

Central Europe and the Visegrád Group

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(Extract)

Summit meeting was held in Visegrád at the beginning of November in 1335 where participants were Charles I of Hungary, Bohemian King John of Luxembourg, Casimir III, King of Poland and the Great Master of the Teutonic Order. Primary purpose of the meeting was to prevent expansion of Austria and to create new trading routes to bypass the staple rich city of Vienna. One route from Buda to Zilina through Brno and another route which led from Kassa/Košice to Krakow through Szepes County. Poland was affected the most by this realignment: John gave up his claims to the Polish throne in exchange for Silesia. Broadening with Silesia and Lužice/Lausitz the Bohemian Kingdom reached its greatest territory. Pomerania remained under control of the Teutonic Order. Casimir received compensation with support of Hungary and took control over the western regions of the Kievan' Russ which got disintegrated under the pressure of the Mongol Invasion.

On the second Congress of Visegrád in 1339 with the agreement of Charles the Margrave of Moravia (later Emperor Charles IV) it was decided that after the death of Casimir, son of Charles I, Louis I of Hungary would become the king of Poland provided that Casimir does not have a son.

Vienna naturally gained back its leading role in the area but in the 15th century it wasn't decided yet who would obtain power over Central Europe. Would it be the House of Habsburg, or the Jagellonian dynasty or Mathias I, the king of Hungary and the later ruler of Bohemia, Silesia, Luzice. After the death of Mathias I, Ladislaus II (nephew of Ladislaus I who died in the battle of Varna) became the king of Hungary and in this way Jagellonians ruled the lands from Bavaria to the Grand Principality of Moscow.

After 1526 Austria of the Habsburg dynasty gained power over the above mentioned area by favorable marriages – for instance with the Jagellonians - and after the divisions of Poland (1772-1815) it got expanded with Polish lands. The enormous production capacity, integrated customs area, free movement of labour, capital and merchandise which emerged inside of the Monarchy can be considered as the antitype of the European Union or in narrower sense the Visegrád Group. German, Czech, Slovakian, Polish, and Hungarian workers who work in the industrial region of Silesia are responsible for reviving the economy of undeveloped parts of Transylvania, South Hungary, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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On the model of the medieval congresses on 15th of February in 1991 heads of states the Hungarian Joseph Antall, the Polish Lech Walesa and the Czechoslovakian Vaclav Havel accepted a proclamation about „ Road to the European Integration”. The main aim of this cooperation was to help the euro-Atlantic integration of the three system changing countries. Practically speaking it involved a more effective representation of the three countries' viewpoint in front of the EU. The initiative wasn't received by overjoy in the capital cities of the western countries, especially in Paris.

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Prime ministers of the Socialist center-left governments of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Austria held a meeting in Slavkov on 29th January 2015. Right after the summit speculations came to light about Hungary's isolation, its accession to the group while opposing to the sanctions against Russia. There are some talks about splitting of the Visegrád Four, others see the expansion of Austerlitz A3 with Slovenia and Croatia. According to realistic analysis everything is about energy security: Austria intends to play the role of mediator in the Austrian-Russian investments as well as in the expansion of storage tanks in Schwechat. According to the ambassador of Poland, Roman Kowalski, activities of the A3 in developing the cross-border cooperation seem promising.

Experts are unanimous in their opinion that Visegrád Four can't be replaced by A3. V4 has become a good brand name; it's recognized by the EU and holds 65 million votes which is equal with the combined votes of France and Germany together. Germany which saw some sort of rival in the V4 before has started to look at them as partners due to the growing pressure of Russia.