

Peter Katzenstein (ed.): Mitteleuropa – between Europe and Germany

Providence-Oxford, Berghahn Books 1997, 286 p.

The recurrence of a Central Europe is an indication of deep political change. Thus reads Professor Peter Katzenstein's opening line in the first chapter of a book that presents the conclusions of an international project that was initiated in Cornell University in 1989. He thus covers almost symbolically with his opening the revolutionary changes that ended the bipolar arrangement of the world and of Europe. Whether or not Germany returns to her old role of continental superpower, Katzenstein warns against drawing misguided parallels between Germany's present-day role and that of recent history. The Bonn Republic is not the Weimar Republic and united Germany will not be a Berlin Republic. Germany's current situation contains the following theses.

- * The German economy continues to have an export orientation, which was a response to the post-war division of the country and the surrendering of part of the Polish territory. In the 1980's and 1990's the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) became the world's largest exporter, which has brought dependence on the world market, which Germany has only minimal control over.
- * The socially-orientated market economy of the FRG has reached capacity as a result of the pressure of three factors: the unification of the country, growing global competition and European integration.
- * The German economy has quickly established itself in Central and Eastern Europe, so that in Poland and Czechoslovakia in the first months of 1990, joint ventures with German companies formed 30-40% of the total. Both countries have tried to offset the significance of German investments with only limited results. Russia's share of foreign trade with Central European countries fell drastically.
- * The new democratic constitutions and political systems of the post-communist states of Central Europe were considerably influenced by co-operation with the Christian-

Democratic Union and Social Democratic Party in Germany, the British Conservative Party and the US Democratic and Republican parties.

- * Germany advocates (also in her own interests) the expansion of the EU to the East and, with regard to financial possibilities, the role of German capital is almost unrivalled. In addition, the role of the independent *Bundesbank* serves as an institutional model to Central European states.
- * The Czech, Polish and Hungarian bids for EU entry met with the strong opposition of a number of member states, in particular France and other states of southern Europe, which do not consider expansion to the east as the highest priority.
- * The debate about the security architecture for Central Europe was scarcely opened but for a short period in 1990. From a number of possible scenarios the USA gave priority to a re-definition of NATO's mission and its expansion, while Germany favoured the OSCE mechanism.

The publication, edited by a recognised expert on the given theme, presents in six chapters (studies) the specific situation of the countries of Central Europe in relation to the phenomenon of Germany. He is also the author of the introductory chapter, which characterises in broad outline the new geopolitical situation, among whose formative factors is the unified Germany, the collapse of the monolithic Soviet block and the subsequent decline of Russian influence in Central Europe, a decline which deepened as a result of the continuing economic and currency crisis now threatening the remaining state integrity of the Russian Federation.

Chapters 2 and 5 offer a four-part case study surveying the economic, social and ethnic problems being dealt with by Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia since 1990 in connection with the transformation of their political and economic systems, in which the key circumstance in an international context is their coming closer to Euro-Atlantic structures.

The final six chapters introduce a thesis that the efficiency of sub-regional tendencies

directed towards Central European integration has been falling since 1993, when European supra-national institutions became an increasingly significant organisational element of this region.

The chapter devoted to Poland (by W. Aniol, T. A. Byrnes and E. Iankova) states that the Polish return to Europe is noticeably marked by two strong opinion strands, the first of which is the Polish *nationalists*, a concentration on trade unions and the Catholic Church, which contributed to the fall of the Communist system. The second strand consists of the *cosmopolitans*, many of whom are among the voters of the post-communist parties who are convinced advocates of a secular, social welfare state and a pluralist democracy. At the same time, criticism is heard particularly from Polish Church circles of the consumer society, along with demands for a spiritualising of contemporary capitalism. In this concept a revitalisation of the spiritual values of Christianity should contribute to the cultivation of the materialist Western society.

The Polish Catholic bishops want to acquire and preserve a Polish national identity (distinctness) in the integrating society of Western Europe. Interesting is the passage surveying in detail the principles of introducing the West European standards of emigration policy into the Polish environment.

The detailed breakdown of the Polish nationalist policies will certainly strike a note with the Czech reader, in particular the situation of the German national minority, which is protected on the one hand by the documents of the European Commission and on the other by a bilateral agreement between Poland and Germany. It is estimated that three million German citizens left Poland between 1945 and 1950. There remained, however, one million people of not clearly defined nationality, whose status was inclined towards assimilation into the majority population. Peculiar to Poland is *regional national identity*, which operates in such a way that citizens can state in census polls whether the consider themselves to be primarily Silesian, Kashubian etc. and only then Poles or Germans.

German politics views Poland as the most significant ally among the post-communist

states, but continues at the present time to support the *ethnic revivalism* of German minority groups in Silesia and other areas. In this regard the often disputed border on the Oder and Neisse in the course of the Cold War is not forgotten. This naturally gives rise to disbelief among the Poles, along with reminiscences on the role of the *Volksdeutsche* in the German expansion policies of the 1930's. For example, in 1990 the *Landsmannschaft* formulated a demand for the provision of a privileged status for the German community in Opolian Silesia. It contained the possibility of resettlement and provision of property to the exiles, the internationalised question of the Silesians and the inclusion of the Oder and Neisse lands into the economic jurisdiction of the European Union. We may add that similar demands are repeatedly heard in connection with the Kalinin-grad/Königsberg enclave.

The most troublesome point in the treaty talks of 1991 was the demand of the *Landsmannschaft* for the provision of dual nationality for members of the German minority. It is estimated that there are about 60,000 citizens in Opolian Silesia with German and Polish citizenship. However, there also exist organisations attempting greater integration of both nationalities, e.g. the workers' association, Reconciliation and the Future, in the county of Katowice.

In the third chapter dealing with Hungary, P. Gedeon arrives at the conclusion that the Church has much less influence than in Poland. Equally insignificant are fears of German influence. In the area of social policy the deciding role is played by international financial institutions, the IMF and the World Bank. Neither is Germany a theme in the area of privatisation and the influx of foreign investment. Nonetheless, the Hungarian National Bank is considerably inspired by the institutional model and policy of the *Deutsche Bundesbank*.

H. Jeřábek and F. Zich deal with the situation in the Czech Republic. In the title of the chapter they already characterise the fundamental tendency of Czech-German relations – internationalisation and dependency forming an integral part of this process. The first model case is the entry of the Volkswagen concern

into Škoda, constituting ties between the Czech economy and the German, European and world markets. Škoda, like the Czech government, strongly pushed for the influx of foreign capital and know-how, which would revitalise this key strategic company, whose position strongly influences a range of connected branches.

Czech mass communications, on the other hand, went through internationalisation by means of an almost lightening-quick process. The entire network of Czech regional daily newspapers ended up in the hands of the Bavarian firm *Passauer Neue Presse*. In evaluating this situation, however, the Czech government came to the conclusion that the increased level of German influence was offset by the presence of American capital controlling the electronic media (CME). I am not quite sure, however, about the effectiveness of this concept of the balance of information.

The essay dedicated to the Czech border areas points out that Czech entry into the European Union is being complicated by organisations of displaced Sudeten Germans, particularly the Sudeten German *Landsmannschaft*, which remains a concrete manifestation of the historical burden of Czech-German relations. Their demands also projected into the Euroregion projects, which cover the whole length of the mutual border of the two counties. In the results of sociological research into the Czech border regions, the contradictory views of the inhabitants towards the role of Germany, which is considered a desirable partner in the fields of politics and culture, while at the same time there are fears of economic dominance. The Czech-German Declaration of 1997 represents a compromise solution, which allowed both sides to retain their own position and still find a positive basis for co-operation.

Slovakia, according to the authors D. Brzic, Z. Poláčeková and I. Samson, is embarking on an experiment in independence for the first time in thousands of years of history. The specifics of the Slovak situation they see in the possibility of bridging the gap between the East and the West. This concept was of course already defined by pre-war foreign policy, particularly in the renewal of the Czechoslovak Republic, however. It is not necessary to point out the consequences. More than any other

Central European country Slovakia follows the German model with the leading role of banks, while Anglo-American opinion considers market mechanisms a priority. According to the authors, Slovakia does not adhere to European standards with regard to protection of minority rights. She emphasises traditional military interests, strengthens links with Russia and presents a certain scepticism towards NATO. We should remember that the departure of the HZDS from the government will very likely lead to considerable alterations in this stance. Overall, though, Slovakia is less orientated towards the West than the Czech Republic, Poland or Hungary.

The sixth chapter by V. Bunc returns to the new situation of Central Europe after 1989. In the period 1990-1992 a number of international incentives were launched with the aim of institutionalising co-operation in the region. In November 1989 the Pentagonal Treaty between Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Italy and the Yugoslavia had already been signed. This was later expanded to include Poland and Ukraine. Bavaria, among others, also asked for the opportunity to participate in specific projects. The turning point for Czech foreign policy came in 1993, when the Klaus government began to consider the Central European initiatives as a brake to fast membership of Western European structures.

The individual case studies create a somewhat heterogeneous impression from the point of view of a unified structure, which is partly accorded by the different initial situations of the individual countries, but also by the specialisation of the authors. The editor himself points out that the Hungarian and Slovak studies have only an illustrative character. I also found a lack of a systematic reflection on the contemporary and historic role of Germany in the Central European environment. Nonetheless it is necessary to appreciate the detailed presentation of the situation of Polish society and relations with Germany. Seen from a Czech perspective a certain connotation offering itself in the relationships of the Czech Republic and Poland to Germany remained unexplored. The question arises whether Czech foreign policy reflects this co-relationship in an appropriate manner.