

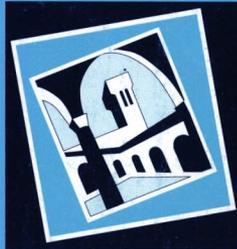
Robert Schuman Centre

Germany and the Enlargement
of the European Union
to the Czech Republic

ANNE BAZIN

RSC No. 99/21

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EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE

ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE

**Germany and the Enlargement of the European Union
to the Czech Republic**

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The collapse of the communist system in Eastern Europe in 1989 coincides with the end of the partition of Europe, as well as that of Germany. Symbolically, these events are identified with the fall of the Berlin Wall, which reveals the close tie between the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and German unification. The events of 1989 and the unification of Germany has permitted the reappearance in new terms of the German Question in Central Europe.

The period since 1989 has seen the return of Germany to the center of Europe. Federal Germany has become for its Central European neighbors something that it had never been : a model of democracy (all the more attractive as this democracy had been built on the ruins of a totalitarian system¹). For the first time in its history, Germany seems to be able to reconcile its geography with its political orientation² and has revealed itself as an element of stabilization and integration at the heart of the continent. Its economic success is an example to all. Its geographic proximity and the existence of cultural links makes Germany the most familiar among the Western models. Its economic power within the European Union (EU) is another element of attraction. Germany for years has been perceived by Central Europe as the route to modernization as well as a privileged means of access to the West.

The Czech Republic (CR) has had for centuries complex relations first with the Germanic world and then with Germany itself. As President Havel has recently pointed out : *"Our relationship to Germany and the Germans has always been more than merely one of the many themes of our diplomacy. It has been a part of our destiny, even a part of our identity. Germany has been our inspiration as well as our pain ; a source of understandable traumas, of many prejudices and misconceptions, as well as of standards to which we turn ; some regard Germany as our greatest hope, others as our greatest peril."*

"... [their relationship to the Czechs] may be more important to [the Germans] than some Germans might be prepared to admit: traditionally, this relationship has been one of the tests revealing their own conception of themselves as well. Let us recall that Germany's stand toward us has many times been a mirror image of its stand toward Europe as a whole! At present, as newly united Germany tries to find its new identity

¹ Timothy Garton Ash even affirms that *"the contemporary model of the German democracy is arguably the most relevant of all... because it is a model built on the rubble of a totalitarian dictatorship and very deliberately designed to prevent the return of (such) a dictatorship. It is, one might say; a Western system built on Central European experience."*, in "Eastern Europe: après le déluge, nous", *The New York Review of Books*, 16 August 1990, p.59.

² Rupnik, Jacques, "Le dialogue des sept présidents", *Transeuropéennes*, 3, printemps 1994, p. 9.

*and a new position in Europe and the world, the significance of the former has particularly increased*³.

As the "return to Europe" of the Czech Republic has as its final objective the integration of the state into the EU (and NATO), it appears today to be legitimate to examine the role that Germany plays in that process. In the perspective of the enlargement, Germany is at once seen as one of the most important sources of support for Central European countries as they move west toward the European Union. It is also the beachhead (together with Austria) of the Union as it reaches east.

Relations between the Czech Republic and Germany are a large subject and here the focus will be on the enlargement issue itself. First the different layers of cooperation between the Czech Republic and Germany within the European context (national and regional) must be examined in order to identify the various vehicles for rapprochement with the EU. Second this cooperation has a major impact on the Czech perception of the EU. The way in which the CR considers its integration into the EU and the way it regards its relations with Germany leads to an analysis of the stakes involved in integration for the CR. Third in the last decades, Europe has been a key word for (West-) German foreign policy. German support for enlargement can be seen within this framework. Nevertheless it seems legitimate to question the convergence between the German "national interest", which is the subject of so much discussion among academics and politicians, and the interests of the rest of Europe as well as Central Europe. The intention here is to examine some of the stakes for Germany in enlargement, as well as to attempt to determine whether the Czech Republic represents a specific case for Germany. Finally as the next enlargement of the EU will modify relationships within the region, it is necessary to consider the impact of the integration of the CR from a multilateral perspective.

³ Vaclav Havel, "Czechs and Germans on the Way to a Good Neighbourship", address by the President of the Czech Republic, Charles University, Prague, 17th of February 1995.

I - COOPERATION BETWEEN CZECH REPUBLIC AND GERMANY WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN UNION

This study will limit itself to evoking only the European aspects of German-Czech cooperation, even if the distinction is at times difficult between European relations and strictly bilateral relations. The idea here is to avoid a realist approach to the relations on the European level and to consider the complex interdependence that characterize these relations. In the case of Germany private actors on the economic and cultural level as well as non-state actors, the *Länder*, the euroregions and various other institutions play an essential role in the relations with the neighboring countries and within the European context.

At The National Level : Economical, Cultural and Political Cooperation

Cooperation between Germany and the Central Eastern European Countries (CEEC), and the Czech Republic in this case is usually discussed in economic terms. Economic integration of the CEEC is understood to be the first step in a full and complete integration into the EU. Other member states do not show the same interest in enlargement nor do they seek to develop the same type of economic relations with the region as does Germany, which appears today to be the most dynamic and enterprising partner of the CEEC, especially in economic terms. Eastern and Central Europe is clearly among German priorities concerning an enlargement now considered certain. Today Germany accounts for more than half of the commerce between the EU and the CEEC (all twelve candidates)⁴ and that share has grown since 1989⁵. Germany has historically been a more dominant actor in the affairs of Central Europe than has the West. *Osthandel* was one of the two pillars of the FRG's influence in Eastern Europe during the last decades, as well as the *Ostpolitik* (on the political and

⁴ Germany was in 1995 the chief commercial partner for imports and exports between the member-states of the EU and the 12 CEEC (total \$112 Md). 52% for Germany, 17% for Italy, 8% for France.

German investments in CEEC represented in 1995 19% of the total foreign investments (ahead of the USA and Austria, 14%). Cf *Business Week*, 3 February 1997, p.14-17.

⁵ CEE's share of total extra-EU trade in 1994 for Germany: exports to CEE = 10% (Italy = 7.83%) / imports from CEE = 10.85% (Italy = 7%)

Germany's share of CEE trade (% of total EU-12 exports to CEE-6): in 1989 = 42% (Italy = 18%) and in 1994 = 57% (Italy = 13.5%)

Source: Grabben Heather, Hughes, Kirsty, *Eastward enlargement of the European Union*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, European programme, 28-9.

ideological level). In 1989 the German model of a *Wirtschaftswunder* was one of the most cherished hope for all the countries of Eastern Europe.⁶

As for the Czechs, the EU is their main economic partner. At the heart of the Union, Germany holds by far the most important position with more than half of the economic exchanges.⁷ Germany is itself the main trading partner of the Czech Republic⁸ with 35.3% (in 1995), ahead of Slovakia (with 13.2%).⁹ This German dominance concerns not only commercial exchange but also investments.¹⁰ As with trade, the direct foreign investment data reinforces the picture or at least raises the question of an unevenness in EU-CEE integration, where Germany is playing a particularly important role. This becomes even clearer if we consider that the other large member states like France or United Kingdom are playing a very much smaller one. In spite of the importance of these investments for the CEEC they represent only a small portion of total German foreign investment, about 10% as far as direct investment is concerned. But while this investment may seem limited, it reveals the profound and long term engagement of Germany with the CEEC in commerce, cooperation and financial aid. It represents, as does the relocation of German enterprises towards Central Europe, an opportunity to take advantage in the short term of lower operating costs in the CEEC. Investment represents above all a means of being present in the new and expanding markets and is in the medium and long term economic interest of Germany.¹¹ The question here is not whether this situation is more to Germany's or to Central Europe's advantage. What is interesting about these intense economic relations besides their visibility and "social effect" is that they are for Germany an undeniable means of gaining direct and indirect influence on the development of the region and will eventually lead to the enunciation of new economic rules.

⁶ See Westerman, Frank, "Germany's Economic Power in Europe" in Markovits, Andrei S., Reich, Simon (ed.), *The German predicament, Memory and Power in the New Europe*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1997, 150-82.

⁷ Imports from the EU to the CR in 1997 = 531 357 Million Kc of whom 227 490 mio Kc for Germany.

Exports from the CR to the EU in 1997 = 430 489 mio Kc of whom 257 312 mio Kc for Germany. Source: German Embassy in Prague, 1998.

⁸ but the chief partner for Germany among the CEEC in Poland.

⁹ Source: German Embassy in Prague, 1998.

¹⁰ Direct investments in CR are in 1997 about 1,3 billion \$, of whom 0,391 for Germany (= 30%). Source: German Embassy in Prague, 1998.

¹¹ Some suggest that Central Europe could be for Germany what Mexico is for the USA. See for instance Rudolph, Hedwig, "German Maquiladora? Foreign Workers in the Process of Regional Economic Restructuring", *Innovation, The European Journal of Social Sciences*, vol 7, n°1, 1994, 137-50.

This preponderant role of Germany in the economic exchanges between the CR and the EU is the result of a general German policy towards the region which will be addressed later.

German Foreign Cultural Policy

The economic presence of Germany in Central Europe, more visible and more often discussed, is echoed by an intense cultural cooperation: "*Foreign cultural policy is, next to the cultivation of political and economic relations, an integral component of foreign policy*".¹² Bonn's cultural policy is officially part of a more general policy with regard to Central Europe.¹³ The change is startling in this region where Germany (West Germany) had been presented as a menace to these countries during four decades of communist rule; where the memory and the experience of German occupation during the Second World War (in Bohemia-Moravia, but also in Poland) are associated with the idea of direct German political and cultural domination and where this is perceived as a menace to the culture of the nation.

It is without doubt in the linguistic domain that German cultural policy is most active in the region¹⁴. Language instruction is perceived as a long term investment with positive economic and political dividends. Demand for German language instruction is strong in this part of Europe, even if English has made great progress and is today in direct competition with German. Of approximately 20 million people worldwide learning German, more than 13 million of them are from Eastern Europe.¹⁵ The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs spends more than 150 million DM in grants on the language program alone, which is to say a budget four times as large as, for example, France's entire cultural - and not just linguistic - development program in the region.¹⁶ It is still too early to judge the results of this language policy¹⁷, but today more than 60% of the population claims a desire to learn German,¹⁸ which remains

¹² "Auswärtige Kulturpolitik", *Almanach der Bundesregierung 1993/1994*, Bonn, Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, 1994, 149-51.

¹³ See Höfig, Carolyn, "Foreign Cultural Policy" in Markovits, Andrei S., Reich, Simon (ed.), *The German predicament, Memory and Power in the New Europe*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1997, 183-202.

¹⁴ It is mainly through the Goethe institutes that the German language program is run.

¹⁵ Höfig, Carolyn, 1997, p. 198.

¹⁶ Goujeon, Jacques-Pierre, *Où va l'Allemagne ?*, Flammarion, Paris, 1997, 271-2.

¹⁷ In 1996, there were about 737.000 students and pupils studying German in the CR. Source: German embassy in Prague.

¹⁸ Gabal, Ivan, Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, *Einstellung der tschechischen Gesellschaft zu Deutschland*, Prague, 1995.

the foreign language most used in the CR ahead of English.¹⁹ This aspiration towards and interest in German culture is directly linked to the idea that it also represents an initiation to German-style prosperity. From this point of view cultural foreign policy is seen as the third pillar of German foreign policy.

This dynamic German cultural (and not only linguistic) program is born of two essential elements in today's CR : a geographic proximity to Germany and Austria, since both neighbors are German speaking and represent the path towards the Occident ; and centuries of coexistence between the German and Czech populations in Bohemia-Moravia. Without entering into the details of the relations between the Germanic world and Central Europe in the past it must be understood just how important those relations are in cultural terms. The presence of a German population created a "symbiosis"²⁰ among the populations in Central Europe that creates, even after the disappearance of the German population (expelled or fled at the end of the war), a better understanding and knowledge of each other and of their "social codes". On the other hand, the presence of a residual German minority (estimated at about 50,000 people) in the Czech Republic today plays no mediating role in this direction. Several reasons can be proposed to explain this, among them the fact that the German minority has been "czechized" during the communist decades (the new generation is not often fluent in German, especially when they come from a mixed family) or that, from the Czech point of view, they are often assimilated to the *Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft* to which some of them in fact belong.

The official description of German foreign cultural policy establishes also the task not to be an "*unilateral export of culture..., but dialogue, exchange and cooperative partnership*".²¹ Thus the policy of reconciliation held by the Czech-German Fund of the Future and its cultural part is within this framework.

A Political Cooperation

It is difficult to separate German-Czech bilateral relations from the CR's relations with Europe given that the German policy with regard to Central Europe is immersed in a European context. On the political level, the European issue is always there between the lines.

¹⁹ Eubarometer, n° 7, March 1997, 23% of the population claims to speak German. (In Hungary, only 10% of the population and 13% in Poland)

²⁰ Antje Vollmer, in a lecture at the Carolinum at the Charles University, in Prague, 5th October 1995.

²¹ "Auswärtige Kulturpolitik", p. 149.

In the official framework of international accords it can be seen that Germany explicitly supports the integration of the CR into the EU. Thus in the Treaty of Good Neighborhood and Cooperation between the CSFR and the BRD (renewed in the same terms with the CR after partition), signed the 27th of February 1992, Germany undertakes to "*uphold the efforts of the CSFR in view of satisfying the conditions for their total integration into the European Community*" (article 10, paragraph 2). Similarly during negotiations of the Association Agreements with the EC in 1991 and 1993 Germany was one of CEEC's most fervent supporters (even if, as may seem paradoxical, the negotiations with some German partners on certain economic points were especially long and difficult).

Since the integration in the European Union is always named as the main objective of Czech foreign policy, it seems logical that this topic should be on the agenda of every meeting between Czech and German politicians, whether it is to reaffirm a common political will or to discuss a specific file. Because of the proximity and also the German political will to integrate its eastern neighbors in the EU, these meetings are more frequent than those with the political leaders of the other member-states. Therefore this leads to Germany to act as a privileged interlocutor for the Czech Republic on the European scene.²²

Without exaggerating their importance, the German political foundations²³ broadcast, for example, a German conception of European construction. These institutions are represented in the CR and are relatively active. Their goal is, for the most part, to promote democracy as well as to improve bilateral relations. A European dimension is clearly evident in this cooperative activity. Within the framework of conferences and seminars directed at elected officials or other actors on the Czech political scene, German politicians, of various political points of view (national political figures as well as union and local officials), are invited to come and speak to create a dialogue and cement relationships at all levels. It is not a matter of influence in the sense of imposing conditions but the simple fact of being familiar with the German vision which serves as a reference point for Czech political leaders, in acts of opposition or appropriation of these same concepts. The example of German political foundations is evoked here because they are a means of cooperation typically German which they use on a scale far beyond that of any other European nation.

²² We can today observe the preference given to Germany from their Czech counterparts in many partnership projects recently initiated by the European Commission to prepare the enlargement. Interview with the French Ambassador in Prague, October 1998.

²³ Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (CDU) / Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung (FDP) / Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (SPD) / Hans-Seidel-Stiftung (CSU) / Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (Grünen).

On another level but still in the same European context there is cooperation among the border regions within the framework of the PHARE program, for instance, which fosters contacts at the local level between various German and Czech actors. The program works towards a wider diffusion of the rules and regulations of the EU within the Czech Republic by way of Germany. This is the subject of the next chapter.

At The Regional Level, Direct Contact With The European Union²⁴

Cooperation at the regional level within the European framework is in some respects simpler and clearer than the relations so far discussed. For the Czech Republic this represents a concrete contact with the European Union and allows for a different view of Germany and the Union in the border regions than in the rest of the country.

The fall of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 and especially the opening up of the western Czechoslovakian borders has had a direct effect on the border regions in north, west and south Bohemia. These regions have become places of privileged contact with Germany. This evolution is all the more remarkable as the iron curtain had impeded all transborder relations for decades.

More than an inter-state border, the Czech-German frontier is a boundary between the European Union / NATO and the Central European candidates for integration. Since 1989 the development of the transborder activity with Germany in particular and the EU in general allows the border regions to emerge as new actors on the Czech internal scene. Today, they play a specific role in the Czech debate not only on Czech-German relations (which will not be developed here) but also on European integration.

The Czech border regions moving towards integration

The opening of the western boundaries of Czechoslovakia in 1989 allowed the classical phenomenon typical of border regions to appear, especially along Bohemia's western border with Bavaria: the rapid reappearance of transborder commuting; the relocation of German plants to Bohemia and the associated threat of unemployment (on the German side²⁵); the explosion of local business,

²⁴ See Bazin, Anne, "Les régions frontalières tchèques: différenciation interne et enjeux européens", *Revue d'Etudes Comparatives Est-Ouest*, 1999, 21 p., to be published.

²⁵ The high salaries in Germany incite German investors to settle in the Czech republic, whereas the Czech workforce seeks jobs in Germany. Nevertheless, it is today admitted

but also of criminality and illegal business. The wide gap in the standard of living between the Czech Republic and Germany (especially Bavaria) of course plays a key role in the developing crossborder activity.²⁶ To measure the convulsions that this has meant for the border regions, one must keep in mind that these areas (especially west Bohemia) had been left underdeveloped by the communist regime for decades mainly for strategic and security reasons.

Today, the Czech-German border has become UE's border. Crossborder cooperation between the two countries represents for the Czech economy a direct contact with European Union rules : export to Germany means the export of products to the EU, that is to say, with all the norms, laws, rules and, the legal framework this entails. Illegal immigration from countries, most notably those to the east of the CR and Poland, is above all illegal immigration into the EU itself.

The threat of destabilization or at least the fear of instability arriving from the east is often used in Germany as an argument for enlargement. In fact, one of the main preoccupations of Germany since the early 90's has been to extend the European Union's zone of stability to the East, so that the eastern boundaries of Germany would not coincide with those of the EU or NATO. Volker Ruhe, the German Ministry of Defense explained in a speech in May 1995 : "*It is one of the vital interests of Germany that the frontier between stability and instability, between poverty and richness, that the boundaries of NATO and the EU do not coincide with the oriental frontiers of Germany. We want one day to see these borders as permeable as the French-German border is today*".²⁷ The border regions are therefore not only geographically but also politically and economically concerned with this approach. The development of transborder cooperation is seen today as an instrument of progress to this goal because it extends the zone of stability across the border and then further.

that in Bavaria, for instance, the opening of the boundaries has had a globally positive effect on the economy of that Land.

²⁶ In the early 90's, the difference of standard of living between Bohemia and Bavaria was 1 to 7.

²⁷ Speech delivered by V. Ruhe, the German Ministry of Defense, in Bonn, at the Deutsche Atlantische Gesellschaft, on May 16th 1995.

The Euroregions : Part of the Czech Policy Towards The European Union

Parallel to the development of informal transborder relations with Germany there exists a more 'institutionalized' cooperation, especially with the financial and political support of the European Union. The European Commission considers that "*interregional and multi-national cooperation as a means of promotion political stability and economic ties is especially important for the success of the pre-membership strategy.*" The aim of this paper is not to analyze the whole PHARE program but it is important to point out one portion of this program : the crossborder cooperation program (CRO-CO), and more especially the German-Czech euroregions's part in that program. Their formation bring up essential questions in the debate on the European issue in the Czech Republic.

The CRO-CO Fund is the result of a resolution of the European Parliament, voted in 1993, which creates of a special fund for Central and Eastern European countries to help them to develop cross border-cooperation with EU countries. CROCO is financed by a part of the PHARE program. Up until that time, European funds dedicated to the crossborder cooperation within the INTERREG program could only be granted to member states.²⁸

Five Czech-German Euroregions were created on German initiatives starting in 1991 : Egrensis, Nisa / Neißé, Labe / Elbe, Krusné Hory / Erzgebirge, Sumava / Böhmer Wald. They cover approximately all the Czech-German border, even if some Czech cities decided not to take part in the project. They represent for the Czech Republic a direct contact with the EU and since their creation have been part of the Czech European policy. Crossborder cooperation is in fact mentioned in the Association Agreement between the Czech Republic and the EU signed in 1991.

The aim of the euroregions is to promote the transborder cooperation in such different areas as development of infrastructure and transportation, protection of the environment, support for small businesses, socio-cultural exchanges or, more generally the amelioration of the standard of living in those regions. If the difficulties differ from those encountered in Western Europe in the past, the goal remains the same: promoting understanding, stimulating economic development and finally reinforcing the process of European integration.

²⁸ The PHARE program for the CR is 330 million Ecu for the 1995-99 period, of this 47% is directed to the crossborder cooperation.

The CBC program is divided as follows for the same period: with Germany: 75 millions Ecu / with Austria: 15 millions Ecu / with other associated countries: 72 millions Ecu.

Even if it is obviously too early after only a few years of existence and application to draw any definitive conclusions, the success of the euroregions projects do appear to have been compromised on the Czech side and the impact on the populations very limited. (A comparison with Poland would shed an interesting light on this question but will not however be made here.²⁹) An analysis of the debates on the Czech-German euroregions from within and from without illuminates several problems related to the issue of this paper which bring the German component of the European project.

Within the Czech Republic, the development of the euroregions has revealed the weakness of the regional structures of the country. While, at the local level, German interlocutors, whether from the *Länder* or from smaller communities, have real political power and enjoy financial autonomy, their Czech counterparts are difficult to identify and, above all, have no financial nor political weight. More than a simple and direct heritage of imperial and then communist centralism, this situation is also the result of the policies of the Klaus government from 1992 to 1997. The national committee of regions was abolished in the fall of 1990 as a symbol of one of the structures which was in the hands of the old communist system, and no law on a new regional structure had been adopted until last 1997. This especially long delay has had as first consequence the creation of a gap between administrative levels of the State and the districts. The recent law is only a first shy step, almost symbolic, in the sense that it does not define the prerogatives of the new regions (especially their finances and their power of taxation).

This brief description of a problem which could be considered as only an internal Czech Republic issue is more than just that. The main obstacle to the development of euroregions is in the logic of Czech politics which sees decentralization as a threat to the State in the process of democratization and national reconstruction. Prime minister Klaus, constantly evoking Czech national identity in his European speech shows (here in 1993) how this central / regional issue must be considered from an international perspective: "*The hidden significance of the euroregions is different. We must act very carefully and make a distinction between friendship, partnership, cooperation in crossborder projects and an attempt to undermine the identity of our State... We want to enter Europe as the Czech Republic. I do not believe that we want enter Europe as the Euroregion Nisa, Labe or Sumava... Some mayors think that they can be in Europe sooner this way. I don't think so. I see that as a threat to the identity of our State*". This leads to the international (or German) as well as the European dimensions of the euroregions in the Czech Republic. The Czech

²⁹ See Lepesant, Gilles, *Géopolitique des frontières orientales de l'Allemagne*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1998, 265 p.

reactions, on the political scene as well as within the population, are in fact an illustration of the wider debate: the debate on European integration, on the future shape of the European Union, and the evolution of relations with Germany within that framework.

The euroregions as seen from the rest of Europe are above all German-Czech; but, for the Germans, as well as for the Czechs, they are part of their European policy. The Czech debate on the euroregions has emerged in the following difficult context : German predominance within the EU (so perceived in Prague) and the slow and difficult road to normal bilateral relations with Germany. It is especially in reaction to a German (and Bavarian) conception of the 'Europe of regions' that Klaus's words have to be understood, a Europe which would dissolve the Czech state and sense of identity. The Czech debate on the euroregion, also shows that the German issue is at the core of Czech concern over Europe. It would be illusory to try to separate the two issues. This point will be addressed later to also show how the European issue can sometimes be seen as a possible and hoped for answer to the German question.

Some of the opponents of the Czech-German euroregions within the Czech Republic don't hesitate to claim in a provocative manner that they are an instrument promoted by Germany to finance its economical development in Central Europe. The geographical delimitation of the euroregions is not always easy, mainly for historical reasons, and is directly linked to the German issue in the Czech lands. There are, for instance, some similarities between a map of the Czech-German euroregions today and a map of the Sudeten German territories before 1945. In the case of the euroregions Egrensis, its borders are more or less the same as the ones of the former historic province of the Egerland, a land which was independent until the 17th century and belonged to a Bavarian family.

Others prefer to justify their opposition to the financing of the euroregions by explaining these regions are already favored by their proximity of Germany and that it would make more sense to support the development of those regions located in the eastern part of the Czech Republic. There is no need to give more weight to these arguments than they deserve, but they do show how the German issue remains a constant in the European debate within the Czech Republic.

The questions raised by the creation of the euroregions in the CR are linked to a larger and more general phenomenon, that of the europeanization of relations at once among the member states and those between the member-states and candidate countries. The Czech political hesitation concerning the euroregions must to be considered in a wider context: that of the Czech policy toward the EU and the integration process.

II - HOW THE CZECH REPUBLIC ENVISIONS ITS RELATIONS TO GERMANY WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION

A Return To Europe Through Germany³⁰ in the Beginning of the 1990s³¹

In order to consider how the Czech Republic envisions its relations to Germany within the EU, one has to look first at what integration means for the Czechs (to the public as well as to political actors)³² in order to identify their expectations and their fears vis-à-vis the European Union. An interesting way to consider integration into the EU is to analyze how the process of rapprochement with the European Union is occurring at the same time as a separation from a difficult past.

One of the slogans of the 'Velvet revolution' in Czechoslovakia in the fall 1989 was : the "return to Europe" [*Zpet do Evropy*], which soon became an official priority of Czechoslovak foreign policy. During the first stage of political transition, Europe (used in a positive and general sense) represented a consensus in terms of foreign policy. It offered at the same time a successful model, an aim during an uncertain period and a way to radically reject the previous geopolitical entity.

The new Czechoslovak politicians, of whom an important part were former dissidents (such as Vaclav Havel, president of the Czechoslovakian Republic; Jiri Dienstbier, foreign minister; Petr Pithart, Czech Prime minister) introduced a new policy which was in many respects influenced by the debates held clandestinely before 1989, particularly on the German issue and then on Europe as a whole. Since the division of the continent was described as being unnatural, it had to disappear in the short term. It is in this perspective that the debate was held to search for a new structure in a unified continent.³³ In the

³⁰ See the title of an article published in the Czech Daily *Lidové Noviny*, 19 december 1994, by Martin Danes: "Do Evropy Pres Nemecko" [To Europe through Germany]

³¹ This study will be limited by the end of the Klaus' era for sources and coherence reasons. The first months of the social-democrat government are not enough to allow relevant analyses about the way the CSSD deals with the European issue. Nevertheless the integration in the EU is today presented as the main objective of the Czech foreign policy. The political programme of the CSSD for the last legislative elections in june 1998 was the one which followed in the closest way the current "philosophy" of the European integration with for instance reference to the Maastricht treaty.

³² See also Bugge, Peter, *Czech Perceptions of the Perspective of EU Membership - Havel vs. Klaus*, Working Paper of the Robert Schumann Centre, Florence, 1998.

³³ See Schulze-Wessel, Martin, "Die Mitte liegt westwärts, Mitteleuropa in tschechischer Diskussion", *Bohemia*, n° 29, 1988, 325-44.

international context of the 1980s,³⁴ intellectuals in Central Europe approached the German issue from a global perspective.³⁵ Germany (in fact the two Germanies) were at once a symbol of a divided Europe and a stake in the Cold war. Dissident movements like *Charta 77* in Czechoslovakia considered the resolution of the German question as a key to getting beyond the partition of Europe. The reunification of Germany was seen as the prerequisite to the reunification of Europe itself. Since at least the 19th century the German issue has not been separable from the European issue and debate in the 1980s (not limited to Czechoslovakia but involving intellectuals from all of Central Europe, as well as from Western Europe, among them Central European exiles in the West, such as Milan Kundera) brought this to the forefront once again.

Aware of the special place of Germany in Europe, the new Czech politicians were convinced that it was of greater importance to develop privileged relations with Germany on their way to European integration. In its first two years the new democracy in Czechoslovakia (until the elections in 1992 which marked a change of government with Vaclav Klaus at its head) tried to develop and improve relations with its German neighbor as its main partner and supporter for integration into European institutions. The unequivocal and unreserved support given by the Czechoslovak state from the very beginning to Germany's unification could be seen as part of this policy, as well as other symbolic gestures (for instance the first presidential trip made by Vaclav Havel was to Germany, East and West, Berlin and Munich, symbolic cities for Germany as well as for all Europe).

Changes in Czech foreign policy toward the EU as well as Germany occurred with the change of government after the elections in June 1992. Vaclav Klaus became Prime minister and Josef Zieleniec replaced Dienstbier as the Minister of foreign affairs.

The Czech Will to Integrate The European Union

To understand Czech policy toward the European Union today and how the German question interacts with this process, it is necessary to bear in mind some of the official and non-official arguments used by the Czech government

³⁴ after the Helsinki agreement and the appearance of dissident movements in the East as well as peace movements in the West.

³⁵ especially in comparison with the end of the 70's in Czechoslovakia where a debate among dissidents took place on the Sudeten German issue, the expulsion of the German population from Czechoslovakia and its consequences.

when discussing the European integration process³⁶, as well as the way in which the process is perceived in Prague. When compared with the official applications and especially the memoranda for membership to the EU written by other applicants such as Hungary or Poland, the Czech application seems to be more reluctant. A few points of the discussion will be briefly addressed here.

First of all, in Prague³⁷ it is not considered necessary to justify why the Czech Republic is an applicant to enter the Union because it considers that it has always been part of Europe. The Czech Lands were excluded from the rest of Europe by the take-over of the communist regime in 1948, which means implicitly by the former Soviet Union. This idea was well enunciated by the Czech writer Milan Kundera in 1985, when he defined the fate of Central Europe as part of Europe, geographically in the center, culturally in the west and politically in the East: the "kidnapped Occident".³⁸ For this "kidnapped west" and the Czech Lands particularly, 1989 and the fall of communism is seen as the opportunity to "return to Europe" after decades of totalitarianism.

The sense of belonging to Western Europe is reinforced by the conviction of and the affirmation by the Czech people of sharing the same values (in tacit opposition to the East to continue Kundera's definition of Central Europe): Foreign Minister Zieleniec proclaimed in an interview for *Lidova Demokracie* in 1994 that "*the nations with which we feel tied and with whom we share the values of civilization and a way of life are part of the EU and NATO. Our place is in those institutions*".³⁹

Security is another argument in favor of the integration into the western institutions. The fact that the European community has accomplished one of its main aims, maintaining peace on the continent among the member-states during decades, is seen a great success and attraction for Central European countries, newly separated from the former Soviet empire. Even the former Czech minister of the economy Vladimir Dlouhy considered that "*the idea of guaranteeing a durable peace on the continent is the basic and common stone for the European integration*".⁴⁰

³⁶ See Hudalla, Anneke, *Der Beitritt der Tschechischen Republik zur Europäischen Union, eine Fallstudie zu den Auswirkungen der EU-Osterweiterung auf die Finalité politique des europäischen Integrationsprozesses*, Hamburg, LIT, 1996, 191 p.

³⁷ again only until the end of Klaus's era but the consequences are to be seen until today

³⁸ Kundera Milan, "L'Occident kidnappé, ou la tragédie de l'Europe centrale", *Le Débat*, (27), nov. 1983, 4-22.

³⁹ Zieleniec, Josef, interview in *Lidov Demokracie*, 27 April 1994.

⁴⁰ Dlouhy, Vladimir, in *Mlada Fronta Dnes*, 1 July 1995, p. 12.

In this context, the EU is also perceived as a way to contain and even control Germany or, to be more "politically correct", a way to transform and put into perspective the geopolitical imbalance of the European scene from which the smaller states suffer. This appears to be one of the preoccupations of the small European neighbors of Germany, as J. Zieleniec explains: "*I consider the integration of the Czech Republic into the EU as an historic chance. Go and see in Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium or Luxembourg, all these countries also have a troubled past and a troubled history of their relations with Germany. Those countries also consider the integration process as a chance for small nations.*"⁴¹

Although the idea of extending the stability of the Union beyond its eastern borders is, often quoted in the west to support enlargement, this argument is not used as such by the Czech government. But the economic advantages of being part of the Union is for many Czechs an important pro-European argument even if Czech officials until recently insisted that the Czech economy would not need the European Union to succeed in its transition from communism.

This brief description of the official argument, as presented in Prague, for integration into the Union is the framework for debate on European integration in the Czech Republic. Although political relations with Europe and the process of integration have progressed in the recent years, these elements have remained a constant in the discourse on Europe and is part of what differentiates the Czech Republic from its Central European neighbors.

The prospect of entering the EU transforms relations between the Czech Republic and its neighbors in the east (see section IV) as well as in the west. This concerns not only the relations between the states but also their populations, on an economic and local level. From this point of view one has to focus on the "indirect" role Germany plays in the process of enlargement to the CR through the evolution of their bilateral relations.

The Europeanization of the Czech-German Relations

In 1989 bilateral Czech-German relations reached an entirely new context: democracy and the stated mutual desire for normalization. These relations have always been complicated and particularly so since the end of the Second World War and the expulsion of the Sudeten German population from Czechoslovakia. Even if bilateral relations could legitimately be considered by the political

⁴¹ Interview with the Czech Foreign minister, Josef Zieleniec, *Telegraf*, 9 May 1996, p.3

leaders of both the CR and Germany as being better than they had been in many years they were not actually normalized until the joint Declaration of Reconciliation in January 1997.

The 'German Question' in the Czech Republic as it has reappeared since 1989 may be defined in two ways: the gestation of a common heritage, the Sudeten German question in particular and the imbalance - demographic, geographic, economic and political - between Germany and the CR. Beyond the initially and essentially bilateral nature of the question, it is its implications and the challenges it poses for Europe are of interest here.

The German population of Czechoslovakia, established on the border territory (and in the main cities) since the Middle ages, represented up to a third of the entire population of Bohemia at the start of the First Republic of Czechoslovakia.⁴² The war, Nazi occupation and the finally expulsion of nearly the entire German population from Czechoslovakia in 1945-47⁴³ profoundly disturbed relations between the Czechs and the Germans and the last brought no solution to the German question in Czechoslovakia as some had hoped it would.

The great majority of the Sudeten Germans, when they were expelled from Czechoslovakia, settled in Bavaria where they play a political and economical role of the first order. They are represented by the *Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft* (SL), a radical lobbying group. At the end of 1989 the SL presented the Czechoslovak government a list of its demands, for the most part already established in their constituting charter of 1950: the right of return (*Heimatrecht*); indemnification for damages sustained during the expulsion; return of goods and property confiscated by presidential decrees in 1945 as well as the abrogation of those decrees. The traditional support of the Sudeten German for the CSU of Bavaria, a partner of the CDU at the heart of the government of Helmut Kohl, gave them the means of applying political pressure

⁴² In 1921, the German population represented 23% of the Czechoslovak population (which is more than the Slovak population) and 33% of the population in Bohemia. Cf. Mamatey, Victor, Luza, Radomir (ed.), *La République tchécoslovaque 1918-1938*, Paris, Librairie du Regard, 1987, p. 40.

The term "sudeten German" first appears in the 20's. It is first used to identify the Germans living in the border regions, and later all the German population living in Czechoslovakia.

⁴³ The expulsion of the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia in 1945-47 was enacted according to the decrees of the Czechoslovak president Edvard Benes, and then the Potsdam Agreements (article XIII). This expulsion is to be considered in a wider context: the flight and massive expulsion of the German populations living in Central Europe (12 million people) and especially in Poland at the end of the war.

on the federal government and permitted the SL to directly affect bilateral relations between the German and the Czech governments.

The radicalization of this question in the early 1990's led the representatives of the German Sudeten to try to give a European dimension to their demands⁴⁴ : they have threatened to slow the process of Czech integration into the EU as long as the Sudeten question is not resolved,⁴⁵ as explained in 1994 the Bavarian Minister Edmund Stoiber : "*the only road to Brussels leads through Munich*"⁴⁶ . They intend to use political pressure not just on the Bavarian CSU and its representatives in the federal and European parliaments, hoping to be supported by Austria.⁴⁷ Even if this menace seems to bear little weight in regard to the unswaying support of the German federal government for the integration of the CR into the EU, it has been repeated several times in public and has been widely broadcast by Czech media. The publicity surrounding the Sudeten questions, brought up by certain European parliamentarians - defenders of and spokesmen for the SL's demands in European institutions like the European Parliament - has been perceived in the CR as an attack on the rather positive image the country enjoys abroad and on the European scene. Nevertheless, the signature in January 1997 of the Declaration of Reconciliation between Germany and the CR after 18 months of difficult negotiations has officially permitted closure of the question at least on political and legal levels.⁴⁸ Without putting an end to the Sudeten German demands, this partly contributes to a certain "marginalization" of the radical trends of the SL in the debate.

Beyond this, a solution to the Sudeten German question also represents a foreign and European affairs goal, even if symbolic, for the German government on the eve of enlargement. After reunification, as Germany strived to develop good, friendly relations with its neighbors especially to the East, this problem was underestimated by the German government. The evolution of the Sudeten question embarrassed the German government (hence its will to put an end to it with the declaration) precisely when it had to convince its partners of its good will in regard to the enlargement which it supports so eagerly. This question has

⁴⁴ The SL is, among other, supported by the Pan-European Movement, led by Otto von Habsburg.

⁴⁵ See in particular the repeated talks of Franz Neubauer, spokesman of the Sudeten Germans.

⁴⁶ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 24 May 1994.

⁴⁷ The former Austrian Foreign Minister Alois Mock delivered a speech to this end during the Sudeten German annual meeting at the Pentecôte 1994, in Nuremberg. Interview of the author with SL representatives in Munich in 1995 and 1997.

⁴⁸ See Bazin, Anne, "Tchèques et Allemands sur la voie d'une difficile réconciliation ?", in *Relations Internationales et Stratégiques*, 26, été 1997, 154-64.

also been linked to the indemnification of the Czech victims of nazism,⁴⁹ and appeared to be the last stumbling block to normalization of relations with Central Europe. Its resolution will hopefully allow Germany to turn the page on the Second World war.

The imbalance of power between the CR and Germany, not only in economic terms but also in terms of geopolitics and demography constitutes the other side of the German question which is of interest here. This inequality has been accentuated by the reunification of Germany on the one side and the partition of Czechoslovakia on the other. Today Germany is by a wide margin the largest economic partner of the CR and its economic might is considered by the Czechs as a key factor in their bilateral relations.⁵⁰ Without speaking of the Czech Republic becoming the 16th Land of Germany, the rapid development of the German economic presence in the CR is particularly visible since before 1989 it had been practically nil and very discreet. In this geopolitical context, integration into the EU is perceived by the Czechs as a means to reduce German predominance in the CR by diluting it with the rest of Europe.

Towards a Triangular Relationship : the European Union as a Solution to the "German Problem"

Approaching the problematic of the Czech-German relations from this angle points out its European dimension or even its "europeanization". In fact, discussing the Sudeten question at the European parliament or considering the geopolitical imbalance in a wider framework places relations on the European level.

⁴⁹ In fact, the CR was the last country to be indemnized by Germany for the nazi occupation of the country during the war.

⁵⁰ See the sociological study about the border region: Houzvicka, Vaclav (ed.), *Reflexe sudetonemecke otazky a postoje obyvatelstva ceskeho pohranici k Nemecku*, [reflexions on the german Sudeten issue and on the attitude of the inhabitants of the Czech border regions towards Germany] Sociologicky Ustav Akademie Ved Ceské Republiky Vyskumny Tým Pohranici, Usti nad Labem, 1997, 94 p.

In a national survey conducted in spring 1996, nearly half of those questioned considered the German economy a potential menace for the CR (Study held by FACTUM agency in March 1996, "Image from Germany". "Does germany represent an economical threat for our country?": 48,8% said yes and 43% no). or that it had a negative effect on the economy in the CR (poll IVVM, 2-7 february 1996, to the question "how do you estimate the German influence on the Czech economy?", 48% answered "rather unfavourable or very unfavourable", against only 39% rather favourable (30%) and very favourable (9%), which is a more negative opinion than in a previous poll held by the same institute in February 1995 (38% unfavourable and 48% favourable)).

The Czechs see their rapport with their German neighbor evolving into an increasingly "triangular" relationship: the Czech Republic, Germany and the European Union. The former Czech minister of Foreign Affairs, Josef Zieleniec, speaks of "*an integrated Europe where essential events are not played out on a bilateral level but multilaterally... and when we say that the principle goal of Czech foreign policy is integration into the EU, we see several levels, one of which is our relationship with our great neighbor Germany*".⁵¹

This evolution is a consequence of the europeanization of the relations between member states and non members and most especially with the candidate states. The prospect of integration, in effect, leads the candidate states to closer economic, judicial and social ties to the EU. Attempting to consider these relationships as strictly bilateral no longer makes sense.

The Czech population's perceptions of European integration are an illustration of the "triangularization" of the Czech-German relations and the intermingling of concerns over Germany and Europe.⁵² The Czech population perceives that the role and position of Germany in Europe and in the world is transformed by the fact that Germany belongs to the EU and NATO. In a sociological survey, 56% (compared to 33% who disagreed) felt that it was because of German's integration into EU and NATO, that there is no danger from that country. Despite the fact that the study shows that Germany is still considered a potential threat, this response coincides with the public opinion (70% for to 16% against) that integration of the Czech Republic into the EU/NATO is a way to improve current Czech-German relations. This same phenomenon is observed on the German side when Germany develops its foreign policy within a multilateral (and often European) framework (see section III). Integration into EU/NATO then is seen as a potential means of destroying the fear of Germany in Czech society. It is perceived (and presented) as one answer, or even the best answer to the German problem today.

The EU is seen as the opportunity for small countries to gain weight on the European scene. The idea that Denmark or the Netherlands have the same rights and voice as Germany constitutes an important element of attraction for the EU. A factor in the debate is that integration could attenuate the imbalance between the two states. A chance for a new balance of relations is seen by the smaller nation candidates of Central Europe in a very positive way, as one of their historic fears is, a loss of national sovereignty.⁵³ No sooner free from the

⁵¹ Zieleniec, Josef, in *Respekt*, January 4th 1993.

⁵² "Einstellung der Tschechischen Gesellschaft zu Deutschland", Gabal, Analysis & Consulting, Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, Juli 1995.

⁵³ This is a main argument in Slovenia today.

hold of the Soviet Union it is hard, despite the clear economic consequences of non integration, for public opinion to conceive of having to abandon sovereignty, even if only symbolically. More than ever and more than any other neighboring nation, the Czech Republic, after the breakup of Czechoslovakia is confronted with the problem of being an even smaller nation next to a larger unified Germany.

As far as the past is concerned, Germany would like to turn the page on World War II and establish relations with its Central European neighbors along new lines. On the Czech side, the Sudeten German issue embarrasses the government, in that it has been a latent menace to all political discussions between the two states. Not only does the dispute threaten to tarnish the image of the Czech Republic but it puts it in a more uncomfortable position vis-à-vis Western Europe than its Central European counterparts. Finally it is a question of political will on both parts to regard past points of contention and stumbling blocks not bilateral but from a European perspective as they pursue the process of integration and bring it to term.

This leads to a redefinition of problems which no longer have the same meaning they did in the past and which can no longer be put in the same terms. The words of Wolfgang Schäuble, president of the CDU-CSU parliamentary group in the *Bundestag* are illustrative of this evolution : *"Being a member of the EU also signifies a commitment to the fundamental liberties of the people of Europe. Amongst them is the freedom of movement and residence for the citizens of the member states, but also for Germans. Why should not the German people go and live and work in Silesia or in Bohemia ?"*⁵⁴ The Sudeten question thus changes the perspective and demand for a right of return that no longer makes sense in this new context. Even if it would be too simple to speak of a "solution", such an evolution nevertheless marks an important change. The problem is diffused and thereby relativised. Whether as referee (such as the European Justice Court) or as a third party, the European Union is a more and more necessary interlocutor, when on the bilateral level no solutions can be found.

Opponents of the European Union Use Germany as an Argument

Even if there exists today a consensus at the heart of the Czech political leadership to support European integration (extremist parties are not under discussion here) there are a few voices raised, notably within the former right wing majority, to put into question the process of integration. Below are some elements of the discussion tied to the German question.

⁵⁴ Lecture at the *Bundestag*, June 1st, 1995.

An advisor to the former Prime minister Vaclav Klaus, Vaclav Belohradsky is an intellectual with influence at the heart of the ODS even if he is not representative of party. His argument against a "European State" backed by Germany is of interest in as much as it expresses a certain current active in the CR today.⁵⁵ Belohradsky criticizes Europe in the name of anti-Germanism. As an ardent opponent of the Maastricht treaty which, according to Belohradsky, fixes "*as an objective of the EU a progressive transformation of its institutions into a super-state called Europe*", he denounces the EU as being nothing more "*than one solution to the German question : by constructing a homogenous European State, Germany and the other European States evade the problems involved in a powerful national State of Germany within Europe.*" He goes so far as to describe the European commitment of Germany as "*two faced German patriotism*" which serves only as rhetoric to disguise the fact that Germany, now once again a "*normal nation State*", is defending its own national interests. Belohradsky also denounces the preeminence of Germany at the heart of the EU and in particular the use of the traditional centrality of Germany on the European continent which he presents as a threat to European construction, preferring to turn towards the United States and the "*Atlantism and Americanism which is the European road which leads to modern democracy*".

Without taking up the most critical and explicitly anti-German themes of his advisor and in a more politic and pragmatic register, ex-Prime minister Vaclav Klaus often uses references more or less implicit of Germany in his discourse on European construction.⁵⁶ A central element in Klaus' approach to Europe is the question of identity.⁵⁷ The manner in which European construction currently evolves presents a threat to Czech identity in the process of recomposition. The Central European States found themselves dragged into the Soviet empire only shortly after the collapse of three other empires (Austrian, Ottoman and Russian) and they find themselves today confronted by a difficult problem, "*that of finding their identity and not losing it on the road which leads to Europe*".⁵⁸ Klaus does not hesitate to stress the fact that : "*We [the Czechs] wish to become part of [advanced Europe] as a sovereign*

⁵⁵ See Belohradsky, Vaclav, "Proti Statu Evropa" [Against the State-Europe], *Literarni Noviny*, 51-52, 18 dec. 1996, 1-4.

⁵⁶ Since the Essen summit, in Germany in 1994, Prime minister Klaus has avoided criticizing publicly the EU nor has let suggested that his country had any hesitations about a full integration in short term.

⁵⁷ See here the case of the Czech-German euroregions for instance

⁵⁸ Klaus, Vaclav, "Evropa a My", [Europe and us] in *Lidové Noviny*, 18 May 1994, p. 9.

*political entity, as the Czech Republic, which will neither be lost nor dissolved in Europe, and which has something to offer to the entity it will join*⁵⁹.

Klaus denounces the peril of a lack of a European identity today on which to build a unified Europe. He then takes a clear and repeated position on the nature of the EU into which the CR would like to be integrated without putting this eventual integration into question. The ex-Prime minister thus contributes towards defining the CR's position on the EU in opposition to other candidate states (see memoranda) in as much as he places it in the center of internal discussion of the EU and its future evolution as : a federation of states, a confederation or a giant market place. *"We share European values as our occidental neighbors and, just like them, we believe in the significance, the importance and positive influence of the process of European integration... The questions which we raise rather concern the form of European integration... If I say that we are resolved to join in a reasonable European integration, I do not say that we are in favor of an absolute and unconditional unification of Europe."*⁶⁰ Only the nation state can provide an identity as a point of reference to its citizens. This statement implies that current European integration rests on strong nation states⁶¹ and does not coincide with the concept of a stronger integration such as defended by Federal Germany. The denunciation of a "Europe of regions", upheld notably by Bavaria, fits this pattern as well.

On the economic level, the perception of Czech public is also revealing both of the "centrality" and permanence of the German issue in the European debate and of the ambiguity in their expectations, in regard to Germany. When considering Germany's relations with its neighbors and especially with its eastern neighbors, German interests appear to be the main issue. A large majority (68% to 33%) believe that Germany hopes to create political and economic dependence of Central European countries upon Germany. 54% to 33% feel that it is in Germany's best interest to *"have a strong European Union to guarantee the prosperity of the weakest and smallest"*. The Czech population is aware that if Germany appears to be a great supporter of their entry into EU or NATO, it is because it is in Germany's own interests. Indeed, 62% of the people interviewed (to 32%) think that *"Germany aspires to an economic and political hegemony in Europe"*. This factor is directly related to the question of power and the responsibility Germany wields in the Union as well as in whole Europe.

⁵⁹ Klaus, Vaclav, speech delivered for the reception of the Adenauer Prize, 21 december 1993

⁶⁰ Klaus, Vaclav, "Evropa a My", [Europe and us] in *Lidové Noviny*, 18 May 1994, p. 9.

⁶¹ As a defender of liberalism and a supporter of the European policy held by England, Klaus saw in the European integration the creation of a large common market.

An ambivalence appears when, on the one hand, 53% to 47%, affirm that they would prefer Germany not to take more responsibility in the development of Europe. On the other hand, 44% to 29%, still consider Germany as the main supporter and guarantor of the integration of Central European Countries into the European Union and NATO.⁶² 92% believe that an economic rapprochement between the two countries would contribute favorably to bilateral relations and 70% feel that entering the EU and NATO would have the same effect. The image of Germany as a motor for European prosperity, stability and security is challenged by the image of Germany as a developing worldpower with its own ambitions and interests. Furthermore, the power of Germany at the heart of the EU and its dominant presence on the European economic scene have played and continue to play a double role: as an element of attraction and a model of prosperity for an economy in transition, but also as an element of unease for the Czech Republic with its political, social and economic independence uncertain in a future EU. The weight of Germany in the creation of a single currency and the role it tends to play as judge and jury makes Germany in the eyes of the CR a moral authority in economic matters.

⁶² See Gabal.

54% of the people interviewed were in favor of an greater engagement of German companies in the Czech industry (against 40%).

III - GERMAN SUPPORT FOR THE ENLARGEMENT

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe was perceived in Germany as a step towards the reunification, which is part of BRD's Fundamental Law. This goal remained the main priority for months. Once reunified, Germany again occupied the center of the European continent. Until then unambiguous, the BRD's commitment to Western institutions, EEC and NATO, although reaffirmed. Germany had to find a compromise between pursuing and deepening its engagement in the west (and especially within the EU) and the restoration of cooperation with Central Europe which had been interrupted by decades of Nazi and communist totalitarianism. A refusal to go forward in Central Europe would destabilize and even compromise the process of transition in the region, while an overactive cooperative policy would be misinterpreted by Germany's Western counterparts. These allies were, in fact, ready to denounce the shift of German interests to the east and even to reawaken the myth of a *Mittleuropa* under German influence.⁶³ At the same time it was recognized that Germany, since its reunification and the end of the Cold War, could and indeed had to play a more active role in foreign policy.

The question of the role Germany plays in Central Europe is posed in terms of the "new responsibility" of a unified Germany because of its "objective" potential power and its geopolitical situation.⁶⁴ Germany has to normalize and contain its power to avoid reaching a hegemonic situation. This is why it longs for a new role in regional leadership acting as a mediator and stabilizer within the framework of the European Union. Since at least 1989 the European policy of the German government has been marked by the will to go beyond a national policy which might awaken fears among its partners. Germany's European policy legitimizes its activist policy within itself as well as with its neighbors, especially to the East, by arguing that it acts not in its own interest but in the interest of the EU and for greater stability on the continent. This point raises the question of national interest. In fact, European integration would be a long-term solution to two leitmotifs of German policy: stability and security in Europe.⁶⁵

⁶³ Starck, Hans, *L'Autre Europe*, 34-35, 1996.

⁶⁴ Lemasson, Sylvie, "L'Allemagne, l'Europe et la question de la Mittleuropa" in Bafoil, François (ed.), *Les stratégies allemandes en Europe centrale et orientale, une géopolitique des investissements directs*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997, 302 p.

⁶⁵ See for instance Schwarz, Hand-Peter, "Germany's National and European Interests", *Daedalus*, Spring 1994, Vol 123, n°2, 81-106.

The debate on the new stakes of Germany and Europe today could be termed: "should Europe fear the Germans or not?"⁶⁶ Reich, an American political scientist recognizes the structural power of Germany in its capacity to set agendas and limit the choices of its counterparts. He defines this as a situation of "hegemony", something like a potential hegemony. Reich then points out that Germany can not accept a situation of power because of its traumatic "collective memory". Without entering into the details of an academic discussion, one regrets the limits of this realist approach which does not place enough importance on the interdependence which characterize German relations with the rest of Europe. Numerous non-state or substate actors (the *Länder*, private businesses as well as the *Bundesbank* and the Constitutional Court) are all independent of the central government and leave the state neither coherent nor dominant.⁶⁷ The risk (if any) would then come rather from the weakness of the state which would no longer be able to manage its citizens or subnational entities. This analysis leads to the conclusion that German power is beneficial to other European countries. Western reservation finally would derive from a less rather than more active German involvement in Central Europe.⁶⁸

In its relations with its "new" Central Eastern European neighbors, unified Germany has from the beginning affirmed its will to turn the page on the past and has upheld an active policy to arrive at a resolution of some of the differences dating from the Second World War. The case of Poland is in this respect clearer but the same holds for Czechoslovakia, even if their relations were not normalized as quickly. A clear will to put these troubles to rest before beginning enlargement negotiations became apparent at the end of the discussions about the Czech-German Declaration of Reconciliation.⁶⁹ (One could evoke many hypotheses as to the reasons for the long delay of 18 months before a compromise was reached, but this is not the object of this paper. It can only be said that from a strategic point of view, normalization of Czech-German relations was not as of much importance to Germany in the beginning of the 90's as were relations with Poland or Russia.)

⁶⁶ See Markovits, Andrei, Reich, Simon, "Should Europe Fear the Germans?", *German Politics and Society*, n°23, 1991, p.1-20 or the answer to this article from Golberger, Bruce N., "Why Europe Should not Fear the Germans", *German Politics*, Vol.2, n°2, August 1993, 288-310.

⁶⁷ Golberger, Bruce, Op. Cit., 1993.

⁶⁸ See Bulmer, Simon, Paterson, William, "Germany in the European Union: Gentle Giant or Emergent Leader?" *International Affairs*, vol.72, n°1, January 1996, p. 9-32.

⁶⁹ On this question, one can quote Chancellor Helmut Kohl's words during a speech at the Bundestag on September 11th 1996, when he asserted that the Declaration had to be signed before the end of the year.

Political scientists and German foreign policy analysts stress the fact that the German government tends to structure its internal as well as external politics using the European integration framework. More than just an argument, Europe appears as a real ideology, illustrated by the title of Timothy Garton Ash's book on Germany *"In Europe's name"*. Over the last forty years, the FRG's European policy has been subject to constraints : its geopolitical situation and Germany's reliance upon Western allies where even Brandt's Ostpolitik depended on the consent of the superpowers. In this context European integration was seen as a way of reducing the diplomatic disadvantages of a semi-sovereign West-Germany. The "Europeanization" of Germany may therefore be seen as both an objective and an achievement of Bonn's European policy.⁷⁰

A clear illustration of this German European policy can be seen in the CDU-CSU's document the "Lamers-Schäuble report" which was made public in September 1994. Devoted to the future evolution of the European Union, it sheds an interesting light on German foreign policy priorities. Among other things, it exposes the reasoning which led Germany to support the integration of Central European countries into the EU : *"It is of particular interest to Germany that Europe not be exposed to centrifugal forces... It would be the first to suffer directly from the consequences of instability in the East. The only solution to prevent the return of the unstable pre-war situation which confined Germany in an uncomfortable position between East and West, is to integrate German Central and Eastern European neighbors in the post-war West European system."*⁷¹

The stakes of enlargement for Germany are multiple and the *"consequences of the instability"* appear in several arguments in favor of the EU's enlargement.⁷²

The geographic position of Germany means it that its eastern border corresponds with that of the EU (as does Austria's since its integration in 1995). It is the border between the stability and internal prosperity of the EU and the economic difficulties and potential instability in Central and Eastern Europe. The migratory pressure on German borders is very high and generally comes from countries located further to the east, such as the former Soviet Union or Romania. The fear of an influx of economic immigrants and the consequences

⁷⁰ Bulmer, Simon, Paterson, William, *op. cit.*

⁷¹ CDU-CSU Fraktion des Deutschen Bundestages, *Überlegungen zur europäischen Politik*, (Lamers-Schäuble Bericht), 1. September 1994, 14 p.

⁷² See for instance Jopp, Matthias, "Germany and EU Enlargement", in Kaiser, Kalr, Brüning, Martin (ed.), *East-Central Europe and the EU: Problems of Integration*, Bonn, Institut für Europäische Integrationsforschung e.V., 1996, 107-20.

of the ensuing political instability is seriously discussed in Germany⁷³. The CDU-CSU report recalls that "if European integration does not evolve towards enlargement, Germany could, under security constraints, be forced or incited to reestablish stability in Eastern Europe alone and by traditional means, which would be beyond its strength and would bring about the erosion of cohesion within the European Union."⁷⁴

Even if economic motives are of secondary importance, the financial question can not be neglected, especially as budgetary constraints within the EU have become a negotiating point. While Germany would like to see a reduction of its share in the common budget, the question of financing enlargement is more than ever the order of the day. Candidate countries will be, at least during a first period, net beneficiaries of the EU (unlike in the previous enlargement). Germany alone can not support the cost of the transition (the case of East Germany has shown the massive transfer of economic means needed for such a reequilibration).

One of the main objectives of the enlargement is to insure that Germany is surrounded by "order and stability". It will once again find a centrality - *Mittellage* - with reveal positive aspects in this new context and break with 150 years of German hesitations "between Western and Russian overtures; between "Locarno" and Rappallo".⁷⁵ In a sense, this *Mittellage* will contribute to recreate a natural order in a Europe conceived as a culturally and homogenous socio-economic entity which covers the entire continent and which the Iron curtain had but temporarily divided.⁷⁶

A key actor and active supporter of enlargement, Germany is an important element in the future evolution of the EU, inasmuch as this

⁷³ On a concrete level, this means the signature of some bilateral agreements between Germany and its central-european neighbors. For instance, Germany signed in 1994 with the CR and with Poland two treaties, according to which these States promise under certain circumstances to take back the illegal emigrants who had been arrested in Germany, whatever their nationality, as soon as they enter Germany from these two countries (in the Czech case, this agreement comes along with a financial aid from Germany of 60 million DM).

This policy, to which is added other bilateral agreements (on foreign workers in Bavaria for instance) contributes to transform step by step the Czech-German border into a internal EU's border.

⁷⁴ CDU-CSU Fraktion des Deutschen Bundestages, *Überlegungen zur europäischen Politik*, (Lamers-Schäuble Bericht), 1. September 1994, 14 p.

⁷⁵ Deubner, Christian, "L'Europe idéale de l'Allemagne", *Revue d'Etudes Comparatives Est-Ouest*, 1996, 4, p. 202.

⁷⁶ *idem*, p. 202.

A key actor and active supporter of enlargement, Germany is an important element in the future evolution of the EU, inasmuch as this enlargement will move the center of the Union toward the east. The new members about to join are traditionally part of the "German sphere of influence", whether this be an economic and political reality or merely the perception of other member states today.⁷⁷ A united Germany is also aware of the fears of its western European partners about its political or economic involvement in Central Europe. This is one reason it sees its foreign policy interests best served if it operates within a multilateral and integrated policy context.⁷⁸ To evoke today the renewed power of Germany or its relations with the CEEC no longer makes any sense in a bilateral framework. The prospect of the integration of the Czech Republic, as well as the transformation of the European scene in recent years, requires a multilateral perspective.

⁷⁷ The institutional balance between the small and the larger states has become an important issue of the institutional debate within the EU before the enlargement. The last enlargement of the EU is in this perspective an interesting stage. The three new members are among the "small states" of the EU and are considered as belonging to the "German sphere", in the sense of the global interests and as opposed to the French "sphere of influence" traditionally associated to the so called southern countries. Although the public opinion is sometimes undecided (see Austria), the new members declare themselves in favour of a rapid enlargement of the UE. Baltic States for Sweden and Finland, Central Europe in the Austrian case count among the priorities. Despite the financial costs of such an enlargement, to which these countries are net contributors, they are today among its most ardent supporters after Germany.

⁷⁸ Joppe, Matthias, *op.cit.*

IV- A MULTILATERAL PERSPECTIVE : GERMANY IN A BROADER EUROPE

It is not the purpose of this paper to focus on Central European debates concerning whether Germany belongs to Central Europe or not. Nevertheless this debate has consequences on the perceptions of the role Germany plays in the region : if one considers that Germany is part of Central Europe then one could justify that Germany differentiates itself from other member-states in its relations with the rest of Central Europe.⁷⁹

The Czech Republic and Central Europe on their Way to European Union, Alone or Together?

When in 1989 the Western European position was to suggest to the CEEC to make it their common goal to succeed in their transition and join the West, the three Central European Countries concerned, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, clearly expressed their ambition to go at it alone, each down their proper road (so-called differentiation competition). The short term objective was to integrate the western European institutions and thereby recover their position on the European political scene. The European Union was perceived as the ultimate goal.

The Czech policy of the "return to Europe" was at least in the first years marked by this determination to differentiate itself from its Central European neighbors. To go faster and not wait for ones who had difficulties, to be considered the first pupil in the class by western eyes justified a specific policies for the transition.

For instance, in the debates held before the division of Czechoslovakia, one of the arguments for separation which was supposed to positively influence the Czech people (who were not in fact in favor of the separation of the two republics) was that it would speed integration into the EU : abandon the East to join the West, move the country's center of gravity to bring the Czech Republic closer to the center of Europe and to the EU. Economic arguments which were ostensibly more objective were then quoted to prove such allegations.

This policy of everyman for himself risked reinforcing not only existing centrifugal tendencies but also strategies of "clientelism" towards the western countries which were supposed to help the integration : Germany and Austria

⁷⁹ See Schulze-Wessel, Martin, "Die Mitte liegt westwärts, Mitteleuropa in tschechischer Diskussion", *Bohemia*, n° 29, 1988, 325-44.

for Hungary, and Germany and Great-Britain for the Czech Republic, for instance.⁸⁰

The publication of the Lamers-Schäuble report at the end of the summer 1994 is a factor - one of the most visible - which allowed Czech policy to evolve vis-à-vis its Central European neighbors, especially Poland, in the direction of a rapprochement. It is recognized and officially accepted in Prague that Poland, for Germany as well as for the rest of Europe, has a strategic role and position because of its size, its geographic position between the EU and Russia and its recent history (especially for Germany where some suggest that Poland evokes a feeling of culpability that conditions relations between the two countries). Even though the Czech economic transition is presented by the Czech government as being more advanced than that of Poland, the strategic issue and especially the security issue gives Poland a privileged position in the enlargement debate. After few years of 'competition', cooperation between the two states has been recognized as being an advantage for both. One can note a change in the Czech political discourse toward Poland in 1994 which provoked, among other things, renewed contact at the political level.

This rapprochement is not associated with any organization or institution for Central European cooperation. Czechoslovakia and later the Czech Republic has always, for instance, strongly resisted the Triangle of Visegrad, which it considered a western invention ; a consolation prize or a waiting room for the CEEC on the road to EU : "*We managed to resist the recommendations of some of our western friends to create in Central and Eastern Europe a special subregional institution because it would separate us from Europe instead of leading us to it.*"⁸¹ Visegrad is seen as a institution imposed from outside, sometimes even compared with the Comecon, imposed by Moscow. Moreover, since the signature of the Association Agreements, Visegrad is no longer seen as worthwhile. This lukewarm attempt at interregional organization and the lack of a policy of cooperation within Central Europe shows that the Czechs chose to privilege their east-west relations, seen as more "useful" on the way towards the EU.⁸²

⁸⁰ de La Serre, Françoise, Lequesne, Christian, Rupnik, Jacques, *L'Union Européenne: ouverture à l'Est ?*, PUF, Politique d'aujourd'hui, Paris, 1994, p. 120.

⁸¹ Klaus, Vaclav, "Evropy a My", *Lidové Noviny*, 13-05-1994.

⁸² The signature in December 1992 of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) nevertheless marks the succes of economic cooperation in the region, even if the level of the exchange is lower than it was in 1989.

The Weimar Triangle rather than the Visegrad Triangle ?

The development of German policy toward Eastern Europe moves in the same direction. Since 1989 Germany has privileged the re-establishment of bilateral relations with its eastern neighbors but each in parallel, that is, without introducing any official differentiation between them and according to the global policy evoked earlier. This has resulted in, among other things, the signature of good neighborhood and friendship treaties in 1991-92 which were coached in the same terms both Czechoslovakia and Poland, and then with the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Nevertheless some general tendencies at the European level lead to doubts as to whether the Czech Republic is going to find in integration what it is longing for. For instance the creation of the Weimar triangle in 1994, where Germany, Poland and France met together, could be seen as an important or at least a highly symbolic stage of the recomposition of the European continent. Even if it is only a forum for discussion, the simple fact of its existence confirms the will of these three countries to think together about the future of Europe. This development is important for the Czech Republic. The meetings of the Weimar Triangle were not especially followed by Czech public opinion, but the Weimar Triangle reaffirms the dichotomy large /small nations in Europe and extends it to Central Europe.⁸³ This is why its creation must be considered a new step in the transformation of Europe, related to the debate on the evolution of the EU in the perspective of the future enlargement. By including France in the process of cooperation in the region, this initiative not only gains a measure of transparency but also helps building confidence vis-à-vis the two most relevant countries in the "enlargement game".⁸⁴

⁸³ This echoes the argument, which is often quoted on the Czech as well as the Slovenian political scene, according to which the integration into the UE is an opportunity for the small central-European countries to get a voice on the European and international level.

⁸⁴ Jopp, Matthias, *op.cit.*, p. 113.

CONCLUSION

Even though the debate on the nature and shape of post-enlargement European Union will not be addressed here, some reflections on the subject would be appropriate. The integration of some Central European countries will obviously contribute to alter the balance within the European Union. Whether a shift in the EU's center of gravity towards the East, a shift of Germany towards the new center of the EU or a redistribution of power and centers of interest in Europe, this enlargement will transform the European Union the most.

In 1989, with the euphoria of the "return to Europe" which at last appeared possible and even inevitable, support of German reunification was seen more than ever as the last step to the unification of all Europe, with Germany as the main and inescapable partner of the Czech Republic. Only a few years later, this perception has evolved. In reaction to a Germany which has become a European and Central European power, the Czech Republic considers integration into the EU and NATO as a means of finding a necessary counterbalance. There appears to be a paradox in the relations of the Czech Republic with the European Union, which can be summed up in this way: even as the Czech Republic hopes to find a means to counterbalance Germany's power, in integration into the European Union especially its economic power, and to transform bilateral relations into multilateral relations, it dreads that the EU could become in effect a "German Europe".

There exists today a direct link between the German question and the future configuration of Central Europe and of Europe as a whole. For many years, one of the main dilemmas of German foreign policy had been to find a compromise between *Ostpolitik*, that is, the rapprochement with East Germany as a means to open up the East, and *Europapolitik*, the allegiance to the European Community and more generally to the West. Now, for the first time since the war, there is a chance to reconcile the two. This is also the wish of Germany's Eastern neighbors.⁸⁵

Concerning the Czech Republic more specifically, integration into EU is not only a "return to Europe" or a confirmation that this country belongs to Western values. It is a process of distancing itself from its past. Being able to integrate the EU means being able to envision a different and more open future in a multilateral framework, after having pulled a veil over a complex past. In

⁸⁵ Rupnik, Jacques, "East-Central Europe: the Pivotal Role of Germany", Lecture at the Council of Europe conference on 'Redefining the borders in Europe', Leeuwarden, April 20-22 1993.

this regard, Czech relations with Germany are revealing and illustrative of a complex process within the Czech Republic.

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