

**BRATISLAVA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS**

**UNITY OR SEPARATION: EXPLORATION OF DIFFERENT  
CONCEPTS OF FEDERALIZATION WITHIN TWENTIETH  
CENTURY CENTRAL EUROPE**

Bachelor Thesis

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# **BRATISLAVA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS**

## **UNITY OR SEPARATION: EXPLORATION OF DIFFERENT CONCEPTS OF FEDERALIZATION WITHIN TWENTIETH CENTURY CENTRAL EUROPE**

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**Declaration of originality:**

I hereby declare that this bachelor thesis is my own work and has not been published in part or as a whole elsewhere. All used literature is attributed to the respective authors and cited in references.

I used an AI-powered software (Grammarly) for the purpose of grammar correction. All ideas and thoughts expressed in this work are a product of my own academic abilities in combination with used literature.

Adam Hamza

Bratislava, February 20, 2024

Signature:

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**Abstract:**

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This bachelor thesis will analyze key works of several authors that concern the concepts of integration of Central European countries from several perspectives. It mainly revolves around concepts proposed during the early 20th century and the Interwar period, such as the concept of *Federation in Central Europe* by Milan Hodža as well as the *United States of Greater Austria* proposed by Aurel Popovici, Friedrich Naumann with his idea of *Mitteleuropa* as well as Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi and his pan-European vision. The goal of this paper will be to explore various historical perspectives and ideological foundations of the concept of United Central Europe.

Using descriptive and comparative methods, the final effort will aim to define what is the exact meaning of the term Central European federation within Hodža's, Naumann's, Popovici's, and von Coudenhove-Kalergi's framework, evaluation of the Central European region in terms of the political situation and description of proposals from each author respectively. It is anticipated this paper will prove that the idea of a federalized Central Europe emerged as a response to the historical challenges of Central European nation-states at the time in order to create an entity aimed at preserving cultural heritage, regional cooperation, and collective security against external threats within the context of the Interwar period.

*Keywords:* central europe, federation, pan-europeanism, nationalism, austria-hungary, twentieth century, milan hodža

## **Abstrakt:**

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Táto bakalárska práca bude analyzovať niektoré dôležité diela od autorov, ktorí si kladú za úlohu predstaviť rôzne integračné koncepty v rámci krajín strednej Európy. Hlavný záber tejto práce pozostáva z konceptov predstavených počas skorého 20. storočia a medzivojnového obdobia ako napríklad koncept Federácie v strednej Európe od Milana Hodžu, alebo koncept Spojených štátov Veľkého Rakúska od Aurela Popoviciho, koncept *Mitteleuropa* od Friedricha Naumanna alebo pan-Európska vízia od Richarda von Coudenhove-Kalergiho. Cieľom tejto práce je preskúmať rôzne historické perspektívy ako aj ideologické základy týkajúce sa konceptualizácie integrovanej strednej Európy.

Pomocou deskriptívnej a komparatívnej metódy bude cieľom práce odhaliť čo sa konkrétne skrýva pod pojmom Stredoeurópska federácia v rámci konceptualizácie predostretej autormi ako sú Hodža, Naumann, Popovici či von Coudenhove-Kalergi, ako aj historické zhodnotenie stredoeurópskeho priestoru v rámci vtedajšej politickej situácie a opis návrhov každého jednotlivého autora. Predpokladá sa, že tento dokument dokáže, že myšlienka federalizovanej strednej Európy vzišla ako reakcia na historické výzvy stredoeurópskych štátov v danom čase s cieľom vytvoriť entitu zameranú na zachovanie kultúrneho dedičstva, regionálnej spolupráce a kolektívnej bezpečnosti pred vonkajšími hrozbami v kontexte medzivojnového obdobia.

*Kľúčové slová:* stredná európa, federácia, paneuropанизmus, nacionalizmus, rakúsko-uhorsko, dvadsiate storočie, milan hodža

## Terminology

**Ausgleich** – Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867

**Austromarxism** – a school of thought created by Austrian leftist intellectuals such as Karl Renner and Otto Bauer

**Belvedere society** – a group of reformist intellectuals based around Franz Ferdinand von Habsburg, its main goal was to politically reform the Austro-Hungarian Empire (also known as *Belvederská skupina/dielňa* in Slovak)

**Cisleithania** – part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that was primarily governed by the Austrians (territory of modern Slovenia, Austria, Czechia and parts of Croatia, Poland and Ukraine)

**Dualism** – a form of governance in the Austro-Hungarian Empire consisting of two *de iure* sovereign states united under the Emperor-King

**Lebensraum** – literally “living space” in German, refers to Central and Eastern European territories where the German minority lived, nowadays used in a negative connotation due to its ideological interpretation within the National Socialist framework

**Mitteleuropa** – literally “Middle Europe” in German, usually refers to Friedrich Naumann’s plan for German-led Central Europe

**Transleithania** – part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that was primarily governed by the Hungarians (territory of modern Hungary, Slovakia and parts of Ukraine, Romania, Serbia and Croatia)

**Trialism** – a system of governance in which the Austro-Hungarian Empire was supposed to be divided into three sovereign states instead of two (dualism)

**Zollverein** – German Customs Union, an economic union between independent German-speaking states during the 19<sup>th</sup> century

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## **Introduction:**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was the second-largest political entity in the European continent. Nevertheless, the unity of the Empire was not to last. After the First World War, the vast Empire disintegrated into smaller nation-states. This development had brought peace and hopes for the future of smaller nations in Europe that turned out to be false after falling under the whim of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. However, what would Central Europe look like if the lands of the Austro-Hungarian Empire would unite in the form of a federation of equals? This was the question of one of the most influential characters in Czechoslovak politics during the Interwar period – Milan Hodža, but not only him. The original question stems from the works of many authors that can be traced as far back as the 19th century. These different works have contemplated not only the Habsburg Empire or the Austro-Hungarian Empire later on but also the whole of Central Europe and its place in the world. During the initial years of the 20th century, the idea of integrated Central Europe was undergoing its apex, primarily due to the works of the so-called *Belvedere society* that formed around the heir of the Austro-Hungarian throne – Franz Ferdinand d'Este. Throughout these crucial years, the idea was tackled by many authors, such as Aurel Popovici, Friedrich Naumann, Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi, and eventually, Milan Hodža, who was practically the last of these great thinkers.

Before describing various concepts and ideas, it is essential to define what Central Europe stands for and where the concept of unified Central Europe came from. This is the leading motive for the first chapter of this work. Central Europe proves to be an elusive term, as there is no rock-solid and satisfying definition even up to this day. In addition, even the multitude of authors within the confines of the 20th and 19th centuries were thinking within various premises encompassing different territories. Their ideas were usually formed as a reaction to the events their respective home countries underwent. Nevertheless, to understand the motives that led to the concept of a unified Central Europe, it is crucial to understand what authors such as Naumann, Popovici, Kalergi, Palacký, and others brought into this discourse.

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On the other hand, the concept of Central European unity would not be the same without the contribution of Milan Hodža, to whom the second chapter is devoted. Virtually, the topic of Central European unity tagged along throughout Hodža's life. As a member of the *Belvedere society*, Hodža worked towards this idea for several years during his young adulthood. Even though the First World War thwarted the plans of the Belvedere society, Hodža never truly gave up the idea of integration and transnational cooperation throughout his long career. Creating a more economically integrated Central Europe was a political goal for Hodža as a politician, a Member of the Parliament, and the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia. Many of his decisions had the intention to bring Central European nations together not only to become a new economic powerhouse of Europe but also to protect against two other Great Powers that were vying for power in the past for this particular region – Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. As history proves, fears of these two Great Powers intervening within the territory of Central Europe were not without merit. However, Hodža's political actions drew up controversies within the Czechoslovak government and eventually proved futile face-to-face against the German war machine. During the last years of his life in American exile, while the Second World War raged on, Hodža wrote and published one of the most influential works concerning the Federation in Central Europe as a way to prevent conflicts in the future and safeguard the prosperity of the region. Nevertheless, his ideas would not manifest after the Second World War, as the power dynamics in the region would not allow that.

The end of the Second World War had brought a rapid change in the political landscape of Europe – so much so that the idea of the federalization of Central Europe could only be interpreted as a wishful fantasy. With the Soviet Union virtually annexing swathes of territories included within Hodža's plans (but not only his), the idea withered out from intellectual circles. Discussions about Central Europe and its place in the political landscape of Europe were reformatted during the second half of the 20th century to defend Central Europe as a concept in the eyes of the world that had already divided Europe into Western and Eastern portions, blindly following the realities of the Cold War.

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Even though the plans to unite Central Europe into a single entity (whether within a federation of equals or not) were generally considered obsolete and irrelevant, the ideas about peace and stability remained. The spirit of international cooperation that was also championed by Hodža or Kalergi, for example, along with the horrors of the Second World War, gave birth to the ideas of cooperation within the confines of Central Europe and Europe as a whole. Even though neither Hodža nor other authors had succeeded in spearheading the idea of a unified Central Europe, the goal of long-lasting peace and stability came about through the European Union later on.

The purpose of this thesis is not only to explore various authors' perspectives and their approaches toward creating a more unified entity within the territory of Central Europe. It is also focused on comparing them and notifying about the crucial role of Milan Hodža in developing these plans and partially implementing some of his thoughts into the political realities of Interwar Europe. This work explains how the political conditions in Central Europe, marked by ideological divide and lack of cross-border cooperation, had delivered an irrefutable blow towards any ideas concerning Central European unity that were primarily formulated during the first half of the 20th century.

## **First Chapter: Central Europe and its historical development**

This chapter is dedicated to explaining how the concept of Central Europe appeared as a term in various discourses of political thinkers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **1.1 Central Europe as a concept**

To correctly describe which concepts of unification of Central Europe were proposed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is necessary to identify what Central Europe is supposed to represent. This particular region of Europe usually proves troublesome to characterize either due to the fluidity of its territorial borders or complex historical development, unlike e. g. Western Europe and constituent countries of this geographical unit, Central European countries, were not as resilient in keeping their territorial integrity untouched, and various countries encompassing Central Europe ceased to exist more frequently than in the aforementioned example of Western Europe.

The territorial demarcation of Central Europe persists to be challenging to characterize even to this day. From a rigidly territorial perspective, Central Europe is a very fluid concept. Meyer (1955) notes that “the analyst who would unravel the threads of Mitteleuropa story must initially recognize the existence of this state of semantic confusion” (1955, p. 3). Mommsen (1995) adds that Central Europe is a diffused term that cannot be based on geography (1995, p. 4). These claims, however, do not deter influential thinkers behind the idea of uniting or federalizing Central Europe from drawing lines on a map. Nevertheless, their approach to the problem differs. For example, Naumann (1917) focuses on the territory that extends from the Baltic Sea to the Alps and southern edges of the Danubian Plain (p. 11). Rather than trying to put Central Europe into a compact box, Hodža drew a line along what he calls a Central European corridor and dubbed it the core of Central Europe. According to Hodža (1997), this corridor goes along the Vistula to Morava and Váh rivers, along the Danube to Serbian Morava, and finally ends at Thessaloniki (p. 45). His argumentation also coincides with a dispute whether Germany is presupposed to be in Central Europe or not. With this taken into consideration, there cannot be any doubt that every attempt to restrict Central Europe rigidly

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from a territorial perspective does not achieve a consensus. Therefore, every author works with the geographical limits of Central Europe in their own way.

Another aspect that negatively affects the attempts to provide a definitive answer for the characterization and demarcation of Central Europe is the Second World War and its subsequent outcome. In his article, *The Tragedy of Central Europe*, Milan Kundera (2023) describes the aftermath of the Second World War in the following manner:

“(Europe) was always divided into two halves that evolved separately: one tied to ancient Rome and the Catholic Church, the other anchored in Byzantium and the Orthodox Church. After 1945, the border between the two Europes shifted several hundred kilometers to the west, and several nations that had always considered themselves Western woke up to discover that they were now in the East” (Kundera, 2023, para. 6).

Firstly, Kundera’s viewpoint illustrates a historical understanding of the West-East divide based on the religious denomination of the populace living in a given territory. This is one of the primary components of recognizing which territories could be considered Central European (Catholic population) or Eastern European (Orthodox population) respectively. Secondly, the outcome of the Second World War demolished the concept of Central Europe as Europe was divided into the Western and Eastern portions solely along political lines. This dichotomic divide of Europe persists even nowadays to a certain extent, as the Eastern bloc countries are still lagging behind Western countries in various essential aspects, such as the economic aspect, which provides more credibility to the dichotomic divide in modern terms. Nevertheless, due to a plethora of historical developments that influenced the territory of Central Europe, it would be illogical to base these territories as part of the East solely on the account of post-war development in Europe. Pre-war political thinkers were inherently convinced of some sort of Central European identity and envisaged various plans for it.

While the dichotomic division of Western and Eastern Europe stems from late antiquity, based solely on the territorial demarcation between the influence of the Papacy or the Patriarch of Constantinople, with the rise of nationalism in

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19th-century Europe, nationality becomes an essential component of identity, even more so than the religious denomination. While tides of historical events gave and stripped influence of many nations residing in Central Europe, it cannot be said that one of them was decisively dominant across the entire history of Central Europe; the rise of nationalism, however, coincides with German hegemony over the region.

### **1.2 Germany within Central Europe and its efforts towards Central European domination**

Although historical realities were unfavorable towards any ideas of German unity during the earlier 19th century, it did not stop the Germans from trying to unite and dominate the region afterward. By the beginning of the 19th century, German lands were heavily fragmented into states varying in size from relatively well-established and sizable Prussia to microstates that held sway only over a city and the outskirts, for example. Hawes (2017) describes it as a fifty-year era of rivalry between the regional powers that was also affected by the inability of smaller German states to rescind what they perceived as their uniqueness in favor of creating any meaningful union. (2017, p. 93) This heritage of the Holy Roman Empire became the cause of many conflicts between the successor states. It heavily influenced the history of both Germany and Austria during the 19th century.

#### **a) Pan-Germanic attempts to unify Central Europe – Friedrich List**

While the events mentioned above are an integral part of the history of Central Europe and the complexity of this particular era can be described in a very detailed way, for the purpose of this thesis, it is crucial to put forward intellectuals who tried to propose a way of how the two rivals could coexist. Probably the first of such thinkers was Friedrich List – a German economic thinker who vigorously pushed for greater economic integration of the German Confederation and the Austrian Empire during the first half of the 19th century. List's ideas came from his personal beliefs as he belonged to the forefront of German economic theorists. While much of his earlier life revolved around the United States, finding the American economic *modus operandi* captivating, as he emigrated from Germany and became an American citizen, he often

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expressed the desire to return to Germany. Wendler (2014) cites one of List's letters to his friend: "My feelings for my country can be likened to those of a mother for her crippled children... All of my plans revolve around the wish to return to Germany. It is true that petty provincialism and regionalism will antagonize me." (2014, p. 129) Without delving too much into List's biography, after returning from the United States, he slowly became the most influential economist in Germany, primarily focusing on the German railroad system and formulating a protectionist economic policy that aimed to empower the member states of the *Zollverein* and impose higher tariffs on foreign export goods. While List's primary interest was economy and his *magnum opus* – *The National System of Political Economy* – revolves heavily around this topic, he found various interesting connections between economy, politics, geopolitics, and history. List then used these connections to propose distinct plans concerning the subject of German unity as well as the unity of other nations in Central Europe. According to Meyer (1955), List proposed several plans concerning integration, particularly in Central Europe. One of his plans had even counted upon creating a constitutional republic and uniting Germans and Hungarians who were supposed to become a single constituent Middle European nation of the newly created entity by intermixing – just like Normans with Anglo-Saxons in England (1955, p. 13-14). This part of List's ideas and plans reappear later, as German intellectuals look for a viable plan to reshape the map of Europe in case of German victory in the First World War.

While List greatly supported unity between Germans, he did not live long enough to see his dream fulfilled. Nevertheless, a few decades after his death, Bismarck achieved what List could not through political and militaristic means. While, of course, the path towards German unity was rocky and could not be achieved without spilling not only French and Danish but also German blood, the dream of every German nationalist was fulfilled at last. 1871 marks the decisive moment when the German heritage of regionalism and fragmentation from the Holy Roman Empire of old was broken. The central dispute of the 19th century of whether Prussia or Austria would prevail was resolved. The last decade of the 19th century in Germany was marked by a transformation from Bismarckian *Realpolitik* to aggressively imperialistic *Weltpolitik* as the German

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Empire joined the Scramble for Africa. However, German colonial ambitions had proven far greater, way beyond what Imperial Germany had managed to conquer during the brief period of its existence. To phrase the spirit of late 19th and early 20th Germany, it is possible to use perhaps the most famous quote from a speech of German statesman Bernhard von Bülow that he delivered in 1897: “In short, we do not want to put anyone in our shadow, but we also demand our place in the sun” (Bruch & Hofmeister, 2000, p. 270). Nevertheless, putting other nations and states under the “German shadow” was relatively imminent. Even though German colonial ambition is apparent by now, it is also essential to state the object of German colonial desire. The answer to this question is provided by Sebastian Conrad (2008), who states that “recent research has argued that the most important field of German colonial projections and interventions lay not in Africa, but in the European east” (2008, p. 226)

### **b) Apex of German Imperial ambitions – Friedrich Naumann**

The chance to realize these grand ambitions that were no short of continental dominance came from the First World War. During this period, the German intellectual community started contemplating the expected German victory in the war and its future outcome for Europe. One of the most influential works in this field comes from Friedrich Naumann with his *Mitteleuropa* plan. Naumann’s plan virtually expanded List’s ideas by encompassing economic integration over what he defined as Central Europe and adding ideas about pan-Germanic ‘overlordship’ into the concept. In his crucial work, Naumann proposes a pan-German state that primarily encompassed Central Europe.

While Naumann’s conception could be taken as a perfect example of German Imperial ambitions, making such a case is relatively problematic due to the nature of Naumann’s text. According to Trávniček (2009), Naumann was a controversial figure to tackle. On the one hand, he speaks about *Herrenvolk*, and the supporters of the Entente denounced his ideas. On the other hand, Naumann is adamantly against Bismarckian Germanization and his wishes for Central Europe to federalize seems genuine, albeit he overemphasizes the role of Germany and speaks in support of both *Staatenbund* (League of States)

and *Oberstaat* (lit. “Leading State”) which causes semantic confusion. (2008, pp. 102-104) However, the confusion about his true intentions does not end there. The two states that he considers within the confines of his conception are the German Empire and Austria-Hungary, with favorable concessions towards Hungarians as an allied nation. Nevertheless, when it comes to Slavic nations and their position in the federation, Naumann’s proposed treatment is not as generous as towards foreign-speaking Hungarians. According to Naumann (1917), “The foreign-speaking portions (of the German Empire), and especially Prussian Poles, are indeed a difficult problem for statesmanship, but they are neither so numerous nor so powerful as to come into consideration as partners in the Government” (1917, p. 13). Naturally, this raises several questions about Naumann’s plans and the proposed role of Slavic nations within his *Mitteleuropa* conception. From the viewpoint of action and how to achieve *Mitteleuropa*, how to design its legislature, executive, and other vital questions of statecraft, Naumann does little to propose anything tangible. In his writings, Naumann (1917) mentions that, in reality, problems are mostly solved as they come by and considers political programs, for example, as a source of weakness rather than strength. (1917, p. 31) This may also be the cause of why his political manifesto about *Mitteleuropa* offers only a wide variety of his personal opinions about the place of Germany in the post-war world order and analysis of a plethora of historical, political, and economic factors, while not providing any detailed proposal whatsoever.

Naturally, the most negative opinions towards Naumann’s plan were held by the nations that were a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire but had little to no power in the decision-making process, which was reserved for the top echelons of Germans and Hungarians. In his book *The New Europe*, Masaryk (1920) warns about German territorial ambitions over Central Europe and beyond, dubbing it as the *Berlin-Baghdad plan* and urges that freeing Czech lands and other non-German nations in Central Europe is of utmost importance to the Entente, if they want to defeat Prussian militarism (1920, p. 177). Naumann’s plan faced external opposition from the Entente and authors such as Masaryk and internal opposition from influential Socialist thinkers from Austria – Karl Renner and Otto Bauer (prominent Austromarxists who also developed plans

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for Central Europe). However, Masaryk (1920) states that the end goal of Renner and Bauer is the same as Naumann's. However, the process of reaching their goal is more clever and polite, in the form of giving more concessions towards the non-German Central European nations (Masaryk, 1920, pp. 116-117).

However, no matter what the execution of a whole pan-German Central Europe would have looked like, Germany's failure to prevail over the Entente had put an end to the dreams of German-led Central Europe. With the German defeat in the First World War, their prominent regional position was lost as well. Rupnik (1990) states that with the power vacuum created by the disintegration of German-led Empires in the region, a new opportunity arises for the nations they previously ruled over. "A new Central Europe of 1918-1938 was conceived of not only without Germany but against it" (Rupnik, 1990, p. 257). With the downfall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Russian Empire facing civil war, and Weimar Republic facing critical problems concerning internal stability right from the end of the First World War, rump states that had gained territory (such as Serbia in form of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes or Romania) and newly-found states (such as Poland or Czechoslovakia) virtually had a *carte blanche* to act as sovereigns of Central Europe for the time being.

### **1.3 Central Europe within the context of Habsburg Empire**

While Naumann's plan for Central Europe was perhaps the likeliest to be realized purely from the standpoint of support from both German political elites and German military might, Austria-Hungary between the 19th and 20th centuries cannot be ignored as a true hub of thinking about various plans concerning integration from many standpoints or even a federalization of the Empire. In this context, it is necessary to realize that at the beginning of the 19th century, the Austrian Empire was a multi-national, multi-lingual state embroiled in a wave of nationalism, where almost every nation of the Empire underwent its national awakening. Therefore, while pan-Germans and nationalists in Germany were attempting to overcome the problems mentioned in the previous chapter, such as fragmentation and regionalism, the situation in the Habsburg Empire was thoroughly different, influenced by the nationalistic sentiment of constituent nations of the Empire.

#### **a) Emergence of nationalism and separatism in the Habsburg Empire - Hungarian Revolution and the Ausgleich of 1867**

In order to chronologically describe the roots of the nationalistic conflicts in the Habsburg Empire, it is necessary to briefly explain the prelude. In the 18th century, the reformist rule of Empress Maria Theresa and her son and heir, Joseph II, marked an era of change for the Empire that would soon become a centerpiece of Central Europe. In 1784, Joseph II introduced a language reform that virtually gave the German language a paramount position in the Empire. According to Mrva (2015), the emperor reflected upon changing the official language from Latin to German for purely pragmatic reasons. However, to placate the discontent Hungarian gentry, he declared that Hungarian as an official language would not be a problem if at least half of the population could speak it (2015, p. 214). While the language reform in the intended form of Joseph II did not last, it symbolized what would come in the future. Combined with the Napoleonic Wars and an avalanche of nationalism brought all over Europe by the French, the Austrian Empire unwillingly underwent a quagmire of nationalistic sentiment that called for a reform of the old system. It sometimes even led to an open revolt against the Imperial authority. Hungarian response

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towards the language reform came rather quickly. By breaking the hegemony of the Latin language, which was used in the intellectual circles of Hungary for many centuries, the response towards the language reform was to equalize the standing of the German and Hungarian languages through the Magyarization of the populace.

The initial stage of the 19th century in the Habsburg Empire was scarred by the internal conflict between the conservative forces represented by Chancellor von Metternich and liberal malcontents that strived for changes within the Empire. During the thirties, under the rule of Emperor Ferdinand I and V, political stagnation and nationalistic pressures began to deepen. Hungarians wanted to safeguard their position as a constituent nation of the Empire along with language rights, going even as far as proposing self-rule in the parliament, while other minor nations of the Empire had tried to fight back by intellectual means, denouncing both Germanization and Magyarization that was already underway during this period. The crisis eventually culminated in an open revolt of Hungarian liberals against the Habsburg regime in 1848 due to what they perceived as an incursion on their rights when the new Emperor Francis Joseph I revoked the March Laws that guaranteed liberal reforms. While the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 was defeated rather quickly, the intellectual heritage of the Revolution was not.

Lajos Kossuth was one of the leaders of the Hungarian Revolution that managed to escape into exile after its defeat. At the time of the Revolution, Kossuth belonged to the society of the most important individuals in Hungary. He was probably the most influential Hungarian liberal thinker of that era. After the defeat of the Revolution, Kossuth fled into exile, where he tried to form an active opposition towards the Austrians by formulating his idea of a Danubian Federation (sometimes referred to as the Danubian Confederation). According to Wilson (n.d.), the ideas concerning the Danubian Federation were present as early as May of 1848, when a Romanian representative met with another leader of the Revolution – Lajos Batthyany – to discuss a possibility of Confederation between Romanians and Hungarians. (n.d. para. 2). However, other variants appeared as well after the defeat of the Revolution, such as a joint state of Romanians, South Slavs, and Hungarians with a single parliament

in which each nationality would hold fifty seats. Yet another variant, perhaps the most ambitious one, is based on the so-called Kiutahia Constitution of 1851. Kürti (2012) states that “the Kiutahia Constitution proposed the drawing up of new borders along ethnonational lines, and the creation of dual parliament with MPs for the nationalities, as well as envisaging the use of nationality language at home” (Kürti, 2012, p. 103). Nevertheless, none of these plans would garner the necessary support. One of the reasons was complications in finding a viable compromise for all parties. The other reason, which had struck a mortal blow to Hungarian resistance-in-exile and took the wind from their sails, was the eventual compromise orchestrated between the Hungarians and Germans by Francis Joseph I. After a relatively brief period of renewed absolutism within the Empire during the post-revolutionary years, in 1867 Emperor Francis Joseph I agreed upon the *Ausgleich* which divided the Empire between two parts, Cisleithania and Transleithania, enacting dualism within the Empire and conceding towards some of the demands of Hungarian liberals.

#### **b) Response of the minorities – Pan-Slavism and Austroslavism**

While the *Ausgleich* of 1867 had virtually solved nationalistic tensions between the Germans and Hungarians, it meant further stagnation and, in some cases, worsened the conditions and subsequently rescinded the rights of several minor nations that were already achieved beforehand within the confines of the Habsburg Empire. While the Hungarian liberals were content that they had received at least some sort of independence after the defeat of their revolution, for smaller nations within Transleithania, this meant more incursions of Magyarization that started to be pushed even more vigorously after the *Ausgleich* than before. In short, the *Ausgleich* dealt with the significant constituent nations of the Empire while leaving Slavic nations under their control and without any serious representation. Therefore, the Slavic response towards Magyarization and Germanization was heavily influenced by Pan-Slavic ideals. According to Kohn (1961), Pan-Slavism as a political idea gained notoriety during the 1830s, particularly in Central Europe, while not being as significant or even noticeable in Russia (1961, p. 323). It would seem that Pan-Slavism emerged organically as a firsthand response towards both Germanization and the Magyarization of the Empire. Pan-Slavism was widely accepted as a

primary ideology of several important characters behind the process of national awakening within the context of Slavic nations under the rule of the Habsburg Empire. From a historical perspective, it is logical that Slavic intelligentsia had sought help from the Russian Empire. Both the political influence and military prowess of Imperial Russia at the time were at its apex. In addition to that, Russia was seen as a 'fatherly figure' for many Pan-Slavic intellectuals who wished to placate Russia. Sympathies towards Russia were primarily influenced by linguistic and cultural proximity, which, from their viewpoint, translated into Russia being more tolerant towards other Slavic nations than Germans or Hungarians. Nevertheless, the political realities of the 19th century went against the wishes of early Pan-Slavic visionaries, as throughout the century, Russia was a member of the Holy Alliance constituted by both Prussia and, later on, the German Empire under Bismarck as well as the Austrian Empire. In addition, the aggressive Russification of Polish territories under the control of Russia at the time was a challenge that the Pan-Slavic thinkers did not adequately address.

Although Pan-Slavism was popular and various thinkers of Slavic origin accepted it as a solution for the everlasting conflict of nationalities within the Austrian Empire, during the troublesome forties of the 19th century, Czech intellectuals such as František Palacký had formulated a theory of Austro-Slavism that called for an equal standing of the Slavs in the Empire, while also rejecting the Russian Empire as a potential partner, in contrast with Pan-Slavic thinkers. In his most influential work, Palacký (1907) fully embraces the destiny of Slavs being a part of the Empire, even declaring that "if Austrian state did not exist, we would need to create it for the good of humanity (1907, p. 30). It is essential to state that Palacký's proposal for the future of the Austrian Empire had counted upon some form of united federation of nations that lived under it. Štaif (2018) states that Palacký had tried to interconnect Austroslavism and Austrofederalism into a single concept. Moreover, he worked towards restructuring the Imperial constitutional system to provide more breathing space for the minor nations and keep the Empire's territorial integrity intact. However, this effort opposed several political concepts (Štaif, 2018, p. 10). While Palacký's effort provided the first serious political attempt to federalize the

Austrian Empire, his idea had failed to materialize as Emperor Francis Joseph I had squandered the opportunity in favor of a brief period of absolutist rule that ended with the Austro-Hungarian Compromise.

### **c) Emergence of Austrofederalism – Aurel Popovici**

Concerning the question of national freedom, the result of the events of the 19th century did not end favorably for either supporters of Pan-Slavism or Austro-Slavism. However, some members of the Austro-Hungarian intelligentsia realized that the dualism in Austria-Hungary was unsustainable. According to Hollý (2012), “The Old Europe and traditional, stable values were obviously undergoing an erosion... members of the court aristocratic intelligentsia were trying to analyze the situation and prevent the disintegration [of the Empire] (Hollý, 2012, p. 520). During the late 19th century towards the early 20th century, the proponents of Austroslavism had found an unlikely ally in the heir presumptive to the crown of Austria-Hungary – Archduke Franz Ferdinand. It is probably impossible to determine whether his role as a supporter of the federalization of Austria-Hungary was influenced by his general distrust against several individuals from the Hungarian gentry, concern for the well-being of all the nations that were living within the Empire, or just because he felt that the stability of the Empire was threatened and he wanted to preserve his inheritance intact. The fact is that Franz Ferdinand had developed a thorough interest in Austrofederalism, and he favored a thoroughly different balance of power than Francis Joseph I. During the calm, pre-war turn of the century, Franz Ferdinand had supported and worked with a group of intellectuals that are collectively referred to as *Belvedere society*, with the name deriving from Franz Ferdinand’s palace of Belvedere in Vienna. What made *Belvedere society* very important in the context of Central Europe was its orientation towards Austrofederalism. A particularly popular and endorsed proposal for federalization was published by Aurel Popovici in 1906. This proposal of the *United States of Greater Austria*, as Popovici (1906) named it, was supposed to provide a definitive answer to the problem of various nationalities living in the Empire without having an equal voice and solving the situation of *bellum omnium contra omnes* within the realm (1906, Popovici, p. 14). It also

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promised to rearrange the executive and competencies on both levels of semi-autonomous regions and the federal government.

What Popovici (1906) wanted to achieve at the core of his work can be described as a compromise between Centralism and Federalism. His concept proposed 15 semi-autonomous states with proportional representation in the central government. These states included: German Austria (with 7 representatives), German Czechia (2), German Moravia and Silesia (1), Czechia (5), Western Galicia (3), Eastern Galicia (3), Transylvania (4), Croatia (3), Slovenia – referred to as “Krajina” (1), Slovakia (2), Vojvodina (1), Hungary (7), Szeklerland (1), Trento (1) and Trieste (1) (Popovici, 1906, pp. 308-309). All of these lands would be united in the person of the reigning Emperor. The central government in Vienna would maintain several political competencies such as foreign policy, army and navy, tariffs and trade, currency, federal laws, railroads, passports and foreigners, patents, weights and measurements, and last but not least – administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Hollý, 2012, pp. 512-513).

Concerning the actual governance, the executive and legislative power, Popovici had proposed a bicameral structure with the upper house composed primarily of the members of the aristocracy, clergy, and intelligentsia. The lower house was supposed to be composed of politicians that each state of the federation would elect separately. The federal executive was supposed to be headed by the Federal Chancellor, and the government would consist of 42 members (a grand total of all the representatives delegated by the autonomous states) with five committees concerning the interior, foreign affairs, defense, finances, and administration of occupied territories. Every committee was mandated to consist of representatives from at least three individual autonomous states. The Federal Constitution was supposed to guarantee the territorial integrity of the autonomous states and minority rights in each autonomous state and delegate a right for each autonomous state to establish its own Constitution. Each autonomous state would have a *Statthalter* (Governor) who would be named by the Emperor from the ranks of local citizens and would be the head of the government for the state. The official language of the federal institutions was supposed to be German, while

each autonomous state could choose its official administrative language (Hollý, 2012, pp. 513-515).

#### **d) Emergence of Austromarxism – Karl Renner, Otto Bauer**

Popovici's idea was not the only one considered in the Austria-Hungary. Austrian Social Democrats such as Karl Renner and Otto Bauer were spearheading their unique way, combining left-wing policies within the realities of Austria in particular. Thinkers such as Renner and Bauer heavily contributed to the political theory of Austromarxism, which specifically addressed Austria's political problems through Marxist theory. This new intellectual vanguard also proposed a solution to the problem of a multinational empire. Nimni (2000) explains that according to the Austromarxists, territorial appropriation by the dominant nation was to blame for the internal issues the Empire faced during this time (Nimni, 2000, p. xxvi). What they proposed as an alternative was to strip the state of the power to protect national and cultural identities. In that case, each citizen, no matter where they live, would be free to choose their national identity without state interference (Nimni, 2000, p. xxvi-xxvii). According to Hollý (2012), Renner also published a detailed plan to federalize the Empire. However, the critics had denounced it as too complicated, and even Renner had forsaken the plan as unachievable in the bourgeois society (2012, p. 507).

Nevertheless, neither Popovici's nor Austromarxist plan was ever implemented into practice. The Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed, and the so-called Habsburg generation of intellectuals tackling the topic of federalization moved on. Popovici did not live long enough to see the end of the First World War, and while Renner became the first post-war Chancellor of Austria, even his power was limited by the political situation of the post-war years. Eventually, Austria descended into political chaos during the late twenties and early thirties of the 20th century, and Renner lost his political power in favor of Dollfuss and later Schuschnigg.

**e) Emergence of Paneuropeanism during the Interwar period and afterwards – Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi**

The last proposal to arise, particularly from Austria, comes from the lifework of Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi. Learning from the experiences of the First World War prompted Kalergi to realize that Europe stands increasingly on the precipice of yet another war on domination. The changes he proposed were not supposed to affect only Central Europe but Europe as a whole. According to Klinec (2014), Kalergi met with Czechoslovak President Masaryk several times, and in 1920, he even proposed to him to become the George Washington of the United Europe. Klinec also adds that his public introduction of the idea happened in 1922 in several German-speaking periodicals (2014, p. 146).

From the early twenties to the late thirties, Kalergi was deeply dedicated to publishing many books, articles, and essays concerning Pan-European ideas. His most important works include, for example, *Das Paneuropäische Manifest* (1923), *Paneuropa ABC* (1931), and *Europa erwacht!* (1934) and many more, including his journal, *Paneuropa*, which was published for several decades. Kalergi's main argument for establishing a Paneuropean state entity revolved around the acute necessity of doing so to prevent another, more destructive war in Europe. Coudenhove-Kalergi (1938) summarized this thought in an essay titled *Europe must unite* where he argues that there can only be three possibilities for the future development of Europe – either Europe would embrace the Soviet Union as a result of social revolution or Nazi Germany would prevail in its war on domination, or the free states of Europe would band together to prevent the first or second option (1938, p. 2). However, what remains quite unsure when it comes to Kalergi's conception is how to achieve the unity of democratic European countries and constitute such union's political and administrative structure. Although Kalergi was undoubtedly considered the leader of the Paneuropean Movement, his role was not necessarily political. Kalergi's activities were devoted to creating and developing this idea and its popularization in European intellectual circles.

The Paneuropean Movement grew in numbers and popularity during the Interwar years. According to Bond (2021), the first Paneuropean Congress was

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held in Vienna in 1926. It was quite a success, with around 2000 attending delegates from the ranks of intellectuals and scientists (Bond, 2021, para. 7). However, Kalergi's idea did not garner enough political support in time to prevent the rise of Nazism and the eventual outbreak of the Second World War. Nevertheless, the chance to realize Kalergi's concept was not lost, as during the immediate post-war years, Kalergi's conception became even more popular. Bond (2021) claims that recognition of the idea, which was at the time rephrased to the *United States of Europe*, had come from both Churchill and Truman. While Churchill had mentioned him in his speech and recognized his work towards the unification of Europe, Truman himself had declared the United States of Europe as something the American policy should strive for and personally endorsed it (2021, para. 15-16).

While the idea of a unified Europe was embraced overall, the subsequent result was not in Kalergi's hands. Even though organizations pursuing European integration were created, their creation is attributed to politicians and diplomats (mainly from France and West Germany) who went through negotiations that led to their creation. Churchill had started to distance himself from the 'Continental affairs' right after the post-war political settlement. In this matter, Judt (2005) mentions Churchill's speech [the same where he also praised Kalergi for his contribution towards an idea of European unity] where he stated: "The first step in the re-creation of the European family must be a partnership between France and Germany" (Judt, 2005, p. 155). Britain thus remained out of European affairs, and the only two major countries that went on to pursue unity on the continent were France and West Germany. The partnership between these two countries gave birth to several institutions that at least partially 'copied' some of Kalergi's remarks. According to Bond (2021), Kalergi lobbied for the creation of the United States of Europe with its own Constitution, Court of Justice and Customs Union (2021, para. 4). Some of these institutions were created later on, in one form or another, for example the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) which had bonded the Western European nations and their coal and steel industries into a single market in 1952, as well as the European Court of Justice which was established parallelly with ECSC. As for Kalergi himself, he had not lived to see the United States of Europe

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established in its entirety, even though Europe had made several steps forward towards a more unified state entity. For the remainder of the 20th century, Kalergi served as an advisor of the French President De Gaulle and received several awards as a recognition for his efforts to reconcile France and Germany after the Second World War (Bond, 2021, para. 17-18).

## **Second Chapter: Milan Hodža as an architect of unity in Central Europe**

While not much known beyond the former territory of Czechoslovakia, one of the most important characters behind the plans to federalize Central Europe was Milan Hodža. This chapter evaluates his contribution to the topic and describes his plan, which was also the last proposal to federalize Central Europe in the 20th century.

### **2.1 Milan Hodža and efforts to federalize Austria-Hungary**

What is important to mention about the life of Milan Hodža is that he was born into a family with an intellectual tradition. According to Pekník (2015), Several of Hodža's family members belonged to an intellectual group behind an instigation of the Slovak uprising in 1848. This background meant that Milan Hodža received an excellent college education (2015, p. 15). After finishing his studies, Hodža primarily stayed in Budapest. During his stay there, Hodža started his career as a journalist with a keen interest in political topics such as the electoral system in Transleithania as well as minority politics and a plethora of other topics upon which he formulated his opinions in news articles. A career in journalism helped Hodža to elevate him in the public eye. In 1905, Hodža entered politics as a member of the Hungarian parliament, closely working with his contemporary political generation formed around the Slovak National Party.

#### **a) Hodža's political career 1905-1910**

Throughout his tenure as a member of the Hungarian parliament, Hodža stood for reforming the old monarchy from within as he became one of the members of the *Belvedere society*. In the parliament, Hodža built his career upon a platform calling for universal suffrage that would apply to every adult in Transleithania. According to Hodža (1997), "*Lebensraum* politics in combination with the unbelievably grotesque electoral system is the cause of the inability of the non-Hungarians to enter parliament" (1997, p. 76). This was a political leitmotif for Hodža as he dedicated most of his time to addressing this issue in the parliament and his book describing this part of his life. Years that Hodža spent in the parliament had helped him to gain valuable acquaintances

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within the top political echelons of the country, such as the heir to the throne – Franz Ferdinand, as well as the leader of the Romanian nationalists Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, Romanian King Carol I, and others. Hodža skillfully used these valuably attained acquaintances to pursue his political goals concerning the right of self-determination of minorities within Austria-Hungary.

During his early years in the parliament, Hodža, along with other non-Hungarian politicians, was trying to broker a settlement with the Hungarian majority concerning universal suffrage, the Hungarian Independence Party, upholding the ideals of their spiritual leader Lajos Kossuth and his search for allies against the Habsburgs along the Danube, managed to broker a compromise with the Croats that already enjoyed limited autonomy since 1868. This deliberate political maneuver was supposed to drive a wedge between underrepresented minorities in Transleithania, as Romanians and Slovaks were already politically endorsing the partition of Transleithania along ethnic lines, South Slavs (Croats in particular) were somewhat ambivalent, as their primary political goal became the enactment of Trialism. After the compromise with the Hungarians, the Croats resolutely decided to support the achieved status quo, even after Popovici published his *United States of Greater Austria* proposal in 1906 (Hodža, 1997, p. 87). Emboldened by their allies in the Hungarian Independence Party, the Croatian political elite released their manifesto on the 3rd of October 1905, which lashed out at Cisleithania for withholding Dalmatia under the control of Vienna. (Seton-Watson, 1911, p. 394) However, the Croatian hopes for at least some form of Trialism were thwarted by Hungarians not long afterward. According to Hodža (1997), the Hungarian parliament enacted a law according to which the employees of Croatian railways were mandated to speak Hungarian, effectively enabling the Hungarian government to control the Croatian railways. This turn of events had convinced the South Slavs living in the monarchy that the answer to their political struggle was to join the Kingdom of Serbia, rendering the Habsburg overlordship obsolete. (1997, p. 87-88)

After the Hungarian-Croatian affair, Hodža outlined the possible development of Transleithania in the future, summing it up into three possible outcomes. The first proposed outcome counted upon the enactment of universal suffrage in

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Transleithania, which would safeguard a slight non-Hungarian majority (Hodža was convinced that Transleithanian Germans were antagonistic towards Hungarians and therefore counted upon them as possible political allies) and, therefore, full citizenship rights for every adult individual in Transleithania. The second outcome counted upon the complete success of Popovici's *United States of Greater Austria* plan without any transitory phases or compromises, repealing Dualism and establishing a central government in Vienna. The third outcome counted upon yet another Croatian-Hungarian rapprochement and enactment of Trialism. However, Hodža notes that Trialism would not result in any major political deviation or solve the problem of underrepresented minorities within Transleithania (Hodža, 1997, p. 104). While primarily concentrated on realizing either the first or the second aforementioned outcome, Hodža's political career in the Hungarian parliament was also notable for defending the rights of Slovaks in particular. His efforts were faced with strong antagonism from the Hungarian parliamentarians. After the Černová affair in 1907, Hodža condemned the loss of lives due to the excessive intervention of the Hungarian Gendarmerie. Cambel (2001) claims that instead of condemning the event, the Hungarian members of parliament reacted with death threats and calling Hodža a rebel (2001, p. 30). Hodža describes this epoch of his life in the following manner: "We were alone in our battle for national equality... At any time when our speaker had decided to speak up on a stronger note, a thunderstorm of three hundred fanatics had formed against him... Hungarian majority had sensed, and their leaders knew that they found themselves in danger for their system of governance, in danger of the Hungarian conception of statehood" (Hodža, 1935).

### **b) Hodža's efforts to federalize Austria-Hungary 1910-1918**

Apart from his political activities in the parliament chambers, Hodža was also responsible for strengthening ties between Franz Ferdinand and the Slovak National Party. Ever since the Compromise of 1867, there was distrust between Vienna and the Slovak political elite, mainly because the Slovak political elite supported the emperor and, in return, they felt that the emperor had given them up to the Hungarians in 1867. Cambel (2001) states that some parts of the

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Slovak public held a negative view towards Hodža's inclination to cooperate with Franz Ferdinand (2001, p. 31). Also, Hodža's partisan colleagues were not necessarily keen on working with Franz Ferdinand, nor did they share Hodža's infatuation with the plans to reform the monarchy into a federation. Nevertheless, Hodža convinced them that cooperation would be beneficial in the future. According to Galandauer (2002), Franz Ferdinand had an audience with the Slovak National Party delegation headed by Matúš Dula and Hodža in March 1913 (2002, p. 91). As a result of this meeting, the Slovak National Party reoriented itself and started to look up to Vienna much more. Pekník (2015) states that the Slovak National Party had incorporated the plans for federalization into the party program in early 1914 (2015, p. 17). While Hodža had failed to retain his seat in the parliament in the next elections to the Hungarian parliament in 1910, the brief epoch of 1910 to 1914 cannot be described as unsuccessful for him, as he became one of the closest confidants of Franz Ferdinand and his effort to reform the monarchy.

During Hodža's political tenure and afterward, Austria-Hungary and its internal problems, in particular, had caught the attention of many contemporary periodicals and academics. Names like Louis Eisenmann, R. W. Seton-Watson, and Björnstjerne Björnson are worth mentioning in this context. Hodža (1997) also takes note of this publicity and briefly states: "Until the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913, Turkey [*sic*] was known as the sick man of Europe, Austria-Hungary was supposed to be the next one" (1997, p. 108). Nevertheless, Austria-Hungary never truly got to become the next sick man or reform itself. After the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on the 28th of June 1914, the dreams of federalizing the old monarchy were put to a halt. As a reaction to these events, Hodža published a news article in July titled "And these (individuals) want war" (*A títo chcú vojnu*), where he prophesied the fall of Austria-Hungary. This feat earned him a swift arrest and a death sentence. Nevertheless, the court later overruled the death sentence, changing it to prison time, which he was supposed to serve *post bellum*. As a highly educated conscript with the ability to speak several languages, Hodža was assigned to the military censorship office in Vienna, where he spent a significant part of the war as a non-commissioned officer. (Cambel, 2001, pp. 38-39)

While it is difficult to evaluate how the situation in Austria-Hungary would have developed if Franz Ferdinand had assumed the Imperial throne, Hodža provided a brief overview of what was supposed to happen in case of the death of old and fragile Emperor Francis Joseph I. In his article, Galandauer (2002) mentions a brief overview of planned events, which included a military government in Transleithania with several ministers from the ranks of non-Hungarian politicians, constitutional reform, and universal suffrage that would be enacted and guaranteed by an Imperial decree. Allegedly, Hodža was one of only four people who had any knowledge about this plan (Galandauer, 2002, p. 92). Even though the German and, in particular, Hungarian gentry had hoped for a swift victory in the war (which would probably be decisively crushing for any effort to restructure the politics of the monarchy), their hopes had not come to fruition. Austria-Hungary was decimated both militarily and politically by October 1918. Even at that time, it seems, the Austro-Hungarian political elite was clinging onto the remains of a political legacy of the old Empire. During these tumultuous times, Hodža was invited for a meeting with a Hungarian political behemoth - István Tisza. During the meeting, Tisza had proposed to enter negotiations with Hodža concerning the political future of Transleithania while refusing a request for universal suffrage and appointment of non-Hungarian ministers into the government. Nevertheless, Tisza's political stubbornness was no longer relevant as he had little power to stop the whirlwind of upcoming events. On October 28, 1918, Hungarian Foreign Affairs Minister Gyula Andrassy was forced to accept Wilson's Fourteen Points, and on the same day, Czechoslovakia declared independence. As for Tisza, he was assassinated by the Hungarian soldiers returning from the front mere days after his meeting with Hodža (Hodža, 1997, pp. 120-121).

### **2.2 Milan Hodža and his political career in Czechoslovakia**

While Hodža was undoubtedly one of the most known and essential Slovak politicians of this era, he played only a very cosmetic role in the creation of Czechoslovakia. Unlike the "new generation" of Czechoslovak politicians, such as Masaryk, Beneš, or Štefánik, Hodža was not participating in negotiations concerning the future borders of post-war Europe. According to Holec (2018), when the Czechs declared independence, Hodža was staying in Vienna.

Subsequently, the Slovak political elite organized a conference on the 30th of October in Martin, where they signed a declaration that created the Slovak National Council and renounced the legal right of the Hungarian Government to represent the Czechoslovak nation. Even though Hodža was not one of the signatories or members, as he came too late, he had brought important news about the creation of Czechoslovakia to the assembly, which had no notion of these events. Hodža was also responsible for altering the formulation of the declaration under the supervision of several leaders of the newly created Council. Holec (2018) argues that even on the eve of the creation of Czechoslovakia, Hodža was still not entirely convinced about the feasibility and resiliency of the new state. Nevertheless, he had come to embrace it in the upcoming years. (Holec, 2018)

#### **a) Hodža as a rising star of Czechoslovak politics 1918-1935**

After the chaos and disunity of the first years after the war, Hodža established himself as a member of the Czechoslovak political elite. While the pivotal role over the political administration and management of post-war Slovakia was awarded to Vavro Šrobár, who was Hodža's political adversary (mainly due to their difference in opinion towards federalism), Hodža still played a significant role in Czechoslovak politics, which was primarily safeguarded by his pragmatic approach towards contemporary political issues. At the time, one of the major political topics in Slovakia was whether to accept the idea of Czechoslovakism and centralism or orient towards autonomy. For the government in Prague, Šrobár was an obvious choice for administering Slovakia due to his close ties with President Masaryk and his staunch belief in Czechoslovakism. Even though the other side was represented by Andrej Hlinka – a popular figure and a steadfast autonomist with whom Hodža had cordial relations – Hodža, always true to his instinct to view political matters from several perspectives, had chosen his own way. Concerning these facts, Holec (2002) underlines that Hodža had always thought about the broader picture regarding his political program. When it comes to the Slovak question, he saw it in the broadest context possible, at the very least in the context of Central Europe. (Holec, 2002, p. 95) In the political struggle between Czechoslovakism and

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Autonomism, Hodža pursued what he saw as the best of both worlds while staying true to his international outlook. During the convention of the Agrarian Party in 1925, Hodža exclaimed that “with Central European solidarity, we are going to be strong enough to withstand against both Bolshevik or Imperialist incursions which are threatening the peace” (Kováč, 2002, p. 114).

Concerning his political career during the twenties in the 20th century, Hodža can be described as a rising star. Whereas Hodža gained several ministerial offices, the offices from which he could positively impact Central European solidarity remained out of his reach for the time being. During this time, Hodža primarily concentrated on economic matters. According to Votočková-Lauermannová (1938), Hodža held several ministerial offices. His first ministerial position in 1919 to 1920 concerned law unification; in 1922-1926 and 1932-1934, he served as a Minister of Agriculture and in 1926-1929 as a Minister of Education, all the while being continually elected as a Member of Parliament throughout the existence of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1938, p. 33). For this era, Hodža is also known as the “national economist” for his vast contribution towards programs and reforms that primarily concerned agricultural matters. Simultaneously, he devoted his time and energy to the International Agrarian Bureau along with his fellow party member Antonín Švehla. Concerning the International Agrarian Bureau (IAB), its role was to foster economic cooperation between the European countries. However, the most vocal and active members of the Bureau came from Central Europe – the parallel between Hodža’s political aims to bring Central Europe together and the goals of the IAB is quite apparent. (Hodža, 1997, pp. 136-137). Hodža strongly believed in agrarian policies, basing his argumentation around the fact that Central Europe, and Slovakia in particular, was rural, lacking the industrial capabilities of the West in combination with democratic beliefs that he held dear throughout his entire life. Hodža supported what he perceived as the rural middle class and argued that this strong rural middle class safeguards democracy in Central Europe (Hodža, 1997, pp. 256-257).

## **b) Hodža as the Prime Minister and his Danube plan 1935-1938**

From 1925 to 1935, the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party reached its political apex, as it had always ended up being a part of the government. Nevertheless, for over a decade, Hodža was not considered a candidate for premiership. His chance came in 1935 when he replaced Jan Malypetr as the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia. This moment was also the peak of Hodža's political career. While Hodža had managed to achieve several important reforms within the domestic field, for the purpose of this work, his efforts in foreign policy are of paramount importance.

Concerning Czechoslovak foreign policy during Hodža's premiership, the end goal was to achieve rapprochement between the Central European countries, which would later result in cooperation. Rapprochement was a daunting task as the diplomatic relations between the Central European countries were particularly strained during the Interwar period, either due to plenty of territorial disputes or historical experience between them. One of the few solid organizations that safeguarded cordial relations between the Central European countries was the Little Entente. Hodža (1997) also considered the Little Entente as the core of Central European cooperation. (Hodža, 1997, p. 193) Nevertheless, the Little Entente did not encompass the whole of Central Europe and was practically created to prevent Hungarian irredentism. Even so, the fact is that cordial relations between Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia were more of a stark exception rather than something that could be considered as granted in Central Europe's hostile environment. Hodža's foreign policy focused more on the countries that posed an obstacle to cooperation.

Surprisingly, one of the more successful negotiations was carried out with Austria, even before Hodža became prime minister. Hodža (1997) mentions promising results concerning economic rapprochement with Austria after several private meetings in 1933 with Engelbert Dollfuss (1997, p. 184). However, the results of the meetings had proven to be wholly irrelevant as Dollfuss was assassinated the following year. Right after Hodža became the Prime Minister in 1935, he renewed negotiations with Austria publicly. Unfortunately for him, the negotiations with the new Austrian Chancellor Kurt

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Schuschnigg had proven more difficult. Schuschnigg, as a Habsburg legitimist, mentioned the possibility of Habsburg restoration during their meetings, Hodža objected (Hodža, 1997, pp. 185-186). Negotiations with Schuschnigg resulted in an agreement upon what Hodža calls the *Transdanubian clause*, which was supposed to safeguard favorable preferences towards industrial and agricultural goods (Hodža, 1997, p. 188). Nevertheless, German *Machtpolitik* proved too strong for Austria to withstand, and Austria underwent an *Anschluss*. Instead of further diplomatic talks with the Germanosphere, Hodža had chosen to increase rearmament out of concern for the future of Central Europe (Suppan, 2002, p. 269).

The nation that proved to be the most troublesome for Hodža's integrational effort was Hungary. It is trivial to see why the Hungarians hesitated to kick-start such efforts. Hungary saw itself as being surrounded by the nations of the Little Entente and was looking for allies elsewhere, for example, in Italy, Austria, and particularly in Germany. However, this did not prevent Hungary from signing a bilateral trade treaty with Czechoslovakia in 1937. Hodža mistakenly assumed that this treaty and pre-existing economic cooperation within the Little Entente would lead to the realization of his Danube plan, which counted upon a tariff union with a common currency (Hodža, 1997, pp. 189-192). Perhaps this was, in his view, the first step towards achieving more economic and political cooperation within Central Europe. In addition to the aforementioned Czechoslovak-Hungarian treaty, another one that had the potential to foster better diplomatic relations was signed by Romania and Bulgaria in 1936. Needless to say, just like the Czechoslovak-Hungarian treaty, the Romanian-Bulgarian treaty of 1936 mainly concerned economic matters (Hodža, 1997, pp. 192-193).

The reasoning behind Hodža's failure to achieve the goals of the Danube Plan is multi-pronged. While fostering better trade relations between the countries is undeniably commendable, Hodža's foreign policies were simply lackluster in retrospect. While these events may interpret Hodža's policies as perhaps not meticulous enough in search for new allies, it is necessary to consider the sheer number of factors that went against his intentions. From the external point of view, Austria and Hungary were not very interested in cooperation as the former

country looked up to Germany, and the latter was not very keen on political cooperation with the Little Entente for many historical and diplomatic reasons. Poland was also playing its own role in Central Europe with its own unique plans of creating some sort of buffer zone to contain the threat of the Soviet Union (the *Intermarium* plan). Hodža (1997) states that Piłsudski's regime was an obstacle to creating cordial relations between Czechoslovakia and Poland. (1997, p. 138-140). The final blow to Hodža's foreign policy was delivered in the Winter of 1937. As a result of the Romanian elections in 1937, Octavian Goga became the new Prime Minister. Unlike his predecessor and Hodža's political ally – Gheorghe Tătărescu – Goga was a far-right politician who was skeptical about rapprochement with Hungary (Hodža, 1997, pp. 197-198). Hungarian rapprochement became very unlikely, and soon afterward, Austria swiftly conceded to Nazi occupation.

During 1937, Hodža's government increasingly faced pressure from the Sudeten German Party (which was practically a branch of NSDAP in Czechoslovakia). Hodža was aware of a dire political situation in the country and, therefore, started making concessions towards minorities to appease the Sudeten German Party and improve the standing of malcontent German citizens of Czechoslovakia. On the 17th of May 1938, Hodža made one of his most daring political decisions, calling for an administrative reconstruction of Czechoslovakia and giving more autonomy to the constituent countries and regions (Hodža, 1997, p. 211). However, he did not even get the chance to finish this reform. In September of 1938, Nazi Germany had openly started to claim Czechoslovakian Sudetenland. Nazi claims had culminated in Munich Agreement between Germany, Italy, France, and the United Kingdom, which gave legitimacy to German claim over the territory and left Czechoslovakia without its allies if the government decided to oppose this claim. In relation to these events, Hodža (1997) states that many proponents of the Munich Agreement believed it would prevent the eruption of nationalist fever. Nevertheless, the tide of events had developed differently as Nazi Germany "had chosen Prague as the second *ouverture* of the Second World War" (Hodža, 1997, p. 214).

### **c) Hodža's activities in the political exile 1939-1944**

As a result of the Sudetenland crisis, subsequent political turmoil, and the final German invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1939, Hodža left the country, choosing voluntary exile rather than cooperation with the Nazis. According to Múdry (1949), Hodža lived in London during the early period of the Second World War and was a member of the Czechoslovak resistance based there. However, differences in political opinions strained the relationship between Hodža and Beneš. As Beneš was the head of the government-in-exile, Hodža was deliberately sidelined. (Múdry, 1949, p. 18) Many American Slovaks also noted Hodža's political absence. Lack of information, such as his unknown whereabouts, gave birth to various speculations, such as that he was trying to revive the Austro-Hungarian Empire or that he was lobbying for Slovak autonomy in Hungary. Nevertheless, Hodža reappears again in the public eye in the Autumn of 1941 when he arrives in the United States (Múdry, 1949, pp. 17-18).

Hodža's arrival to the United States was not coincidental. In fact, it would seem that his choice to come to the United States was a well-calculated political move. At this time, most of Europe was under Nazi occupation, and basically, the only country that posed a real threat to Nazism was Great Britain. Since the Czechoslovak government-in-exile, based in London and primarily represented by Beneš, was not interested in any genuine cooperation with Hodža, he made a conscious decision to leave for the United States. At the time, the United States hosted the largest community of politically conscious Slovaks, with the exception of Czechoslovakia. While Hodža himself had stated that his primary intention in visiting the United States was to cure himself as, at this point, he was already in his sixties and ailing, his numerous political activities in the United States say otherwise (Múdry, 1949, p. 20). Hodža's political goals in the United States were multi-pronged. One reason for his arrival was to garner the support of the American Slovak public for the Allies in the Second World War; the other was to lobby for "Slovak specificity" within the post-war Czechoslovak Republic (Múdry, 1949, p. 25). However, another reason was to popularize his idea of a Central European Federation that could be created after the war to prevent the situation he personally faced in 1938. In the article from the 20th of

November 1941 titled *Let us concentrate Slovak forces (Sústred'ujme Slovenské sily)*, Hodža proclaims the necessity for a Federation in Central Europe (Múdry, 1949, p. 76). In 1942, he published his book *Federation in Central Europe*, which partly served to introduce and popularize his proposal for the future of Central Europe and his own political autobiography aimed at Anglophone audiences. After the publication of his book, he concentrated on further political cooperation with American Slovaks, giving speeches and interviews. However, according to Múdry (1949), Hodža's health condition worsened in the Autumn of 1943, and he relocated to Florida. On the 27th of June 1944, Hodža died in Clearwater, Florida, after a problematic surgery (Múdry, 1949, p. 61). He dedicated the last years of his life to an idea that was close to him throughout his political career – trying to unite the nations and countries in Central Europe.

### **2.3 Central European Federation – Hodža's conception**

At the core of Hodža's (1997) interest in federalizing Central Europe lies the following question – what to do with smaller nations? He argues that every nation, no matter how numerous its population is, has a right to exist. In his own words: "It is a mission of democracy to fight against *Herrenvolk* theory" (Hodža, 1997, p. 215). During both the interwar period and especially during World War II, smaller nations faced numerous threats to their existence. Unlike perhaps other politicians of the era, Hodža was aware that the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany posed a tremendous threat to smaller nations living in Central Europe. He had sought to ameliorate this problem through the creation of the Central European Federation, whose role was to, first and foremost, protect the small nations from their big neighbors. Ferenčuhová (2006) claims that the creation of the Federation was supposed to psychologically force Germany to consider peaceful methods rather than use force. (2006, p. 74). Another reason why Hodža was interested in creating the Central European Federation was rooted in economic cooperation. In this context, Hodža argues that separate, small countries would remain economically dependent on their big neighbors (Hodža, 1997, p. 229).

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Regarding the structure of political administration, Hodža provides far more detail than any other author. The whole political structure of the proposed Federation starts on the “autonomous” level. He does not seem to focus too much on the political structure of each autonomous territory, but it is apparent that a notable portion of decision-making starts here. Autonomous territories were supposed to have two kinds of elections – local and federal. Local elections would naturally only concern the local parliament of the autonomous territory and its Government, while the results of the Federal elections would concern the Federal Congress. Hodža (1997) proposes that the congressmen of the Federal Congress should be named by the autonomous parliaments by a two-thirds majority. Hodža (1997) defends the appointing of congressmen by autonomous parliaments rather than direct election by claiming that Central European countries have diverse electoral systems and it would be a cause for division if the Federation would establish just one (1997, p. 236-237). Each autonomous territory would have one congressman per one million inhabitants. The congressman’s political mandate would correspond in length with the mandate in the autonomous parliament, which named the congressman into this position. However, each autonomous parliament would have a prerogative to replace their federal congressmen as they see fit. Leading positions within Congress (such as the congressional chairman, vice presidents, *et cetera*) would be redistributed between the congressmen so that at least one member would represent every nation of the Federation. Other important matters, such as the official language and permanent residence of both the Congress and the Government, would be decided by the two-thirds majority in the Congress. (Hodža, 1997, pp. 234-235)

Another pillar of the Central European Federation would be the Government. Hodža (1997) proposes that the Federal President and the Federal Chancellor would be the two most important positions within the Government. Concerning the Presidential elections, the main role in choosing and electing the President would be bestowed upon the Conference of Prime Ministers. This Conference would consist solely of the Prime Ministers of each autonomous territory within the Federation. The final choice for the President of the Federation would need to be confirmed by the Congress as well. Just like nowadays, the President

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would also have various competencies, such as the control over the Armed Forces as the commander-in-chief or the right to veto the laws. Hodža does not specify the requirements to become the President. Another important governmental position would be the Federal Chancellor. The Federal Chancellor would be named by the President, along with the entire cabinet. The Federal Chancellor would propose the cabinet members to the Federal President. Hodža also proposes several Federal ministries, such as the Ministry for Communications (post offices and railways), Defense, Foreign Affairs, Trade, Finance, Traffic (air and sea travel), Justice and Cooperation (specifically between autonomous territories). Along with these proposed ministries, each autonomous territory would have a right to appoint its own Minister to the Federal Government. This Minister would have no *portfeuille*. (Hodža, 1997, p. 233-234)

The constitution also needed to be addressed, as Central European countries of that time came from different backgrounds that may not always correspond with each other. Hodža (1997) was aware of this problem and discouraged looking for inspiration elsewhere, proposing instead that the Federal constitution should draw from the local political conditions. Additionally, he proposed that any lawmaking should come from autonomous decisions. Therefore, each sovereign state must agree upon a Federal constitution, which was supposed to serve as a backbone of effective cooperation in the future. (Hodža, 1997, p. 232)

## **2.4 Comparison between the various proposals**

In order to properly finish describing each concept introduced beforehand in this work, it is essential to critically compare and contrast the main similarities and dissimilarities these concepts had with each other.

The concepts that have the most in common are Popovici's United States of Greater Austria (subchapter 1.3, section c) and Hodža's Federation in Central Europe (subchapter 2.3). The reason behind this similarity is the close proximity of both authors in terms of origin and the conditions under which they conceptualized the idea of Central European unity. Popovici and Hodža had sought greater independence from the Hungarians as they both were members of national minorities in Transleithania, which were politically underrepresented. While Popovici was the original creator of the idea of a federalized Habsburg monarchy, Hodža was working as a confidant of Franz Ferdinand in the same matter and, therefore, had extensive knowledge of Popovici's plan. Several observable correlations exist, particularly in both plans' proposed political and administrative structures. What connects them the most is the political representation, which was supposed to be distributed according to the population of each constituent territory. Other correlations can be found within the role of the Emperor and the Federal President in both Popovici's and Hodža's plan respectively. However, each plan was created under a different timeframe and, therefore, different political conditions in Central Europe. While Popovici's proposal was tailored exclusively for the territory under the control of Austria-Hungary and it intended to pursue the monarchical regime further, Hodža's proposal had not only counted upon the former territory of the Old Empire but also stretched further beyond - towards countries such as Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia in their entirety and it was constructed with the intention to pursue democratic route. This is also evidenced by dissimilarities, such as Popovici proposing a bicameral structure (to reserve the upper house for the elite) and Hodža proposing a unicameral structure consisting of democratically elected representatives. There are also noticeable differences between how these two authors tackle autonomous territories and their political system- Popovici proposed that the Emperor should handpick a Governor (*Staathalter*) who would rule in his name, Hodža proposed a classic

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parliamentary democracy for each autonomous territory with the top position being that of the Prime Minister.

Another concept that was somewhat similar to Hodža's Federation in Central Europe (subchapter 2.3) comes from the work of Coudenhove-Kalergi (subchapter 1.3, section e). The primary similarity these two concepts share is that they aim at the democratic states and openly call for their accession to the supra-national union of equals. However, while Hodža's conception specifically targeted Central Europe – the region of smaller nation-states with which Hodža was almost perfectly acquainted – Kalergi's conception was broader and aimed to include the entirety of democratic Europe. While Hodža's Federation became virtually unachievable after the Second World War, Kalergi's conception enjoyed limited successes within Western Europe right after the war.

Concepts that are dissimilar from Hodža's Federation (subchapter 2.3) primarily include Naumann's concept of *Mittleuropa* (subchapter 1.2, section b). The primary difference between these two concepts comes from the different perceptions of which state-entity should dominate Central Europe. Naumann was convinced that it was the German prerogative to become the leading nation of Europe after the First World War. Naumann also pursued a preferential treatment policy as he planned to give Hungarians a privileged position within *Mittleuropa*. Hodža, on the other hand, disagreed with this notion, proposing instead a federation of equals with no exceptions. These two plans inherently could not coexist with one another.

## **Third Chapter: End of Central Europe**

It is unnecessary to underline how important the Second World War was in the grand scheme of world history. Its consequences on the world order, politics, economy, technology, and many other fields can be felt even today. While the Second World War had brought the idea of international cooperation, particularly in Europe, to a whole another level, the idea of federalized Central Europe had suffered an irrefutable blow as a direct consequence. This chapter focuses on what exactly had happened to the idea and the subsequent aftermath.

### **3.1 Second World War and the end of Central Europe**

Ever since 1938, the political power of smaller nations in Central Europe had dwindled in favor of Nazi Germany. In their disunity, they could not withstand Hitler's aggressive and ever-growing militaristic drive over Central Europe. German *Anschluss* of Austria and the annexation of Czechoslovak *Sudetenland* had already disproportionately changed the balance of power in Central Europe. With Czechoslovakia on its deathbed, the Little Entente in tatters, and the leniency of the Western powers, Germany virtually had free reign over Central Europe at its fingertips. Subsequently, the Germans achieved hegemony over Central Europe by subjugating Poland and Yugoslavia and making Hungary and Romania their obedient allies.

Just like other mentioned authors, also the Nazi ideologues had their own plans for Central Europe. While it is possible to analyze similarities between Naumann's *Mitteleuropa* plan with the Nazi *Lebensraum* policy as there are some similarities (such as the prominent position of Germans and an emphasis on uniting the German enclaves over Central Europe under one roof in both of these concepts), it would be misleading. In practice, the Nazi conception of *Lebensraum* had counted upon ethnic cleansing and resettlement of the indigenous populace, which did not fit the Nazi framework of the Aryan race. Kamenetsky (1961) explains that "Nazi ideology did not specifically include a positive program of genocide, it had tendencies which when followed consistently made such a program inevitable" (Kamenetsky, 1961, p. 139). While Naumann overemphasized the unique role of Germany within Central

Europe, his work never mentioned any ethnic cleansing. Also, Trávniček (2009) mentions that Naumann's *Mitteleuropa* was heavily lacking in scale and execution when compared to the Nazi plans for Central Europe. He also mentions the distaste of one of Hitler's court ideologues – Alfred Rosenberg – for Naumann's proposed plan. (Trávniček, 2009, pp. 265-266)

Nevertheless, just like the other mentioned authors of various plans for Central Europe, the Nazis had also ultimately failed in long-term implementation of their plans. Nazi military incursions had also brought a rather unexpected outcome for Central Europe. In 1945, after it was obvious that it was only a matter of time before Nazi Germany would be ultimately defeated, the leaders of the Allied power met in Yalta to discuss the future of post-war Europe. According to Trávniček (2009), the Yalta Conference created a "bloc system" in Europe (2009, p. 269). Allies had virtually agreed upon two spheres of influence. Europe was practically divided in half between the Soviet sphere of influence (the Eastern Bloc) and the Western sphere of influence (the Western Bloc). In this dichotomic divide between East and West, there was no longer space for any Central Europe, not to mention that the spheres of influence were demarcated by the Iron Curtain, which went through parts of Central Europe. Any ideas about Central European unity had virtually died out in such conditions. Any conceptualization tackling the possible solution to Central European problems with sovereignty or democracy was simply irrelevant in the face of the new reality where the West collides with the East. Central Europe was torn and lying virtually in the middle of this conflict.

### **3.2 What became of Central Europe?**

The end of the Second World War, along with two decisive conferences in Yalta and Potsdam, had immensely and profoundly changed Central Europe, even more so than the previous World War and its outcome. After the treaties that officially concluded disputes caused by the First World War came into effect, Central Europe abruptly became home to several new, independent countries. This was not necessarily the case with the treaties and agreements signed as a result of the conclusion of the Second World War. While borders were redrawn once again to accommodate the new realities of postwar Europe, two

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other factors profoundly impacted the future of Central Europe. The first factor was the mass expulsion of Germans that became widespread right after the Second World War. According to Zahra (2012), more than 12 million ethnic Germans who were living outside the borders of Germany (Volksdeutsche) were forcefully exiled to Germany (2012, para. 2). This mass exodus was undoubtedly ordered to prevent Germany from claiming territories throughout Central Europe ever again. The exodus also spelled the end of German political hegemony over Central Europe. Another factor that changed Central Europe for decades to come was the Communist takeover of Central European countries. As mentioned in the previous subchapter, this split Europe in two along political lines.

Since Communist politicians had no intention to federalize or unite Central Europe in particular, the idea of somehow uniting Central Europe into a single or dominant political entity had died out due to being simply unfathomable. New governments in post-war Central Europe had fixed their foreign policy with the interests of the Soviet Union, which, from the standpoint of political logic, would not gain anything by embracing the idea. Therefore, Central European states remained independent and separated for almost the entirety of the twentieth century.

However, there was still one moment in the twentieth century when Central Europe awakened from its slumber. As mentioned, the concept of politically uniting Central Europe into a single entity was unimaginable throughout the latter half of the 20th century. While it would be shameful not to mention several cases of resistance against the influence of the Soviet Union (such as the Hungarian Revolution, Prague Spring, or a long list of protests in Poland throughout the entire period), in the end, they changed little in political terms. However, the early 1980s brought a surprising development to the concept of Central Europe, which had almost been forgotten by then. This resurrection of Central Europe was the work of Milan Kundera and his essay *The Tragedy of Central Europe* (originally written in 1984). In this essay, Kundera (2023) declares Central Europe as an integral part of the West (para. 6), outlines its struggle against Soviet influence (para. 8), and argues that the Central European identity is under threat (para. 9-11). One thing that is crucial to

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understand regarding Kundera's essay is that it challenged the status quo. His essay was written in a refined and intellectual manner that was difficult for the status quo proponents to challenge. For these reasons, Kundera's essay provided a lively ground for discussion over the long-forgotten topic of Central Europe.

What is particularly interesting about Kundera's concept is that, unlike previously mentioned authors, Kundera does not seem to be that invested in providing political solutions to the problems he listed. Kundera is merely trying to pinpoint these problems and put them forward to a Western audience in a digestible manner. Several passages of Kundera's essay use culture and arts as their primary motive for narration and argumentation. As Trávniček (2009) puts it: "Those with the burning desire for a lost Central Europe are not real politicians but dissidents and banned authors" (Trávniček, 2009, p. 276). The authors that subsequently contributed to this topic had no interest in recreating Central Europe into a politically compact unit. They were specifically interested in explaining the cultural phenomenon of Central Europe and its aspects from many different angles. Therefore, even though the debate about Central Europe was resurrected, the discourse dynamics had changed.

Kundera's essay provoked numerous responses and thoughts, both positive and negative. In this matter, Trávniček (2009) mentions Šimečka's response concerning Kundera's concentration on the Russians as the culprits while ignoring the role of the Germans in the downfall of Central Europe. Another reaction from François Bondy criticized Kundera's exclusion of Germany from Central Europe. Milan Hauner was concerned about how Kundera depicted the Russians. Others, such as Jefim Fištejn, decided to support Kundera's argumentation. The outcome of this debate was important from several aspects. The first aspect is provided by Abrahám (2012), who states: "A number of authors, starting with Milan Kundera, have reminded Western politicians and intellectuals that the countries of Central Europe are not – historically, culturally or geographically – part of Eastern Europe" (Abrahám, 2012, p. 188). Another aspect that is also important to consider is that it can be interpreted as a prequel to what was coming. Due to the totalitarian rule that was present throughout Central Europe, the political elite was wholly subservient to the regime.

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Therefore, obviously, the upcoming Autumn of Nations was not necessarily a result of the political elite going rogue. It was primarily orchestrated by dissidents from the ranks of intellectuals, such as literary authors and actors. These intellectuals represented the consciousness of Central Europe in a time of need. Last but not least, there is an aspect of academic legitimacy. Abrahám (2012) mentions that “[due to Kundera’s essay and subsequent response] the concept of Central Europe was grudgingly recognized by scholars in countless Soviet and Eastern European Studies departments in the West” (Abrahám, 2012, p. 188). The academic status quo that recognized the dichotomic division of Europe into two parts was broken.

Just five years after Kundera had brought up the topic of Central Europe into a wide discourse, the Eastern Bloc had collapsed in an unprecedented wave of protests. While it could be logically anticipated that renewed thoughts of Central European identity would also transform into politics, this was not the case. However, one interesting project was created on the basis of Central European common identity – the Visegrad Group (or the V4) created in the early nineties. Abrahám (2012) mentions that “the primary and official aim of the group was to coordinate and mutually assist each other in entering NATO and the EU. Actually, the Visegrad Group’s creation was partially a response to ethnic egoism, unredeemable nationalism, and egomaniacal madness” (Abrahám, 2012, p. 190). This quote sums up the political situation in Central Europe right after the Revolutions. The politicians were trying to find a way how to reincorporate Central Europe into Western political structures, such as the EU. At the same time, the threat of renewed nationalism had brought new challenges to those who were open to integration. Nevertheless, the countries that can be considered as a core of Central Europe eventually acceded to the EU not long after the end of the 20th century.

## **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the various plans to federalize Central Europe were unsuccessful in implementation. Most of them did not even get their chance to be implemented. They remained just theoretical ideas, which still faithfully reenact the spirit of their respective historical eras even to this day. Due to various historical and political reasons, both the 19th and 20th centuries generated a plethora of intellectuals who were infatuated with the idea. However, at the same time, it seems that the consequences of historical events almost always prevented the implementation of any of the proposed concepts.

Intellectuals such as List, Kossuth, and Palacký, with their respective ideas, were simply sidelined by the political status quo of the era. In the initial years of the 20th century, Popovici introduced his concept of the *United States of Greater Austria*. In parallel, the Belvedere society had started working on modernizing and federalizing the Austro-Hungarian political system, embracing Popovici's conception and cherishing the support of the heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand. Nevertheless, Franz Ferdinand died before he could enact any changes as Emperor, and his uncle Francis Joseph I plunged Austria-Hungary into war. These events eventually led to the disintegration of the Empire. Popovici and the Belvedere society had lost ground, and the reasons for enacting a federalized Austria-Hungary died with it. The Austromarxists, with their sophisticated conceptualization of federalization, had also lost the reasons to pursue their own federal conceptions. With enough problems with keeping in power, let alone pursuing their plans to federalize territories that were no longer within their grade, the Austromarxists had also failed to implement any political changes in this regard. Hodža, who was a member of the Belvedere society beforehand, had his own unique plans with Central Europe during the Interwar period. However, his Danube plan, which he pursued during his tenure as the Prime Minister, had backfired due to the sheer unwillingness of the Central European nations. His conception of *Federation in Central Europe*, which he published during the Second World War, had also proven to be simply unattainable due to the result of the war and the Soviet Union claiming most of Central Europe as its sphere of influence. The only somewhat successful conception in very limited terms was von Coudenhove-Kalergi's conception

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of *the United States of Europe*. Although his particular plan was never practically implemented as a whole, there were some political institutions that Kalergi had conceptualized, which were later created. The European Union might be considered a spiritual successor to Kalergi's concept to some degree. However, the creation of various organizations, such as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and, subsequently, the European Union in itself, was in the hands of the politicians themselves. Kalergi went down in history as a spiritual father of Paneuropeanism rather than the political leader who had called for these changes.

The thesis showed how the various authors had imagined the future of Central Europe within the confines of historical realities and described each author's contribution toward this topic. It provides context in the form of historical events that happened and impacted the development of Central European unity from the 19th century to the 20th century. Furthermore, it compares and contrasts intellectuals who significantly impacted the idea.

## **Resumé:**

Myšlienka stredoeurópskej federácie je nevelmi prebádanou a častokrát ignorovanou súčasťou histórie. Cieľom tejto práce je opísať sekvenciu historických udalostí kvôli ktorým dochádza ku formovaniu myšlienky integrácie a federalizácie strednej Európy. Práca má nielen za úlohu opísať dejinné udalosti ale aj samotné koncepty rôznych autorov, ktorí sa tejto myšlienke venovali a rozvrhnúť dôvody kvôli ktorým nikdy nedošlo ku konkrétnym krokom ku federalizácii strednej Európy.

Prvá kapitola má za cieľ definovať strednú Európu, jej konkrétne geografické vymedzenie a rôzne špecifiká, ako aj predstaviť historické okolnosti, ktoré priamo viedli k návrhom na federalizáciu alebo zjednotenie strednej Európy. Strednú Európu je doteraz náročné definovať práve kvôli premenlivosti jej územného vymedzenia a pokračujúcej diskusie o tom, kde a čo vlastne stredná Európa je. Ďalšia časť prvej kapitoly pojednáva o rôznych autoroch, ktorí tvorili svoje návrhy v rámci Nemeckého cisárstva a habsburskej monarchie. Opis plánov od autorov ako List, Palacký alebo Košut taktiež poskytuje dôležitý prehľad ohľadom udalostí v 19. storočí, ktoré nutne viedli ku konceptualizácii ďalších návrhov počas 20. storočia. Prvá kapitola sa ďalej zameriava aj na tieto návrhy, menovite od F. Naumanna, A. Popoviciho, austromarxistov a R. Coudenhove-Kalergiho.

Druhá kapitola má za cieľ zosumarizovať celoživotný podiel Milana Hodžu v rámci integračných procesov, ako aj zamerať sa na rôzne politické problémy týkajúce sa stredoeurópskej integrácie, ktoré Hodža počas svojho života riešil. Odkedy sa Hodža ocitá v politike, potýka sa s problémom veľmi heterogénnej Rakúsko-Uhorskej spoločnosti, ktorá je zároveň nerovnomerne politicky reprezentovaná v prospech Nemcov a Maďarov. Tento problém sa Hodža rozhodne vyriešiť podporou federalizácie Rakúsko-Uhorska zhruba podľa návrhu Aurela Popoviciho a s pomocou následníka Rakúsko-Uhorského trónu, Františka Ferdinanda. Napriek sľubnej spolupráci sa však federalizácia monarchie nepodarí kvôli nečakanej a násilnej smrti Františka Ferdinanda. Následný rozpad Rakúska-Uhorska po Prvej svetovej vojne spôsobí, že jeho politické zámery sa stávajú nerelevantné. Počas Prvej Československej

republiky Hodžova politická kariéra naberá nové rozmery. Keď sa nakoniec v roku 1935 stáva predsedom vlády Československa, situácia v Európe začína byť napätá. Počas rokov strávených na tejto pozícii Hodža konceptualizuje svoj Dunajský plán, ktorý má za úlohu spevniť diplomatické a hospodárske vzťahy medzi krajinami strednej Európy a zabrániť externým hrozbám za ktoré považuje Nacistické Nemecko a Sovietsky zväz. Jeho plán sa potýka s rôznymi výzvami a námietkami, ktoré vznikajú ako zo strany Malej dohody, tak aj zo strany neutrálnych krajín v rámci strednej Európy. Nakoniec zostáva Hodžov plán neuskutočnený. Po tom, čo Nacistické Nemecko obsadzuje Sudety a následne aj prevažnú polovicu Československa sa Hodža vzdáva úradu a odchádza do exilu na Západ. Hodža počas exilu lobuje za užšiu spoluprácu medzi stredoeurópskymi krajinami a v roku 1942 publikuje knihu nazvanú *Federácia v strednej Európe* kde poskytuje detailnú autobiografiu ako aj náčrt týkajúci sa možného povojnového politického usporiadania v strednej Európe. Hodža umiera v roku 1944 a jeho koncepcia federácie v strednej Európe zostáva kvôli povojnovej politickej situácii nezrealizovateľná.

Tretia kapitola má za cieľ zosumarizovať udalosti v strednej Európe počas a po Druhej svetovej vojne ako aj povojnové politické usporiadanie. Nacistické Nemecko prináša do diskurzu svoju vlastnú predstavu o politickej budúcnosti strednej Európy, ktorú sa snaží presadiť skrz násilie a útlak. Jeden z dôsledkov politiky Nacistického Nemecka je zároveň aj povojnové násilné vyhnanie niekoľkých miliónov etnických Nemcov, ktorí prebývali hlavne v strednej Európe. Povojnové politické vyrovnanie medzi Západnými demokraciami a Sovietskym zväzom prináša rozdelenie Európy na dve sféry politického vplyvu, pričom hranica medzi týmito sférami ide cez strednú Európu. Kvôli tomuto novému politickému usporiadaniu sa stáva myšlienka zjednotenej strednej Európy nereálna a politickí myslitelia sa jej po Hodžovom návrhu prestávajú venovať. Aj keď myšlienka spoločnej stredoeurópskej krajiny bola zavrhnutá, samotná stredoeurópska identita pretrvala. Niekoľko dekád po poslednom návrhu týkajúceho sa integrácie strednej Európy zverejňuje Milan Kundera v roku 1984 esej v ktorej kritizoval povojnové usporiadanie Európy a deklaruje strednú Európu ako súčasť Západu. Jeho esej vyprovokuje debatu ohľadom stredoeurópskej identity. Následne, po sérii revolúcií v roku 1989,

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stredná Európa znovu nadobúda kontrolu nad svojim osudom a rozhoduje sa pre integráciu v rámci Európskej únie.

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