

THE POSITION OF CZECH AND POLISH POLITICAL ÉLITES WITH REGARD TO FRIEDRICH NAUMANN'S CONCEPT OF "CENTRAL EUROPE"

Tadeusz Kopyś

Czech and Polish political élites reacted in very different ways to Friedrich Naumann's book, "Mitteleuropa" (Central Europe), owing to the differing situation of both peoples during World War I and their differing national and economic aspirations for the time after. With the Czechs, Naumann met with almost universal rejection: Even during the Word War they viewed their nation's future within the framework of Austria. Here, "Central Europe" caused fears of "Germanization", authoritarian rule and powerful economic competition. Thus it became the focus of Czech propaganda addressed at the Western powers in the struggle for a Czechoslovak state. As far as political élites in Poland are concerned, the picture is more heterogeneous. Proponents of the Austro-Polish solution supported "Central Europe", as well as did some economists. Decidedly against Naumann were the Polish national democrats. The main difference between Poles and Czechs was the view on Russia: Whereas many Poles saw "Central Europe" as offering a degree of protection against Russia and Pan-Slavism, all Czech concepts were primarily aimed at establishing safeguards against Germany; Russia here enjoyed a positive role.