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A Study of the Decision of the Czech Republic to Join the European Union

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Since its establishment as the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, the European Union has provided more than half a century of peace and prosperity to the continent. The people of the European Union have been guaranteed justice through strict adherence to democratic ideals and respect for human rights; economic stability through transition to a common currency, job creation, development of infrastructure, and fiscal globalization; environmental protection through rigorous membership credentials and legislative policy; and security through the formulation of a single, strong, powerful voice in world affairs. The initial members were Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. These nations were joined by Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom in 1973; Greece in 1981; Spain and Portugal in 1986; and Austria, Finland, and Sweden in 1995. The 2004 admission of ten nations, several of which are small ex-Soviet states, will be the largest in the Union's history and manifests that with the growth of the European Union, there is a need for less dominant states within Europe to submit to the steadily growing power.¹

In particular, the Czech Republic, one of the 2004 admits, given its history of invasion, manipulation, and national culture from centuries of outside rule, must submit to the Leviathan of European Union power. More than one and one-half centuries of war in Europe have forced the Czech people to fall victim to political, economic, social, and religious oppression. The decision of the Czech Republic to join the European Union is not based solely upon the utopian aims of the union but out of national necessity based upon the Hobbesian reality of the Czech situation to provide the enumerated needs of security and sound foreign policy, economic development, and effective internal national leadership.²

In Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*, he writes:

Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war, and such a war as is of every man against every man. ...

...Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same is consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal.worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.³

The realities according to the theories of Hobbes – humanity is naturally in a state of war without a common power, and the primary inspiration for men is fear of a violent death – have proven true in the European continent since the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century. Europe has been racked by war with barely a single generation knowing peace in centuries until the end of the Second World War and the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community. The Europeans seemingly found a solution to these quandaries by eliminating grounds for violent conflict, gaining a respect for human life, and denouncing war as a means of justice; searching for sustenance and ample means of survival; and seeking a governmental instrument through which to orchestrate and support these efforts.⁴ The founding of the European Union provided the “common power to keep them all in awe.”⁵ This reality has incrementally brought together the larger nations of Europe, traditional instigators in such conflict, and subsequently united the smaller nations, such as the Czech Republic, who are often used as pawns in battle. Hobbes identified this greed of nations when he wrote:

And therefore, if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only, endeavor to destroy or subdue one another. And from hence it comes to pass that, where an invader hath no more to fear than another man's single power, if one plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient seat, others may probably be expected to come prepared with forces united, to dispossess and deprive him, not only of the fruit of his labour, but also of his life or liberty. And the invader again is in the like danger of another.⁶

The first component of what Hobbes identified as peace is the need for security.⁷ The national entity of the Czech Republic, itself the result of the dissolution of Czechoslovakia because of ethnic factioning in

1993, has been systematically invaded and pillaged throughout its history. The Magyars, the Franks, the Germans, and the Russians have invaded a number of times, each bringing their own consequences. The Czechs are popularly stereotyped as being very pessimistic and cynical because of their history as a defeated and oppressed people. Given its condition as a consistently conquered nation and as a smaller state in the scheme of European affairs, the Czech people appreciate the opportunity to so grandly and confidently ally with other nation-states of Europe. In an interview conducted with Czech Prime Minister Vladimírš pidla and Slovak Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda, Mr. Dzurinda stated, "... we should run side by side and more importantly, go forward together..."⁸ The security of their nation is one of the foremost reasons that the Czech Republic is seeking to join the European Union, and uniting with the other nation-states of Europe is the principle way to ensure this.

With prospective entry of the Czech Republic into the European Union, the historic concern of annexation by Russia, which has been especially prevalent since the 1989 dissolution of the Soviet Union, is beginning to subside. A Czech journalist, Jirí Zlatuska, wrote: "Our position in Central Europe will be constantly threatened by the unstable Russian colossus to the east, whose fragile internal political and economic conditions may reawaken the old imperial sentiments towards [sic] its western 'Slav brothers.'" These anxieties of the Czech people are well-founded in Thomas Hobbes' theories of a natural state of war. These theories have materialized in Czech history and necessitate admission into the European Union as a means of ensured national defense. The historically militarily passive nature of the Czech Republic and its predecessors is manifested in this statement of Czech Prime Minister Spidla:

In short, Europe has found a path to peace through economic and political integration as well as through social solidarity. Consequently, Europe [now] has several basic, common values. These are peace, solidarity, freedom and equality. And they are now more prevalent than ever before!¹⁰

Despite Czech membership in the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organisation, itself a defense alliance, membership in the European Union allows an extra measure of security. Russia would never attempt to reclaim its former Soviet holdings with a nation that is a member of the Union.¹¹ Membership in the European Union confers an extra level of international equality between the smaller nation-states and the traditional powers by placing each member nation in a forum of open communication with the others and merging economic systems to such a degree that an attack on one nation would have a negative consequence on the others. In an inter-

view regarding entrance negotiations, Prime Minister Spidla expressly noted his acknowledgement for “the amount of scope Europe gives to small and medium-sized nations.¹²” For this spirit of multinational cooperation, Europe had to evolve beyond Hobbesian philosophy which stated, “...that is, by force or wiles to master the persons of all men he can, so long till he see no other power great enough to endanger him.¹³” Entrance into the European Union is the Czech means of mastering. The prospect of a common foreign policy within the European Union confirms the ability of smaller nations, such as the Czech Republic, to wield more influence within every aspect of international politics.¹⁴ In answering the question, “Where does Europe begin and where does it end?” Prime Minister Dzurinda said, “I think that in thirty years time this question will more or less have been answered, and that Europe will be compact, not just geographically but also politically. We will have common opinions on the chief global issues.¹⁵”

The entrance of the Czech Republic into the European Union is preemptively counteracting the fulfillment of Hobbes’ theory that happiness of men is the immediate gratification of desires, as he said,

Felicity is a continual progress of the desire, from one object to another, the attaining of the former being still but the way to the latter. The cause whereof is that the object of man’s desire is not to enjoy once only, and for one instant of time, but to assure forever the way of his future desire.¹⁶

The military history of the Czech lands is not one of Czech offensive strikes but truly as the greater powers of Europe using the nation as a hostage to fortune through invasion, pillage, and conquer. Geographically, the Czech lands provide little strategic importance to its invaders. For instance, the pre-World War II invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Nazi Army was not done as a move for military engagement but as an act of Adolf Hitler to test the appeasement policy of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain.¹⁷ Entry into the European Union is furthermore a means to thwart the threat of conquest by larger nations, particularly the historic menace of looming Russia. Hobbes wrote:

Also, because there be some that taking pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest, which they pursue farther than their security requires, if others (that otherwise would be glad to be at ease within modest bounds) should not by invasion increase their power, they would not be able, long time, by standing only on their defence [sic], to

subsist. And by consequence, such augmentation of dominion over men being necessary to a man's conversation, it ought to be allowed him.¹⁸

Thomas Hobbes' theories were confirmed by Slovak Prime Minister Dzurinda when he stated, "What may still threaten a united Europe is the weakness of those who are on the side of the common good. I think that the entire world is a confrontation between good and evil, love and hate, and truth and lies.¹⁹" This rationale alone is sound cause for the Czech Republic to seek admission into the European Union, but in this, he acknowledged the need for the Hobbesian notion of peace.

Thomas Hobbes' second step toward peace is attaining economic stability.²⁰ Hobbes traces a significant cause of war to economic greed: "So that in the nature of man we find three principle causes of quarrel: first, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory.... The first maketh men invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third for reputation."²¹ He explained in *Leviathan* that the quest for power and economic gain cannot cease because achieving any given amount will only prompt man to seek more:

So that in the first place, I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death. And the cause of this is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight than he has already attained to, or that he cannot be content with a moderate power, but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more.²²

Realizing this inherent greed about mankind, these economic reasons are also prompting the Czech Republic's entry into the European Union. The nature of economics within the Union is one of balance where the stronger economies can balance out the weaker ones.²³ This is accomplished by transition to a single currency thus increasing the ability of inter-European trade and encouraging international trade.

Since 1989, the Czech Republic has worked diligently to rebuild its economy following its communist control by the Soviet Union.²⁴ The Soviet planned economy of communism left an indelible mark on the national identity, which the Czechs now are struggling to erase. In comparison with other nations of the European Union, the Czech Republic's economy leaves much to be desired. The per capita income in the Czech Republic is only 63 percent of the Union's average, and the Austrian Employment Chamber put the wage gap between the average Czech and his Austrian neighbor one to seven, a figure which has changed very little

since liberation from the Soviets²⁵. The lack of strong corporate governance combined with the diminishing but still lingering communist mindset that everyone should work, regardless of how menial the job, explains the remarkably low unemployment rate of three and one-third percent.²⁶ In Prague, unemployment is virtually non-existent.²⁷ The influence left by the Soviet experience is one that will impact the Czech economy for many years to come, so the prospect of balancing the national economy into the Union's is received especially well by the Czechs. Still in transition from a planned economy to a market economy, intervention from European Union leadership in Brussels is welcomed so that the Czech economy will be restored to its Western nature prior to the Second World War. This was discussed in *The Economist*:

... many Central and Eastern Europeans like the idea of rules imposed from Brussels to force the new members to maintain open government and a competitive business environment. They fear that without the EU to keep order, their relatively new political and economic arrangements could still be vulnerable to crony capitalism of the Russian sort.²⁸

The history of the European Union has shown a rise in living standards resulting from a nation's entry into the club, and, according to *The Economist*, "Strategic reasons for joining are all well and good, but the economics of enlargement remain crucial."²⁹ Through continued economic integration, entrance into the European Union will help to rejoin the Czech Republic to the more culturally similar nations of Western Europe, and economics is the principle way to achieve this. With a decent knowledge of the English language and a good education, a Czech citizen is just as capable as any Western European to succeed according to the article in *The Economist*.³⁰ Use of a common currency, the Euro, will allow the Czech Republic and the other new member states to integrate fully into the mainstream of regional and global economics.³¹ Admission into the Union is necessitated by the Czech Republic because of the post-Soviet struggle toward economic well being. With full integration of the European Union economy, the nations will be tied to one another in such a way that internal conflict would not be economically feasible, thus re-securing the Czech Republic.

As the third and final step toward Thomas Hobbes' theories surrounding peace, it is necessary for a nation to develop a strong government capable of orchestrating the processes of security and economic stability.³² In the ways of sustaining a national power structure, Hobbes believed, "Where there is no common power, there is no law; where no law, no injustice."³³ In this, he stated his belief that a lack of government-

tal authority yields a dearth of regulation, and with this, an anarchic state of affairs and the lack of protection of property. For these purposes, it is necessary for men to make themselves subject to a formidable government.

The second law is to compromise for peace but not at the expense of preservation of one's self.³⁴ In Hobbes' laws of nature, he identifies the fundamental law to seek peace.³⁵ He discussed this in his *Leviathan*:

It is a ... general rule, of reason that every man ought to endeavor peace, as far as he has hope of obtaining it, and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek and use all helps and advantages of war....

...From this fundamental law of nature, by which men are commanded to endeavor for peace, is derived this second law: that a man be willing, when others are so too, as far-forth as for peace and defence [sic] of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things, and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself.³⁶

According to these Hobbesian theories on governmental systems, in the same way that the Czech Republic must submit to the *Leviathan* of the stronger European Union, the citizens of the Czech Republic must submit to their respective national authority, providing said authority does not threaten their lives.

Despite the prosperity of Czechoslovakia prior to the Second World War with developing industry such as Skoda and rich mining commerce, the Nazi occupation and the immediate Soviet occupation undermined the strong democratic and capitalist scheme the nation embraced. In particular, the Soviet efforts to redistribute property and communalize every material aspect of national affair upset the balance needed to maintain prosperity within the state. With the fall of the Soviet Empire in 1989, the newly independent Czechoslovak state, unsure in its approach, undertook the task to restructure and rebuild every level of government within the country. However, in reference to the rejuvenation process, Czech journalist Jiri Zlatuska wrote,

Our tradition is polluted by bad habits and instincts that still prevail as a result of the deep imprint of decades of corruption....

...Our judicial environment, the ability to exercise our rights, and the operation of our economy can all be quickly

freed from our distinctly Czech shortcomings. Therefore, rather than playing the role of a nervous know-it-all and instructing the more experienced members of the European Union concerning our own “Czech way” (with its dubious success record), it is clearly in our best future interests to adopt a position that favors positive relations and integration with the EU.³⁷

Membership in the European Union will provide a continuance of the rebuilding process for the Czech government – the body responsible for discharging the means of security and economic stability. The interconnectedness and guidance that membership in the Union provides to its member states will enhance the ability of the Czech nation to strengthen its systems of national direction and continue to bring the country toward its historically natural cultural, political, and social ties to Western Europe. Bolstering of this relationship will better “anchor them in the prosperous stability of the West and allow them to turn their backs on the threat of chaos, tyranny and poverty in the East.³⁸” It will strengthen the Czech national identity, and aid in the facilitation of a government that is more capable of dealing with the demands posed by stronger security and a growing economy, results of Hobbesian peace and European Union politics.³⁹

The Czech Republic, having endured the many varied political situations of monarchism, fascism, communism, and republicanism throughout its history, is embracing the prospect of European Union membership. Smaller nations of Central and Eastern Europe, particularly the members of the ex-Soviet bloc, are pleased at the expectation to become full members of the Union. The mayor of Vidin, Bulgaria remarked to European Union dignitaries, “You represent hope to us.⁴⁰” Hobbesian peace – security, strong economics, and capable governmental system – will be achieved by the Czechs upon complete entry into the Union. The reality of the Czech situation is based upon Hobbes’ philosophical principles. Due to the nature of its historical status within the European continent, the Czech Republic must submit to the greater power – the Leviathan – of the European Union.

Footnotes

1. Cf. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994).
2. Cf. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 76.
3. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 76.
4. *Ibid.* In his *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes states, “The passions that incline

men to peace are fear of death, desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living, and a hope by their industry to obtain them. And reason suggesteth convenient articles of peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement. These articles are they which otherwise are called the Laws of Nature..." His statement, "fear of death" implies a need for security. "Desire of ... commodious living," implies the need for economic stability. An "industry to obtain them," implies the need for a just and functional government capable of this method. Therefore, in seeking peace, Hobbes suggests the need for security, economic well-being, and political stability.

5. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 76.

6. *Ibid.*, 75.

7. Cf. *Ibid.*, 76.

8. Libuse Koubská, "Running Together on the Road to Europe," *New Presence: The Prague Journal of Central European Affairs* 5 no. 3 (autumn 2003): 10.

9. Jirí Zlatuska, "We shouldn't fear a federation," *New Presence: The Prague Journal of Central European Affairs* 5 no. 3 (autumn 2003): 4.

10. Koubská, "Running Together on the Road to Europe," *New Presence*: 10.

11. "Joining the West," *The Economist* (London), 19 May 2001; Available from <http://www.galileo.peachnet.edu>; Internet; Accessed 28 November 2003.

12. Koubská, "Running Together on the Road to Europe," *New Presence*: 11.

13. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 75.

14. Koubská, "Running Together on the Road to Europe," *New Presence*: 11. The military conflicts in the Middle East have manifested significant disagreements in foreign policy within the member states of the European Union. Most experts (including Czech and Slovak legislators) agree that a common foreign policy can only be formed with passage of significant time. Still, the outlook looks hopeful for such a formation.

15. *Ibid.*, 13.

16. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 57.

17. Donald C. Watt, "Before the Blitzkrieg," in *History of the Second World War*, ed. Sir Basil Liddell Hart (London: Phoebus Publishing, 1980), 9. History books commonly disregard the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia. This source discussed the March 15, 1939 invasion in the introduction.

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18. *Ibid.*, 13.

19. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 57.

20. Donald C. Watt, "Before the Blitzkrieg," in *History of the Second World War*, ed. Sir Basil Liddell Hart (London: Phoebus Publishing, 1980), 9. History books commonly disregard the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia. This source discussed the March 15, 1939 invasion in the introduction.

21. *Ibid.* These three causes can ultimately be associated with economic gain.

22. *Ibid.*, 58.

23. Weaker economies include those previously within the Soviet bloc. I.e.:

the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, the Baltic States, etc.

24. Before 1993, the Czech Republic did not exclusively exist. Until 1993, the current Czech Republic and Slovakia were united as Czechoslovakia. The two peacefully separated in 1993.

25. Barry D. Wood, "Central Europe," *Europe* 392 (1999): 16.

26. "Hungarians, Czechs, Poles race to join EU," *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), 12 August 1997; Available from <http://www.galileo.peachnet.edu>; Internet; Accessed 28 November 2003.

27. *Ibid.*

28. "Joining the West," *The Economist* (London), 19 May 2001; Available from <http://www.galileo.peachnet.edu>; Internet; Accessed 28 November 2003.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*

31. Koubská, "Running Together on the Road to Europe," *New Presence*: 10.

32. Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 76.

33. *Ibid.*, 78

34. *Ibid.*, 81.

35. *Ibid.*, 80.

36. *Ibid.*, 80.

37. Zlatu_ka, "We shouldn't fear a federation," *New Presence*, 4.

38. "Joining the West," *Economist*.

39. Koubská, "Running Together on the Road to Europe," *New Presence*:

11.

40. "Europe's Magnetic Attraction." *The Economist* (London). 19 May 2001. Available from <http://www.galileo.peachnet.edu>. Internet. Accessed 28 November 2003.

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