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## **Professor Jiří Pehe, New York University in Prague: Is our current crisis caused by habits from Austria-Hungary?**

Completion requirements

**Postscript from April 2022: The Putin war against Ukraine has changed the political situation in Central Europe substantially. The Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán has refused to support Ukraine while the Czechs, the Poles and the Slovaks have sent many weapons and military infrastructure to Zelensky. It means that the Visegrad Group of the CE countries has more or less disintegrated since the Putin invasion on 24th February 2022: The Putin invasion has concentrated the minds of many right wingers throughout Europe: While, in the past, populist and extreme right wing views were extremely popular with many European politicians. the Russian invasion of Ukraine has functioned as a red line for many right wingers. Murdering civilians, women and children is basically too much for many politicians. Hence the disintegration of the Visegrad Group.**

**September 2023:**

**However, since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Czech right-of-centre government of Petr Fiala, about which everyone hoped that it would return the Czech Republic to the West (and he has supported Ukraine, that is true) has proven to be rather uncommunicative and incompetent on the home political scene, not really dealing with the impoverishment of about 30 per cent of the population, thus encouraging, indirectly, the populist and authoritarian opposition in the Czech Republic. The return of the pro-Russian oligarch Babiš to rule the country cannot be excluded now. Poland and Hungary are continuing on their authoritarian path, Hungary is pro-Russian and Slovakia is wavering in its support for Ukraine.**

The political attitudes of the so call "Visegrad group" of the Central European countries (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic) are not particularly constructive. The EU is threatening to stop its subsidies to Poland and Hungary for destabilising the rule of law, Czech PM Babiš is being investigated by the EU for a conflict of interest. Around 1900, Central Europe was a source of highly stimulating ideas, culturally as well as politically. This was due to the mixing of cultures. Then, however, Austria-Hungary was dismembered. This was a serious problem for Central Europe. It was occupied by the German Nazis, then by Soviet communists. Central Europe is a geopolitically weak place. The CE countries can defend themselves against the great powers of Germany and Russia only if they cooperate, but they are unable to do this. The Central European countries have adopted authoritarianism, red tape, weakness of politicians and the politicians' disinterest in the individual citizens from Austria-Hungary. In this Britské listy Interview, Jan Čulík talks about these themes with Professor Jiří Pehe, Czech political scientists and the Director of the

Prague branch of New York University. The interview was broadcast by the Czech cable TV station Regionalnitatelevize.cz from 20th January 2020.

Click on [Professor Jiří Pehe, New York University in Prague: Is our current crisis caused by habits from Austria-Hungary?](#) to open the resource.

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