

**Eštok, G. (2020). (Ne)dávne hľadanie strednej európy. (in English: (Un)Delayed Search For Central Europe).** Košice: Univerzita Pavla Jozefa Šafárika v Košiciach, 2020. 192 pp. ISBN 9788081529245.

Research introduced in this academic monograph concentrates on a concept of Central Europe and attempts of these countries for integration and disintegration processes. Its aim is to characterize some of integration projects and identify differences between Central European countries during the period from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century up to the end of to the WWII in 1945. The author's aim is based on considering this region not a primary strategic territory. The chosen period is interesting for any research because the ideas of the Separation of Nationhood and Statehood were increasing. The author is also aware of the complexity of a definition of "Central Europe" and offers thus a wide range of its reflection.

The monograph is divided into 4 chapters. The first one - entitled "The Delimitation of the Space of Central Europe" focuses on eventual grasps in the definition of the space of Central Europe. The author categorizes them into the two antagonistic options – the positive and the negative delimitations. The introduction of the chapter highlights its historic roots. Moreover, it clarifies that the division onto the Western and Eastern Europe is tracked back to the turn of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century whereas the concept of Central Europe is younger and appears at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The following statements emphasize the added value the monograph: "*the demarcation and the characteristics of the region of Central Europe is a very disputable and complex assignment*" (p.11) or "*What had been considered as the Central Europe two hundred years ago was not anymore valid a century ago and a completely different perspective and definition of the region in question was established twenty years ago*" (pp. 11-12). The author also notices the different nomenclature of the region such as „In-between-Seas“, „In-between-Europe“, Central-Eastern Europe, etc. The monography also offers an explanation of the complexity and ambiguity of the geographic definition of the mentioned term throughout different optics or prioritization of the individual aspects. The subchapter describing the negative delimitation of the Central Europe defining the region outwards (meaning outside of its "borders"), outlines the uncertainty and ambiguity of such approach and considerations of authors who prefer such a view. The subchapter of the

positive delimitation of the space of Central Europe suggests also various possible integrational approaches of this conception. Rich representation of authors and their concepts enable a reader to perceive the diversity of positive approaches. Significant contribution of Gabriel Eštok, as the author, is apparent in discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the particular concepts as stated:

*„...the Central Europe distinguishes itself from the East and the West by the richness of the cultures, nations and nationalities, thinking, languages and religious jurisdiction“.* (pp. 27).

The second chapter entitled "Pan-Slavic Integration Projects in Central Europe" offers a discussion of individual groups of integration processes within Central Europe. They are based on the idea of their belonging to Slavic tribes. The beginnings of the Central European integration processes can be tracked back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The first subchapter is dedicated to ideological basis of Pan-Slavic culture united under a dominance of Russia. The subsequent subchapter is devoted to a vision of the integrated Central Europe by Ľudovít Štúr. The author states that Štúr's concept is "*Russophile as well as anti-communistic*". (pp. 39) He analyses Ľudovít Štúr's views on Slavic Federation, on possibilities of reforming the Austrian monarchy and his vision of independent Slavic empire. In the similar spirit of concentration on positive as well as negative aspects, the author critically examines Polish vision of Pan-Slavic integration processes. He identifies the basic concepts and aims which is clearly visible in the following statement: "*In Polish national surrounding we meet with projects of cooperation within Central Europe which aim were to gain the independence as well as to preserve the peace within the region, and the world as well*" (pp. 51). The last part of the second chapter explains contradictory streams against the integrated Central Europe.

"Pan-Germanic Integration Projects within Central Europe" is the title of the third chapter where the author explains various naming alternatives of Central Europe in German language and the corresponding thought anchorage of the notion in Germanic states, and by analyzing these relations: "*The main aim of Pan-Germanic projects of Central European integration during the turn of the century was the reinforcement of the status of Germany itself and the expansion of its influence in the Central Europe.*" (pp. 63). On the other hand, classical works on German geopolitics prioritize "*the violent integration of Central Europe under Germany, which was on the first place interconnectedness of politics, industry and banking sector, and this contributed to the interest of Germany on Central Europe to a significant*

*extent*" (pp. 66). One of the subchapters explores the most popular project of temporary period, The Project of Mitteleuropa by Friedrich Naumann, which became popular not only within the academic or political circles but also among the general public. This concept is constructively criticized by the author with conclusion that Naumann "*was encouraging to overcome the animosities and to strengthen friendly and brotherly coexistence based on the mutual respect*" (pp. 76). The author also deals with the selected integrational ideas of the unification of Central Europe under the German leadership during the interwar period. He describes the thread of dangerous theories about the superiority of German nation which cumulated during the WWII. Vision of Central Europe according to a theoretician and a politician Władysław Studnicki is analyzed in the final part of the chapter.

The last (forth) chapter called "Integrational Processes in Central Europe without Strong Regional Powers" concentrates on the types of integrational processes of Central Europe which omit the empires dominating the region.<sup>1</sup> The author offers here is original view when describing them that "...we have changed the optics of integrational process in Central Europe. It was not supposed to find a strong ally within the contemporary empires but on the contrary it was supposed to create a strong connection among smaller and weaker states and nations which were inhabiting the space of Central Europe." (pp.94). The first subchapter introduces proposals of such connections which were arising on the territory of the contemporary Slovak and Czech republics. The attention is paid to visionaries such as Rudolf Hotowetz, Václav Schuster, Jaromír Nečas, Milan Hodža or Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. Next subchapter is dedicated to the latter one. Masaryk's vision is characterized by the author as a paradox "...because his vision of the cooperation in Europe was based on the disintegrative processes" (pp. 98). In his analysis, the author introduces cons and pros of these concepts. Reflection of the possible integration process and the unification of Central Europe based on the cooperation of states of Little Entente is also a part of the forth chapter. Slovak statesman and journalist Milan Hodža addressed the possible political cooperation in the region of Central Europe from the beginning of his political and journalist career. He characterized the cooperation as a road "...of evolutionary slow steps based on the regional integration" (pp.125). Evaluation of the project of Czechoslovak-Polish federation is not omitted in the chapter and contains various Polish projects of integration in Central Europe such as Międzymorze or Prometheus League, and also projects of economic cooperation within

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<sup>1</sup> The integration under the strong leadership state is the topic of the second and the third chapter of this monography.

Central Europe from the perspective of Polish representatives. A separate part of the chapter describes the work of a theoretician Adolf Bocheński and his visions. Hungarian projects of cooperation are not out of sight of the author's monograph and he pays them as much attention as to the Polish ones. The author also addresses the work of Hungarian economist Elemér Hantos, and his view of the possible cooperation within Central Europe concludes the last chapter.

The author offers basic concepts of the important thinkers on possible ways of cooperation-based integration of Central Europe. Excellent orientation within the given issues and the knowledge of temporary relations can be sensed from the ease of writing. His analyses are considering the historic context of ideological anchoring of the projects as well as national, governmental or state-building interests of the thinkers. All of that contributes to the high value of the work. On the basis of all mentioned above he categorizes visions of integration of Central Europe and points out the strong and weak points of each of the projects. The book as such contributes to the enrichment of scientific publication.

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