not use them in the communist period. There were also individual obstacles resulting from attempts at geopolitical shaping of the border situation (the issue of amendments to the Potsdam Agreement raised by Prague). Significantly different power and importance of the communist parties in Poland and in Czechoslovakia and the influence of the parties constituting emigration governments in London on the post-war, domestic and foreign politics, also determined the shape of bilateral relations. Another specific obstacle to the development of mutual relations was a noticeable difference in the dynamics of internal political cycles, which accounted for the fact that important, groundbreaking events in Poland did not meet support and understanding in Czechoslovakia and vice versa. The symbolical dates of major events in both countries form a chessboard rather than a series which encourages synergy (Poland: 1956, 1970, 1980/81; Czechoslovakia: 1948, 1953, 1968). A classic case of bilaterally missed goals and social expectations in both countries were the events in 1968 in Czechoslovakia, to which Poland reacted with participation in the military intervention of the Warsaw Treaty (“Danube” operation). The

internal development problems and political tensions in both countries accounted for the fact that in the 1970s and 1980s the authorities showed relatively limited interest in development of bilateral cooperation. Much more vivid and offering political prospects were the contacts of the dissident communities from both countries. However, they did not affect the bilateral cooperation at that time. Nevertheless, it must be noted that an important element of bilateral activity in the analyzed period was a very interesting process of mutual learning and acquainting of two societies, critical (though accompanied with friendliness) perception, seeking common cultural fascinations and prosaic and one-sided participation in purchasing activities (‘lentils’ candies, etc.).

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**JIŘÍ KOCIAN:**  
**ČESKO-POLSKÉ VZTAHY PO PÁDU ŽELEZNÉ**  
**OPONY**

Příspěvek zhodnotí na základě literatury průběh a vývoj vybraných oblastí česko-polských vztahů zejména v období let 1989–2004, které bylo završeno přijetím obou zemí do NATO v roce 1999 a do Evropské unie v roce 2004. Připomene, že pád komunismu v roce 1989 zařadil tehdy ještě československo-polské vztahy do odlišného regionálního i evropského kontextu. Polské léto 1989 a listopadové změny v Československu v roce 1989 zároveň zahájily obsahově novou kapitolu ve vztazích mezi oběma státy. Příspěvek sleduje čtyři tematické oblasti spolupráce a vztahů. Připomenuta budou základní východiska nových bilaterálních vztahů, mezi něž patří smlouva o dobrém sousedství, solidaritě a přátelské spolupráci z 6. 10. 1991 s dalšími navazujícími či souvisejícími smlouvami. Zhodnocena bude výchozí etapa visegrádské spolupráce jako nové platformy česko-polských vztahů. Visegrádská kooperace podnítila dynamiku oboustranných kulturních a vědeckých vztahů a pokrok v hospodářských a obchodních vztazích.

V kontextu vzájemných vztahů bude pojednána i oblast života polské menšiny na Těšínsku, kde žije dosud nejpočetnější část občanů polské národnosti. Pozornost bude věnována přeshraniční spolupráci, za jejíž počátek je možné považovat ustavení Euroregionu Nisa v prosinci 1991. V závěru bude připomenuto, jak se česko-polské vztahy v období po pádu železné opony promítají do každodenního všedního života Čechů a Poláků. Potvrdilo se, že vztahy obou národů po roce 1989 nadále výrazně ovlivňují zkušenosti ze zápasů o národní existenci a úsilí o rozvoj pevných spojeneckých a dobrých sousedských vztahů.

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**JIŘÍ KOCIAN:**

#### **THE CZECH-POLISH RELATIONS AFTER THE FALL OF THE IRON CURTAIN**

Based on the literature, the paper will evaluate the course and development of selected areas of Czech-Polish relations, especially in the period 1989–2004, which culminated in the accession of both countries to NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004. It will recall that the fall of communism in 1989 put at that time still Czechoslovak-Polish relations in a different regional and European context. The Polish summer of 1989 and the November changes in Czechoslovakia in 1989 also opened a new chapter in relations between the two countries. The paper follows four thematic areas of cooperation and relations. The basic starting points of the new bilateral relations will be recalled, including the Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness, Solidarity and Friendly Cooperation of 6 October 1991 with other follow-up or related agreements. The initial stage of Visegrad cooperation as a new platform for Czech-Polish relations will be evaluated. The Visegrad cooperation stimulated the dynamics of bilateral cultural and scientific relations and progress in economic and trade relations. In the context of mutual relations, the area of

life of the Polish minority in Cieszyn Silesia, where the largest number of citizens of Polish nationality still live, will also be discussed. Attention will be paid to cross-border cooperation, the beginning of which can be considered the establishment of the Nisa Euroregion in December 1991. In the conclusion, it will be recalled how Czech-Polish relations in the period after the fall of the Iron Curtain are reflected in everyday life of Czechs and Poles. It has been confirmed that relations between the two nations since 1989 continue to be strongly influenced by the experience of struggles for national existence and efforts to develop strong allied and good neighbourly relations.

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**ANTONI DUDEK:**

#### **RELACJE POLSKI I CZECHO-SŁOWACJI W PIERWSZYCH LATACH PO UPADKU SYSTEMU KOMUNISTYCZNEGO W KONTEKŚCIE PROCESU INTEGRACJI EUROPEJSKIEJ (1989-1993)**

W referacie omówione zostaną następujące wątki: (1) Reakcja rządu T. Mazowieckiego na aksamitną rewolucję w Czechosłowacji. (2) Pierwsze kontakty między nowymi władzami w Warszawie i Pradze. (3) Zmiana na stanowiskach ambasadorów obu krajów i tego konsekwencje. (4) Problemy w tworzeniu Trójkąta Wyszehradzkiego i ograniczenia w jego działaniach. (5) Znaczenie stanowiska Czecho-Słowacji dla przebiegu negocjacji polsko-sowieckich dotyczących wyprowadzenia jednostek Armii Radzieckiej z terenu Polski. (6) Stosunek Pragi i Warszawy do likwidacji Układu Warszawskiego oraz RWPG. (7) Negocjacje Polski i Czecho-Słowacji na temat stowarzyszenia z EWG. (8) Współpraca Polski i Czecho-Słowacji w pierwszej fazie zabiegów o członkostwo w UE oraz przyczyny jej załamania. (9) Polska wobec podziału Czecho-Słowacji.

**ANTONI DUDEK:**

**THE RELATIONS BETWEEN POLAND AND THE CZECH AND SLOVAK FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC IN THE FIRST YEARS AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE COMMUNIST SYSTEM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS (1989-1993)**

The article discusses the following topics: (1) The reaction of T. Mazowiecki's government to the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia. (2) The first contacts of the new authorities in Warsaw and Prague. (3) The changes on the posts of the ambassadors of both countries and their consequences. (4) The problems encountered when creating the Visegrad Triangle and limitations of its activities. (5) The significance of the Czechoslovak position for the Polish-Soviet negotiations leading to the evacuation of the Red Army units from the territory of Poland. (6) The attitude of Prague and Warsaw to the liquidation of the Warsaw Treaty and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. (7) The negotiations of Poland and Czechoslovakia concerning the countries' association with the EEC. (8) The cooperation between Poland and Czechoslovakia in the first stage of attempts at gaining EU membership and the reasons for the breakdown of this cooperation. (9) Poland's position concerning the division of Czechoslovakia.

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**PIOTR BAJDA:**

**RELACJE POLSKO-CZESKIE W PRZEDNIU 30-TEJ ROCZNICY PODPISANIA TRAKTATU O DOBROSĄSIEDZKIEJ PRZYJAŹNI**

Teza: polsko-czeskie relacje bilateralne charakteryzują się wysoką dynamiką wymiany gospodarczej i bogatą agendą współpracy politycznej, za czym nie nadąża jednak współpraca społeczno-kulturalna. Współpraca polityczna nie jest jednak wykorzystana optymalnie i za ilością wydarzeń nie idzie jakość relacji. Cel artykułu: wskazanie głównych czynników kształtujących relacje polsko-czeskie w latach 1993-2019 w obszarze

politycznym, gospodarczym i społecznym. W referacie zostanie uwzględniony wymiar relacji międzyrządowej (bilateralnej, w ramach instytucji multilateralnych i regionalnych), ale też skala współpracy samorządowej (przygranicznej). Struktura artykułu: W trakcie wystąpienia zostaną przedstawione uwarunkowania bilateralnych relacji polsko-czeskich w wymiarze politycznym, gospodarczym i społeczno-kulturalnym. Relacje polityczne mimo swojej intensywności nie potrafią przejść na wyższy strategiczny poziom, mimo ogólnego złego wizerunku RP w Czechach (np. sprawa kopalni Turowa, jakość polskiej żywności) wymiana gospodarcza jest na bardzo wysokim poziomie. Relacje społeczno-kulturalne są bardziej deklaratywne niż realne. Czesi są najbardziej lubianym narodem w Polsce, Polacy dość wysoko są w czeskich rankingach, ale nadal niewiele wiemy o sobie nawzajem i słabo się sobą interesujemy. Większy deficyt braku zainteresowania leży po stronie czeskiej. Jedynym aktywnym wymiarem jest współpraca trans graniczna. Wnioski z analizy: Pozostaje ogromny niewykorzystany potencjał po obu stronach. Brakuje prób pobudzenia zainteresowania, stworzenia swoistej mody na współpracę polsko-czeską. Po polskiej stronie dodatkowo sytuację utrudnia polityka kadrowa w polskich placówkach dyplomatycznych, szczególnie dobór ambasadorów RP w Pradze.

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**PIOTR BAJDA:**

**POLISH-CZECH RELATIONS ON THE EVE OF THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY SIGNING A TREATY ON GOOD-NEIGHBORLY FRIENDSHIP**

Thesis: The Polish-Czech bilateral relations are characterized by high dynamics of trade and a rich agenda of political cooperation, which is not followed by social and cultural cooperation. Political cooperation, however, is not used optimally and the quantity of events does not translate into the quality of relations. The aim of the article: to show the

main factors shaping Polish-Czech relations in 1993-2019 in the political, business and social areas. The article takes into account the dimension of intergovernmental relations (bilateral, within multilateral and regional institutions), but also the scale of self-government (border) cooperation. The structure of the article: the speaker will presents the conditions of bilateral Polish-Czech relations in the political, economic and social and cultural dimension. Political relations, in spite of their intensity, still cannot reach a higher, strategic level, despite a generally bad image of Poland in the Czech Republic (for example the case of the Turów mine, the quality of Polish food), trade is on a very high level. Social and cul-

tural relations remain more declarative than real. The Czechs are the most liked nation in Poland, Poles rank relatively high in the Czech Republic, but we still do not know much about each other and we are not interested in each other. The interest deficit is higher on the Czech side. The only active dimension is trans-border cooperation. Conclusions from the analysis: There is still a huge potential to be fully used by both sides. There are no attempts at stimulating interest, developing a specific fashion for Polish-Czech cooperation. On the Polish side the situation is further hindered by the staff policy in Polish diplomatic centers, particularly the choice of Polish ambassadors in Prague.