

## **Czechoslovakia/the Czech Republic and European Integration: During and After the Cold War**

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There are virtually no publications that cover Czech policy towards European integration both before and after the fall of the communism. Yet this is a subject which deserves attention, not least as it is of both historical and contemporary political importance. This article will examine the main features and turning points of this complex relationship before and after the end of the Cold War.<sup>1</sup>

The article begins at the moment the European Economic Community was created in 1958, and then follows the development of Czech attitudes to this process, up to the beginning of the negotiations for the Czech Republic's (CR) accession to the EU in 1998. Given the period that needs to be covered, we only focus on Czech behaviour towards European integration, and do not discuss the country's approach to any other Western organisation such as NATO. We do not discuss the bilateral relations between Czechoslovakia/the CR and the member states of the EC/EU unless this is particularly germane to our central topic. Finally, it is necessary to point out that while analysing the development after the break-up of Czechoslovakia in 1993 we limit our attention to the relations of the CR with the EU and, thus, do not include the relations of Slovakia in our analysis.

The question that the article addresses is what the main features of Czech policy towards the EC/EU were in this period. We also seek to examine when the main changes in Czech behaviour towards European integration took place. At first glance, it appears that during the communist regime, European integration was perceived as a project of countries that belonged to an enemy alliance. By contrast, after the fall of the communist regime, cooperation with the EC/EU and, what is more, accession to this organisation became a main priority of Czechoslovakia (and later also of the CR). Thus, the transformation of Czech policy in relation to European integration from hostility to a quest for participation in the integration process appears to have been a sudden one, reflecting regime change. However, one of our main findings is that whereas the shift to political cooperation and accession efforts was indeed abrupt, economic or, more precisely, trade cooperation predates the fall of communism. The transformation from 'non-existent' relations to cooperation was, therefore, more gradual in this particular field than might have been expected.

The article is divided into two parts: the first part concentrates on the Cold War, and the second analyses how policy evolved in the 1990s. Both the Cold War and

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1. We deal with the attitude of Czechoslovakia and subsequently the Czech Republic (which we will call CR) towards the European Economic Community and then the European Community (both of which we will refer to as the EC) and the European Union (EU). For stylistic reasons we also use the term 'Czech' instead of alternating 'Czechoslovak' and 'Czech' or using a rather complicated expression 'Czechoslovak/Czech'.

post-Cold War sections begin by setting out the main sources that are currently available to scholars and policymakers who wish to explore further the areas that we cover. Inevitably, the number of sources covering the 1990s contrasts with the lack of literature on the 1958-1989 period, although a number of primary sources are now available. Then attention turns to the substantive issues, although, not surprisingly, relations developed much more intensively during the relatively short period of the 1990s than during the entire Cold War period. In the conclusion, our main findings are summarised and discussed.

## 1. During the Cold War

### 1.1. Sources

We use three categories to classify the sources. The first category is the archival sources that are available in the CR; the second is secondary literature published outside the CR (in English or any other internationally used language); and the third is secondary literature published in Czechoslovakia/the CR (including translations).

There are, however, two publications of considerable general utility. The first is Brom's survey of documents available in Czech archives that are related to the international economic relations during the Cold War.<sup>2</sup> Although the importance of this study is somewhat limited by the fact that it was published in Czech, it provides relatively detailed and valuable information on what particular areas of the respective field the files of individual Czech archives cover. Brom's research also indicates in which archives and files documents directly devoted to Czech policy towards the EC can be found (see below). Second is another publication by Simmons that provides an overview of Czech archives.<sup>3</sup> This is written in English and focuses on the technical aspects of archival research, and provides information on the accessibility of files in individual archives. However, Simmons's overview was written a decade ago and the conditions in some of the archives may have changed since.

As far as the archives themselves are concerned, it should be pointed out that according to the current law only documents that were issued more than 30 years ago may be accessed. However, it is sometimes also possible to work with more recent documents with the permission of the archivist. With regard to the approach of Czechoslovakia towards the EC in the course of the Cold War, the following two archives are the most important: Státní ústřední archiv (Central State Archive) and

2. B. BROM, *Dokumenty z českých archivů k historii mezinárodních hospodářských vztahů v období studené války: studie o pramenech* [Documents from Czech Archives to the History of International Economic Relations in the Time of the Cold War: A Study About Archive Sources], Karolinum, Prague, 2002.

3. P.J. SIMMONS, *Archival Research on the Cold War Era: A Report from Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw. Cold War International History Project, Working Paper n° 2*, The Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, 1992, pp.15-29.

Archív Ministerstva zahraničních věcí (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive). According to the Brom's research, particular files of both archives contain documents specifically on the foreign policy of the communist Czechoslovakia in relation to European integration. To give an example, one of the files of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive includes documents on Czech trade strategies towards the EC and EFTA.<sup>4</sup> The importance of the Central State Archive is underlined by the fact that it took over the files of the former Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which perhaps constituted the most important foreign-policy making institution in the country in the time of the communist rule.

Concerning the secondary sources on the attitude of Czechoslovakia during the Cold War towards European integration, there is an almost total gap in the literature dealing directly with this subject and published outside Czechoslovakia. The only exception is a chapter in a volume by Marescau on trade relations between Czechoslovakia and the EC.<sup>5</sup> However, it was written by a state representative (and, moreover, by a representative of the communist government) and it is concerned with some rather practical issues. It cannot be considered an academic contribution. What is more, this lack of sources on the subject is not compensated by a strong literature that focuses on Czech foreign policy more generally during the Cold War. There are only a limited number of books that touch on this within a general context.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, on the basis of our research in the most prominent historical and political science journals we did not find more than one article devoted to the foreign policy of the communist Czechoslovakia.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, several studies on the relations of the EC towards the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) countries are a useful starting point.<sup>8</sup>

The literature published in Czechoslovakia/the CR does not offer much more. To our knowledge, there is no book or journal number concerned primarily with Czech foreign policy and European integration during the Cold War. Even issues of the specialist international relations journal, *Mezinárodní vztahy* (International Relations), do not include such contributions. As will be explained below, the

4. B. BROM, op.cit, p.71.

5. M. ČERNOHUBÝ, *Trade Relations between Czechoslovakia and the European Community*, in: M. MARESCAU (ed.), *The Political and Legal Framework of Trade Relations between the European Community and Eastern Europe*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Dordrecht, Boston, London, 1989, pp.51-54.

6. J. KALVODA, *Czechoslovakia's Role in Soviet Strategy*, University Press of America, Washington, 1978; G. SKILLING, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976.

7. P. A. KUBRICHT, *United States-Czechoslovak Relations during the Kennedy Administration*, in: *East European Quarterly*, vol.23, 3(1989).

8. J. MASLEN, *European Community – CMEA: Institutional Relations*, in: M. MARESCAU (ed.), *The Political and Legal Framework of Trade Relations between the European Community and Eastern Europe*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Dordrecht, Boston, London, 1989, pp.85-92; S. NELLO, *Recent Developments in Relations Between the EC and Eastern Europe*, EUI Working Paper n° 89/381, European University Institute, Florence, 1989; J. and P. PINDER, *The European Community's Policy towards Eastern Europe*, European Series n° 25, Chatham House, London, 1975; J. PINDER, *The European Community and Eastern Europe*, Pinter, London, 1991.

absence of works on this topic in the journal's issues can be explained by the fact that Czechoslovakia rejected the EC as a political and legal entity. All more general books published on foreign policy were written by scholars working in research institutions controlled by the communist government and are largely based on the clichés of the ruling ideology.<sup>9</sup> It was only two years ago that a book covering Czech foreign policy in the second half of the last century appeared.<sup>10</sup>

### 1.2. The 1960s and 1970s: the absence of official relations

During the Cold War the foreign policy of Czechoslovakia was primarily dependent on the decisions of the Soviet Union as the dominant state of the communist bloc. Essentially, the foreign policy of communist Czechoslovakia followed and reflected Soviet actions. Although a more subtle view might reveal variations in the dependence on the initiative and steps of the Soviets over different issues or periods, it is possible to say that the conformity with the Soviet Union in foreign policy was an overall constant.<sup>11</sup>

Hence, while analysing the main features and periods of the Czech policy towards the EC during the Cold War decades, it is not only useful but almost unavoidable that the nature of and changes in the Soviet policy are taken into account. At the same time, similar attention should be paid to the policy of the Council of the Mutual Economic Aid towards the EC. The focus on the CMEA is required by the fact that as an international economic institution of communist states, it actually was, in some way, a counterpart of the EC on the side of the communist bloc. However, although the CMEA represented an organization of, at least formally, independent countries, it was mostly shaped by the will of the Soviet Union. Drawing on the works that deal with the evolution of the attitude of the Soviet Union and the CMEA towards the EC in the Cold War years, it is possible to recognize the three following periods in the policy of the two towards the EC: 1) 1958-1972 (non-recognition and hostility), 2) 1972-1984 (growing but constrained interest in cooperation), and 3) 1984-1989 (limited cooperation).<sup>12</sup>

Since the outset of the European Economic Community at the end of the 1950s to the beginning of the 1970s, no official relations between the Soviet Union and the CMEA on the one side and the EC on the other side existed. Moreover, the

9. E.g., I. BROŽ and S. SUJA, *Zahraniční politika ČSSR: Príspevok k boju za socializmus, mier a uvoľňovanie* [Foreign Policy of Czechoslovakia: A Contribution to the Fight for Socialism, Peace, and Détente], Pravda, Bratislava, 1981; M. ŠTEFAŇÁK et al., *Zahraniční politika ČSSR* [Foreign Policy of CSSR], Svoboda, Praha, 1983.

10. J. DEJMEK, *Československo, jeho sousedé ve 20. století – 1918 až 1992* [Czechoslovakia, its Neighbours and the Great Powers in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century – 1918 to 1992], Centrum pro politiku a ekonomiku, Prague, 2002.

11. E.g., J. DEJMEK, op.cit., pp.30-39; J. KALVODA, op.cit., pp.218-278; G. SKILLING, op.cit., pp.82-90.

12. See J. MASLEN, op.cit.; J. and P. PINDER, *The European Community's Policy towards Eastern Europe*, op.cit.; J. PINDER, *The European Community and Eastern Europe*, op.cit., who divide the years 1958-1972 into two periods.

Soviets and the other CMEA countries refused to acknowledge the EC in legal terms. The communist states also sought to bloc the participation of the EC in international institutions. In its statements on the European integration process, the Soviet Union considered the EC to be a tool of the capitalist class and a means of imperialist aggression. The approach of the CMEA countries towards the EC was hostile and connected with intensive anti-Western European propaganda campaigns.<sup>13</sup>

In the case of Czechoslovakia, the non-existence of official relations with the EC during the 1950s and 1960s stands out when compared to several other CMEA countries. More explicitly, in the course of the 1960s some of CMEA states established informal relations with the European Commission in order to cope with problems in trade. More concretely, four communist countries (Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania) managed to conclude limited trade agreements on agricultural products with the EC in the same decade.<sup>14</sup> As will be demonstrated below, a relatively reluctant attitude of Czechoslovakia towards the EC was not limited to the 1960s, but was also apparent at least during the 1980s.<sup>15</sup>

Interestingly, even the short period of the reform leadership and the process of the so-called Prague Spring of the year 1968 did not lead to a change in the Czech attitude towards the EC. Above all, it must be pointed out that new efforts in the field of foreign policy were in principle limited to reforming the relationship with the Soviet Union and other communist states, and did not aim at any reorientation of foreign policy as such.<sup>16</sup> Essentially, the intention of the Czech leaders was to gain more autonomy and independence in foreign policy, while preserving the alliance, and cooperation with other communist countries. Thus, military and economic cooperation within the communist bloc and its institutions continued to be declared as the basis of foreign policy. More detailed examination of the official declarations and discussions among experts show, however, that the development of economic cooperation with the Western European countries was one of the frequent and most emphasised points in the area of Czech foreign policy at that time.<sup>17</sup> Still, it was pan-European economic projects and the role of the Economic Commission for Europe and not cooperation with the EC that were emphasized.

13. See J. MASLEN, op.cit., p.85.

14. J. PINDER, *The European Community and Eastern Europe*, op.cit., p.10.

15. Given the above outlined absence of the secondary literature on the foreign policy of the communist Czechoslovakia towards European integration, the analysis of the relatively reluctant attitude of Czechoslovakia towards the EC during the Cold War would require a detailed inquiry based on primary research that lies beyond the scope of this article, and which would need to take into account not only the motivations on the Czechoslovak side, but those on the side of the EC as well (especially in the 1980s).

16. G. SKILLING, op.cit., pp.617-658; J. DEJMEK, op.cit., p.35.

17. G. SKILLING, op.cit., pp.617-658; see also P. DRULÁK, *Záblesk v totalitní temnotě – pokus o výzkum mezinárodních vztahů v období reformního komunismu* [A Glimmer of Darkness of Totalitarianism – The Attempt to Research IR in the Period of Reform Communism], in: *Mezinárodní vztahy*, vol. 37, 1(2002), pp.50-55.

Even though the focus of this article is on the policy of Czechoslovakia towards the EC as such, it is still useful to pay attention also to the level of bilateral relations with individual Western European countries, and to their development in the 1950s and 1960s. The reason is that this field was marked by some, albeit very limited, aspects of cooperation (whether it was the same in the case of other communist countries must, however, remain beyond our remit.) Trade relations with some EC members developed from the middle of the 1950s. This is not surprising, as, before the communist take over, Western European countries were Czech's main trading partners. In 1948, trade with the West constituted 80% of the country's total turnover, but was only 21.5% in 1953 after a considerable trade reorganization towards the Soviet Union and other CMEA member states. Nevertheless, the share of the trade with the West reached 34.2% in 1956 and 29.4% in 1969.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, the first years of the existence of the EC coincided with a period of a relatively less hostile attitude in Czechoslovakia towards the West, in comparison with the previous Stalinist period. It was also, but only relatively speaking, a time of greater autonomy for Czech foreign policy. To be sure, this resulted largely from the change of the Soviet position and, more concretely, from the Soviet declaration of the policy of 'peaceful coexistence' with non-communist countries. It is necessary to underline that the most distinctive feature of Czech foreign policy was still conformity with Soviet decisions. Still, after the absolute subordination to the Soviet Union in the first half of the 1950s, relations between Czechoslovakia and Western European countries were then partially re-established. Czechoslovakia concentrated on official state visits, at first with France and later also with Britain, Benelux, and Scandinavian countries. Relations with the Federal Republic of Germany remained tense, due to the unresolved issues related to the past of the mutual relations (mainly the nullity of the Munich Treaty).<sup>19</sup>

### 1.3. The 1970s and 1980s: towards limited cooperation

At the beginning of the 1970s, the attitude of the Soviet Union and the CMEA towards the European integration underwent a slight change. As a starting point of this change is often considered to be the statement by the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev of 1972, in which he suggested that cooperation between the CMEA and EC could be established under certain circumstances. As a consequence, several initiatives in this respect were launched by both the EC and the CMEA. However, none of these efforts led to the institutionalisation of mutual political relations due to the different perspectives of the both. The EC rejected negotiations on trade issues with the CMEA as an organisation, while the communist bloc insisted that institutional relations would have to be established between the EC and the CMEA.<sup>20</sup>

18. A.A. BROWN and P. MARER, *Foreign Trade in the East European Reform*, IDRC Report n° 5(1972), IDRC, Bloomington, 1972.

19. J. DEJMEK, op.cit., pp.33-34; G. SKILLING, op.cit., pp.82-83.

20. J. MASLEN, op.cit., pp.85-87; J. PINDER, *The European Community and Eastern Europe*, op.cit., pp.11-14. See also S. NELLO, op.cit.

Similarly, no official relations were established between Czechoslovakia and the EC during the 1970s. Moreover, mutual relations actually became more complicated than before as in 1975 bilateral trade agreements between EC member states and Czechoslovakia (as well as between the EC and other communist countries) expired. At the same time, EC member-states delegated their authority in the area of trade with the CMEA countries to the EC. Nevertheless, Czechoslovakia continued to develop limited bilateral relations with individual Western European countries and maintained some political relations with all EC member states. Most importantly, a treaty with the Federal Republic of Germany was concluded and diplomatic relations were re-established in 1973.<sup>21</sup>

In the first half of the 1980s, Czechoslovakia, like several other communist countries, developed a certain limited cooperation with the EC. This development took place in spite of the fact that at that time the CMEA as such was not, as outlined above, able to establish relations with the EC. At first, Czechoslovakia concluded an agreement on the import of goat and sheep meat in 1981.<sup>22</sup> There were also annual negotiations on quotas regarding steel, and negotiations between the EC and the communist countries on quotas for textiles. Czechoslovakia participated in both of those processes. In 1982, another agreement was reached – this time on quotas for textiles. In 1983, Czechoslovakia (as well as Hungary) actually started negotiations with the EC about a possible extension of mutual cooperation from arrangements limited to sectors to a full-fledged trade agreement.

In 1984, the CMEA dramatically changed tack, when it declared a willingness to conclude a political declaration with the EC. In other words, the communist bloc eventually admitted that a common declaration of both organizations could be only political and trade agreements would have to be managed only between the EC and individual countries of the CMEA.

As a consequence, relations between Czechoslovakia and the EC shifted from limited cooperation in trade to a more substantial institutionalisation of trade relations. More concretely, an agreement concerning trade with industrial goods was concluded between Czechoslovakia and the EC in December 1988 (again, similar agreements were concluded between the EC and other countries of the CMEA). It should however be pointed out that in comparison with a similar treaty that the EC concluded with Hungary, the treaty with Czechoslovakia was limited.<sup>23</sup> Whereas the agreement with Czechoslovakia was only concerned with trade in

21. E.g. J. HRÍCH, *Společná obchodní politika Evropské unie jako příklad supranacionálního přístupu k integraci* [The Common Trade Policy of the European Union as a Case of Supranational Approach to Integration], in: *Mezinárodní vztahy*, vol. 36, 4 (2001), 9; J. DEJMEK, op.cit., pp.36-38.

22. L. MÁLKOVÁ, *Vývoj spolupráce mezi Evropskými společenstvími a Československem do roku 1992* [The Evolution of Relations between the European Communities and Czechoslovakia to 1992], unpublished MA thesis, University of Economics, Prague, 1999, pp.23-28; J. PINDER, *The European Community and Eastern Europe*, op.cit., pp.21-22.

23. L. MÁLKOVÁ, op.cit., pp.36-38; J. PINDER, *The European Community and Eastern Europe*, op.cit., pp.32-33.

industrial goods, the one with Hungary covered both trade and political relations. Hence, one must conclude that even by the very end of the communist regime, political relations between Czechoslovakia and the EC were not, in comparison, for example, with Hungary, very far advanced.

## 2. After the Cold War

### 2.1. Sources

This section discusses the secondary literature published both outside and in Czechoslovakia/the CR (primary sources are not, given a short time distance from the 1990s, discussed, although increasing numbers of official documents are now available on the web). Four observations are in order. First, the vast majority of works dealing with this issue do not focus primarily upon CR's accession as their main topic, and the country is usually seen as part of the general process of Eastern enlargement. Thus the CR usually only merits a chapter in a broader book. This approach is clearly more prevalent in non-Czech literature, whereas Czech authors are, quite naturally, more inclined to a one-country analysis. Yet, even those authors who do prefer to look specifically at the CR are usually tempted to extend their horizon to a comparative approach of at least two countries, such as the CR and Slovakia or Poland.<sup>24</sup> In addition, some of the very good analyses of the Czech accession process can be found in writings which do not deal principally with enlargement, but in which an analysis of enlargement is a by-product of a different research focus.<sup>25</sup>

Second, it is also possible to observe a geographic imbalance in regard to the place of origin of the literature on Eastern enlargement. In this respect, the unquestioned leader is, apart from the CR itself, Germany, followed at a considerable distance by the Anglo-Saxons.<sup>26</sup> There are also some works from the

24. J. RUPNIK and J. ZIELONKA (eds.), *The Way to the European Union: The Czech and Slovak Republics*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2003.

25. C. LEFF SKALNIK, *The Czech and Slovak Republics: Nation Versus State*, Westview, Boulder, 1998; H. TEWES, *Germany, Civilian Power and the New Europe. Enlarging NATO and the European Union*, Palgrave, Houndmills, 2002.

26. On German literature, see R. J. LANGHAMMER, *Die Assoziierungsabkommen mit der CSFR, Polen und Ungarn: wegweisend oder abweisend?*, in: *Kiel Discussion Papers, March 1992*, Institut für Weltwirtschaft, Kiel, 1992; W. WEIDENFELD (ed.), *Mittel- und Osteuropa auf dem Weg in die Europäische Union. Bericht zum Stand der Integrationsfähigkeit. Strategien für Europa*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh, 1995; W. WEIDENFELD (ed.), *A New Ostpolitik – Strategies for a United Europe. Strategies for Europe. Short version*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh, 1996; B. LIPPERT (ed.), *Towards EU-Membership. Transformation and Integration in Poland and the Czech Republic*, Europa Union und Institut für Europäische Politik, Bonn, 1998. On Anglo-Saxon literature, H. WALLACE and A. MICHALSKI, *European Community: The Challenge of Enlargement*, RIIA, London, 1993; K. HUGHES, *Eastward Enlargement of the EU: EU Strategy and Future Challenges*, Working Paper n° 2 (September 1996), RIIA, London, 1996; H. GRABBE and K. HUGHES, *Enlarging the EU Eastwards*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, RIIA, London, 2000.

CR's neighbouring countries but their quality is unfortunately usually not up to Western standards.<sup>27</sup> Surprisingly, French literature is very poorly represented as it concentrates rather on the Mediterranean and its prospect for EU membership.

Third, the literature about the Eastern enlargement in general and about the Czech accession in particular does not deal with the whole time period with equal attention. While the early 1990s are covered rather poorly, the period since 1996 has witnessed a steep rise in the number of publications. This growth applies to both Czech and foreign literature which is, however, not to suggest that there are dozens of high-quality works published in the last years but rather that the starting base just right after the collapse of communism was extremely low. Only after enlargement had become a real possibility in the second half of the 1990s, did more Western scholars dealing with European integration turn to Eastern Europe. The reason for Czech negligence of the topic – which could be seen as one of the natural top priorities for academia and politicians alike – is somewhat different. It lies in the virtual absence of any objective Czech analytical writings about the EC before the Velvet Revolution. In most cases, academic writings focused first of all on trying to understand the EC/EU as such, and only stumbled in the footsteps of the quickly changing reality).<sup>28</sup>

Fourth, it is important not to overestimate the analytical value of many of these works. Unfortunately, a large number of the publications, especially those of Czech origin, content themselves with simple descriptions of the historical evolution since the fall of Eastern bloc.<sup>29</sup> This might have been useful in the early post-Cold War years, but not after Czech accession became more likely. Even the latest Czech publications have difficulties in eluding the trap of imbalance between description and analysis. Yet, this is not the only danger to repel; there are twin perils that each serious attempt at writing a good book on Eastern enlargement encounters: those, mostly foreign, works which escape the danger of Scylla of description may, nonetheless, encounter the Charybdis of ignoring Czech domestic factors. Consequently, many works analyse enlargement-induced changes *within* the EU which reveals a one-sided or, indeed, distorted picture of the process.<sup>30</sup>

### 2.2. The beginning of the 1990s: the Association Agreement

The re-emergence of democratic Czechoslovakia was only possible due to changes in Soviet foreign policy during the time of perestroika in the second half of the 1980s. Thus, the first question to be answered by the new Czech foreign policy elite in the 1990s, was how far-reaching the changes in the communist bloc and in the Soviet Union itself actually were. On the one hand, the new Czech leadership tried

27. A. PODRAZA, *Central Europe in the Process of European Integration: A Comparative Study of Strategies of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. Towards Deepening and Widening of the European Union*, Research Support Scheme, Prague, 2000.

28. J. JAKŠ, *Quo vadis. Evropská unie* [Quo Vadis. The European Union], ETC Publishing, Praha, 1998.

29. P. FIALA and M. PITROVÁ, *Evropská unie* [European Union], CDK, Brno, 2003.

30. See, for example, K. HUGHES, *op.cit.*; W. WEIDENFELD, *A New Ostpolitik ...*, *op. cit.*

hard to assure the total independence of the country from Soviet influence but, on the other hand, its proposals in regard to the post cold war architecture of Europe and the place of former communist countries in it, remained surprisingly modest. Early proposals aimed to maintain economic relations with other Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, including the Soviet Union. However, this was in contrast to military affairs, where Czechoslovakia used the sensitivity of Soviet leadership – the clear sign of which was Michael Gorbachev's apology for the Soviet invasion of 1968 – and demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from its territory.<sup>31</sup>

Political and economic integration into the framework of the EC was nevertheless considered a top foreign policy priority.<sup>32</sup> After some initial trials at creating viable relations to the East such as the Dienstbier Plan, the East-oriented efforts were abandoned, the CMEA was dissolved in 1991, and joining the EC became the only viable option.<sup>33</sup> At this early stage, the EC were, however, not enthusiastic about membership of the post-communist countries, since it was clear how complicated the enlargement could be. Indeed, the EC were not prepared for such tremendous change in Eastern Europe which came à la surprise générale.<sup>34</sup> Some member states also feared that the enlargement might postpone the hotly debated deepening of the EC or even render any reform altogether impossible for the foreseeable future.<sup>35</sup> This was a particularly acute dilemma for Germany, since German foreign policy tried to pursue both apparently contradictory objectives simultaneously.<sup>36</sup>

31. C. LEFF SKALNIK, op.cit., pp.216-219.

32. On the "fixation on eventual accession to the EU", see R. BIDELEUX and R. TAYLOR (eds.), *European Integration and Disintegration*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, pp.245-246.

33. The Dienstbier plan was a plan analogous to Marshall Plan and its aim was to provide the Soviet Union with a credit of sixteen billion dollars which would be used for financing exports of industrial goods from Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary to the Soviet Union. Instead of debt repayment, the Soviet Union would use the financial means to conversion of its own industry. Similarly, the three Central European countries would use a part of the received money to modernise their own enterprises. The modernisation in all these countries would be supervised by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). See J. DIENSTBIER, *Od snění k realitě. Vzpomínky z let 1989-1999* [From Dreams to Reality. Memoirs from the years 1989-1999], Lidové noviny, Prague, 1999, pp.112-115.

34. For a discussion of the unique nature of the Eastern enlargement see J. EATWELL et al., *Not „Just Another Accession”. The Political Economy of EU enlargement to the East*, IPPR, London, 1997; *Les Nouvelles Frontières de l'Europe*, Economica, Paris, 1993, p.185; W. WEIDENFELD, *A New Ostpolitik ...*, op.cit., p.5.

35. Cf. L. CRAM, D. DINAN and N. NUGENT (eds.), *Developments in the European Union*, Macmillan, Houndmills, 1999; A. MAYHEW, *Enlargement of the European Union. An Analysis of the Negotiations with the Central and Eastern European Countries*, SEI Working Paper n° 30 (December 2000); M. BAUN, *A Wider Europe. The Process and Politics of European Union Enlargement*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 2000; B. STEUNENBERG (ed.), *Widening the European Union. The Politics of Institutional Change and Reform*, Routledge, London, 2002, pp.183-201.

36. For the debate enlarging vs. deepening in German foreign policy discourse see H. TEWES, op.cit., pp.81-139.

Although clarity about enlargement was still absent, the EC offered aid. The first instrument set up after the changes in Central and Eastern Europe was *Phare*. The programme was created in 1989 to help Poland and Hungary to restructure their economies (*Phare* stands for "Pologne-Hongrie: Actions pour la Reconversion Economique") but soon Czechoslovakia became another recipient of help. Czech policy-makers, especially the then minister of Finance Václav Klaus, did not appreciate this kind of financial help to the same extent as the Polish or Hungarian governments did, and this sceptical stance toward financial injections from the West was reflected in the per capita level of payments from *Phare* which was among the lowest in Czechoslovakia/the CR.<sup>37</sup>

Although generally being a useful tool, *Phare* could not replace more comprehensive legislative instruments that would provide for both economic cooperation and political dialogue. But in reality, virtually all CEE post-communist countries wanted to hear a clear promise of membership, ideally accompanied by a precise timetable of steps to be taken by both sides before the enlargement. All these hopes seemed to be pinned on the Association Agreements (AA) which were supposed to elevate the relations substantially. The decision about negotiating a new kind of AA (the Europe Agreements) was taken in Dublin in spring of 1990.<sup>38</sup>

The negotiations about the AA with Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia were the first direct longer-term encounter of these countries with the EC at the negotiating table. Unfortunately the Czech negotiators were left with a bitter aftertaste since the negotiations revealed that the EC was a tough negotiator which uncompromisingly pursued its own interests, sometimes even to the detriment of the prospective associated countries.<sup>39</sup> However, before the agreement with Czechoslovakia could be ratified, the country was split, and two new AA had to be signed with the successor states (with the CR the new agreement was signed in October 1993). Thus, the Czech situation changed both geopolitically and economically which allowed it a more focused approach. The structure of the AA was seemingly all-encompassing: it started with a relatively long preamble, followed by chapters on political dialogue; general provisions; free movement of goods; free movement of persons; law harmonisation; capital movement; economic, financial, and cultural cooperation; and institutional provisions and conclusion.<sup>40</sup>

For Czechoslovakia and, after the break-up of the country, for the CR, the AA harboured several unambiguous benefits, for it allowed for a stable framework for mutual cooperation of the EC and the country in most key areas at a time when the membership was still only a dubious possibility. Despite the objections raised

37. C. LEFF SKALNIK, op.cit., p.281.

38. C. PRESTON, *Enlargement and Integration in the European Union*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997, p.198; B. LIPPERT (ed.), op.cit., p.170; P. FIALA and M. PITROVÁ, op.cit., p.152.

39. D. DINAN, *Ever Closer Union. An Introduction to European Integration*, Macmillan, Houndmills, 1999, p.189; P. ČERNOCH, *Cesta do EU. Východní rozšíření Evropské unie a Česká republika v období 1990-2004* [The Way to the EU: EU Eastern Enlargement and the Czech Republic in 1990 – 2004], Linde, Praha, 2003, pp.26-28.

40. [http://www.euroskop.cz/cze/file\\_list.asp?fcid=316&cat=5078&ts=10ec16](http://www.euroskop.cz/cze/file_list.asp?fcid=316&cat=5078&ts=10ec16); Accession Partnership. Czech Republic, 13 October 1999.



about the unsatisfactorily low level of willingness to trade concessions on the part of the EC, the AA was asymmetric in favour of the post-communist countries in that it declared that the EC member states would remove their tariffs earlier than the associated countries. The AA thus followed on the path of liberalisation of mutual trade that started with earlier trade agreements such as that between Czechoslovakia and the EC of May 1990.<sup>41</sup>

The failure of the EC to acknowledge in the AA that the associated countries would become member states provoked growing pressure from these countries. After some discussions during 1992-1993 (summits in Lisbon and in Edinburgh), the definite answer came at the Copenhagen summit in June 1993. Here, the accession criteria were first formulated that had to be fulfilled by the candidates. These include both political (democracy, rule of law, human rights, protection of minorities) and economic conditions (functioning market economy, ability to take on obligations connected with the membership, competitive ability). Later, several new items were added, such as creation of necessary administrative capacity for adoption of the *acquis communautaire*.<sup>42</sup>

No matter how satisfactory it was for the associated countries to hear a promise of membership, the practical impact of the criteria was dubious. Not only were the criteria so vague that it was almost impossible to ascertain when a candidate country qualified for membership but the Copenhagen summit failed to deliver an approximate timetable for enlargement. The criterion of assuming obligations of membership implied the adoption of the *acquis* before enlargement, a task that had never been fulfilled entirely in any of the past enlargement rounds.<sup>43</sup> The perception of the Copenhagen criteria in CEE was further complicated when politicians realized that the unprecedented imposition of very vague conditions on membership could not be only a guide to membership but also an instrument to slow down the pace of accession.<sup>44</sup>

The CR was not so critical about the accession criteria for several reasons all of which were related to its allegedly exceptional position. First, the CR's economic performance was, if not stellar, then at least very favourable by mid 1990s. Unemployment remained surprisingly low compared to other CEE countries; liberalisation was completed in most sectors up to 1991; inflation was curbed quite early; and the Czech government was especially proud of the coupon-based privatisation it carried out.<sup>45</sup> Quite naturally, the Czech government was not in favour of a group negotiation since it believed that other countries would slow

41. C. PRESTON, op.cit., p.198.

42. K. HUGHES, op.cit., p.3; L. FRIIS (ed.), *An Ever Larger Union? EU Enlargement and European Integration*, DUP, Copenhagen, 1999, p.101; C. PRESTON, op.cit., p.201; P. ČERNOCH, op.cit., pp.38-39; P. FIALA and M. PITROVÁ, op.cit., pp.153-154.

43. K. HUGHES, op.cit., p.3; H. GRABBE and K. HUGHES, op.cit., p.30.

44. J. REDMOND, and G.G. ROSENTHAL (eds.), *The Expanding European Union. Past, Present, Future*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder and London, 1998, pp.159-160.

45. J. STANKOWSKY, F. PLASSER and P.A. ULRAM, *On the Eve of the EU Enlargement. Economic Developments and Democratic Attitudes in East Central Europe*, Signum, Wien, 1998, pp.169-171.

down the expectedly quick pace of Czech negotiations. More demanding criteria were, therefore, interpreted mainly as barriers for other countries.

Similarly, in the mid 1990s, many leading Czech politicians believed that the time of transition was already over in the CR and that it would have no difficulty in meeting all the requirements set by the EU. Indeed, the very popular minister for Industry and Trade Vladimír Dlouhý showed almost unbelievable confidence in 1994 when he stated that

"[A]s far as the Czech Republic is concerned, these conditions have already been met, and, from this viewpoint – although we are aware of the political importance of the Copenhagen statement and the circumstances accompanying its acceptance – we find it difficult to understand why it must be emphasized that our full membership is still to be envisaged".

This excessive optimism about the CR, which was then dampened during the economic crisis in the second half of the 1990, was reflected in the often-cited Czech critical remarks on behalf of and recommendations for the European Union in regard to reforms which should be, in the view of Czech politicians, undertaken.<sup>46</sup>

The economic questions connected with the accession gradually took on importance, but they cannot be separated from the overall domestic transformation and increasing cooperation with West. While services have undoubtedly belonged to the fastest expanding sector of Czech economy ever since the beginning of the 1990s, some other areas have suffered heavy losses. Particularly hit has been Czech agriculture that competed with difficulties with subsidized agricultural products imported from the Union. The overall agricultural output fell by 30% during the 1990s.<sup>47</sup> The shift from East to West accompanied by thorough liberalisation was lethal for some industrial sectors too. For instance, steel industry has never really recovered from the loss of Eastern markets. Most of other sectors where old machinery and technological equipment was used, such as textile industry, also shrank considerably during the first decade after the fall of communists.

On the other hand, those companies, and indeed whole sectors of economy, that were capable of finding new markets in the West, have not only survived but also blossomed. Among them, machine-building industry or chemical and rubber industries have shown the ability to catch up with their Western competitors. The revival of these industries has been usually connected with foreign investments

46. Z. ZHELEV, H. SUCHOCKA, H. van den BROEK, F. PIECH, V. DLOUHÝ, M. CRNOBRNJA, *Is the West Doing Enough for Eastern Europe?*, The Philip Morris Institute of Public Policy Research, Brussels, 1994, p.64.

47. P. PAVLÍK, *The Czech Republic*, in: H. TANG (ed.), *Winners and Losers of EU Integration. Policy Issues for Central and European Europe*, World Bank, Washington, 2002, pp.135-136.

from Germany and other European countries, the most well-known example being the Volkswagen investment in Czech automobile industry.<sup>48</sup>

### 2.3. The mid-1990s: Membership application

Logically, the next step after the successful signature of the AA and the announcement of membership criteria would be to submit the application for membership. Indeed, both Hungary and Poland did so already in spring of 1994 but the CR chose a different approach.<sup>49</sup> The main reason for this was the Czech scepticism towards the current shape of the EU, combined with a perceived Czech distinctiveness compared to other potential candidate countries. It was chiefly prime minister Václav Klaus who was very plain speaking as far as the European Union was concerned. He quite often castigated the EU for being too bureaucratic and overregulated.<sup>50</sup> Klaus then delayed submission of the CR's application until 17 January 1996, as a symbolic gesture showing his reservations about accession.

It would be, nevertheless, misleading to suppose that this euroscepticism was not widespread in the CR. A negative attitude towards the EU was growing steadily among the Czech population in the course of the 1990s. Whereas in February 1993, 84% of the respondents were in favour of Czech membership,<sup>51</sup> four years later, in 1997, the CR belonged to the most eurosceptic among associated countries with only 33% expressing a positive attitude to the EU. The support for membership decreased by more than 20% during the same period.<sup>52</sup> This may be due to increasing awareness of the EU and the fears about the economic and social costs of enlargement.<sup>53</sup>

However, the situation in Europe was now also changing. The cloud of uncertainty about the future course of the integration process which overshadowed the negotiations about the AA was at least partially dispersed after the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. In a similar vein, the completion of negotiations with Austria, Finland, and Sweden permitted a more focused preparation of the Eastern enlargement. Thus, in 1994 a new pre-accession strategy was agreed. The

48. In this article, we do not tackle the issue of the European single currency since a real discussion about the accession of the CR to the Euro zone started only shortly before the Czech EU entry. Although the CR was proud during the 1990s that it fulfilled most of the required criteria, it has not been able to tame its excessive budget deficits and the Euro introduction does not seem probable sooner than in the last years of this decade.

49. Dauderstädt in B. LIPPERT (ed.), op.cit., p.169.

50. Cf. e.g. *Společná politiku pro Evropu* [Common Policy for Europe], Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Praha, 1994. For a thorough elaboration of a similar position see P. MACH, *Úskalí Evropské integrace* [The Reefs of European Integration], 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, CEP, Praha, 2003.

51. C. LEFF SKALNIK, op.cit., p.255.

52. A. PODRAZA, op.cit., p.17.

53. R. VINTROVÁ et al., *Sociální a ekonomické dopady integrace ČR do Evropské unie. Nové příležitosti, možná rizika* [Social and Economic Consequences of the Integration of CR to the European Union. New Opportunities, Possible Risks], VŠE, Praha, 2001; P. ZAHRAVNÍK, *Vstup do Evropské unie – přínosy a náklady konvergence* [EU Accession – the Benefits and Costs of Convergence], C.H.Beck, Praha, 2003.

discussion about the new strategy included four main parts: structured dialogue, acceleration of economic growth in candidate countries, adoption of *acquis communautaire*, and EU institutional reform. Whereas the structured dialogue was welcomed in the CR as a useful tool for exchange of views of political representatives from both sides, the measures taken to boost faster growth were seen as inappropriate since the EU still resented greater market openness in sensitive areas.<sup>54</sup> The initial positive assessment of the structured dialogue changed gradually because a substantial part of the meetings remained rather superficial and, in most cases, it did not tackle issues of real importance for the acceding countries.<sup>55</sup>

To promote *acquis* adoption, the Essen summit recommended preparing a White Paper on the Single Market. This document was made public the following year. Though not being part of the negotiation process, the White Paper was extremely helpful in identifying those areas where approximation of legislation should start. As early as 1991, the CR developed its own strategy of law approximation which was further strengthened by establishing a coordination group affiliated to the Czech Foreign ministry.<sup>56</sup> A government Committee for European Integration was formed one year later too. At approximately the same time, Czech ministries created their European integration departments and the Working Group for Law Approximation at the ministry of Justice set to work as well.

Despite the early start of law adjustment in the CR, the results were rather poor. The whole structure was not very comprehensive and it underwent frequent changes which made it difficult even for Czech bureaucrats themselves to follow the ongoing transformation of the organizational structure. To make things worse, the adjustment that started in the early 1990s was not entirely in line with the requirements of the White Paper and the harmonization of the old strategy with the White Paper caused further delays in the approximation timetable. Another reason, beyond these organisational problems, was the general attitude in the Klaus government towards law adjustment that seemed rather reserved since priority was given to economic reforms.<sup>57</sup>

A watershed in the preparation for membership was Agenda 2000, which not only assessed the impact of Eastern enlargement but it also identified those candidate countries capable of joining the EU first. The European Commission, authorised by the European Council of Madrid, distributed questionnaires to the candidate states in April 1996, i.e. only several months after the Czech application. Having processed the returned questionnaires, the European Commission published the opinions on the candidate countries' membership in July 1997.<sup>58</sup> As

54. P. ČERNOCH, op.cit.

55. V. CURZON PRICE, A. LANDAU, R. WHITMAN, *The Enlargement of the European Union. Issues and Strategies*, Routledge, New York and London, 1999, p.74.

56. P. DESNÝ, *The Harmonization of the Legislation of the Czech Republic with European Union Law*, in: *Perspectives*, Summer 1997, pp.45-54.

57. A. PODRAZA, op.cit., p.17.

58. Agenda 2000, 1997.



the economic situation in the CR deteriorated in 1997, Czech politicians were now just glad that the country had not dropped out of the first group of applicants. Indeed, the wording of the opinion was quite positive even though it registered some deficiencies. In political criteria, the problems related chiefly to inefficiency of judiciary and police work; another major issue was the ongoing discrimination of the Roma minority. In economic terms, the outstanding problems as seen by Commission experts were insufficient price liberalisation in several sectors and a formidable trade deficit with the EU. In the third area, the ability to take on the obligations of membership, the CR adopted 'significant elements' of the *acquis* and the European Commission was convinced that the country would be able to transpose all legal norms relating to the Single Market in medium term.<sup>59</sup>

Agenda 2000 also elaborated on changes of the pre-accession strategy which was to be streamlined to emphasise its focus on concrete measures leading to membership. The cornerstone of this was the Accession Partnership (AP), tailored individually to fit the requirements of each country. The AP with the CR was approved by the European commission in March 1998 while the CR prepared a mirror document summarising the required changes entitled National Programme of the Preparation of the CR for the Membership in the EU. Yet, the structure of the original version of the National Programme was, unlike the later revised version, not comprehensive and its chapters' quality varied significantly. Nevertheless, the AP and the National Programme taken together provided a detailed roadmap for the accession preparation, especially considering their updated and improved versions published in 1999 and in 2000 or 2001.<sup>60</sup> The European commission succeeded in coupling further financial help with the reform progress which, in fact, offered the EU an effective instrument for promotion of the desired results mentioned in the AP. The commission was, in addition, going to publish regular reports on the progress made by candidate countries and this further strengthened its position. All the necessary documents being available, the negotiation process could start at the end of March 1998.

59. V. NACHTIGAL, and V. TOMŠÍK, *Konvergence zemí střední a východní Evropy k Evropské unii* [Convergence of the Central and Eastern European Countries with the EU], Linde, Praha, 2002, pp.154-163.

60. *Národní program přípravy ČR na členství v Evropské unii* [National Programme of Preparation of the CR for the membership in the European Union], 1<sup>st</sup> January 1998 and 1<sup>st</sup> January 1999: [http://www.euroskop.cz/cze/file\\_list.asp?fcac=317&cat=5162&ts=8ec5](http://www.euroskop.cz/cze/file_list.asp?fcac=317&cat=5162&ts=8ec5); <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/czech/index.htm#>; [http://www.euroskop.cz/cze/file\\_list.asp?fcac=317&cat=5162&ts=8ec5](http://www.euroskop.cz/cze/file_list.asp?fcac=317&cat=5162&ts=8ec5). Overview of key documents related to enlargement; Accession Partnership: Czech Republic, 13 November 2001, is at <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/czech/index.htm#>.

### 3. Conclusion

This article has outlined the development of the policy of Czechoslovakia/the CR towards European integration while also reviewing the sources that are currently available.

With regard to the sources, the following four conclusions are of the utmost importance. First, there is a lack of literature on the European integration process in relation to Czechoslovakia/the CR. There is no such publication on the communist period, and even the relevant literature devoted to the post-communist time has usually broader focus than solely on Czechoslovakia/the CR. Second, there are still more secondary sources on the 1990s than on the earlier period. In effect, those who are interested in the policy of the communist Czechoslovakia towards the EC must rely on the works dealing with the attitude of the EC towards the CEE communist countries as a bloc. Third, most of the literature on the post-Cold war period was published in Germany (apart from the CR) and concentrates on the second half of the 1990s. Last, it should be pointed out that, in at least two of the main Czech archives, there are files that deal with this issue during the Cold War.

Czech policy towards European integration evolved substantially from the absence of mutual relations and from hostility to cooperation and even to accession efforts. We have shown that, until the 1980s, no relations between Czechoslovakia and the EC were established. Since the beginning of the 1980s, a limited trade cooperation began to develop, at first in individual sectors and later in the trade with industrial goods as such. The real turning point in the nature of mutual relations came with the end of the Cold War and was anchored by the Association Agreement concluded in 1991. However, since the beginning of the 1990s Czechoslovakia and then the CR expressed their desire to join the European integration process as a full participant. Since the mid-1990s, the external relations with the EU were complemented with the process of domestic preparations for membership. With the submission of EU membership application in 1996 and the opening of accession negotiations in 1998, the CR's shift from cooperation to accession as the ultimate goal was completed.

One of our main findings is that the economic relations between Czechoslovakia and the EC were established earlier than the political relations. In 1981 the first sectoral trade agreement between Czechoslovakia and the EC was concluded and in 1988 a more full-fledged trade agreement was signed up. Although Czechoslovakia as CMEA member also concluded a political declaration with the EC at that time, this was an act of the entire bloc and not of the Czech diplomacy. By contrast, the 1988 trade agreement did not include political aspects and in this respect, Czechoslovakia found itself in a different situation than, for instance, Hungary (the institutional relations of Hungary with the EC at that time covered the political field as well). Related to this is a preliminary thesis that the relations between Czechoslovakia and the EC tended to be, relatively speaking, somewhat less developed than in the case of some other CMEA members. In addition to the above indications connected with the late 1980s, it is possible to

recall the trade cooperation of some CMEA members (but not Czechoslovakia) with the EC that was launched in the 1960s.

It is not our ambition to suggest here any more specific lines of inquiry into the history of the policy of Czechoslovakia or the CR towards European integration. Nevertheless, our findings suggest that a comparison of Czech approach with the approaches of some other CMEA countries in particular periods of the Cold War (especially the 1980s, also the 1960s) would address a very interesting topic. As pointed out, the existing publications on the policies of CEE countries towards the EC during the Cold War treat those countries as a bloc and largely do not explore potential divergences in their behaviour. Thus, such an analysis could help us to determine to what extent the relations of the communist Czechoslovakia toward the EC were, indeed, more negative or less intensive than in the case of the other CMEA member states and to specify the sources of those possible divergences. In addition, the 1990s also witnessed some variations in Czech attitudes when compared with other post-communist CEE countries both at the formal level (e.g. the timing of membership applications) as well as at the substantive level (e.g. the euroscepticism of Czech population). Hence, in-depth comparisons that would focus on the 1990s and go beyond the existing comparative work could again deepen the current knowledge about Czech attitude to the European integration process.