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Central Europe or Mitteleuropa?

Jacques Rupnik

W*ith the collapse of the Berlin wall, discussion of Central Europe takes on new meaning. Since 1945 Soviet domination in East Central Europe has been legitimated by an alleged German threat. Now that Soviet domination is crumbling, old and new questions are raised about the German role in East Central Europe. Are we in fact witnessing the early end of a divided Germany, and indeed of a divided Europe? What, then, will be the culture of this region? Will a new version of Mitteleuropa emerge, and with it a new kind of German influence?*

As the Berlin Wall comes down, the echo of falling dominoes can be heard all over East Central Europe. The disintegration of “the Yalta system” (the retreat of Soviet Russia) brings with it old and new questions about the German factor in the Central European equation. The democratic tide which since September of 1989 has shaken the very foundations of the German Democratic Republic has made more obvious than ever the direct connection between political change in East Central Europe and “the German question.” For historical reasons, it is impossible to reclaim Central European identity without its essential German component; and as one nation with two states, Germany remains the symbol par excellence of a partitioned continent.

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“Whether we like it or not,” wrote Sebastian Haffner,¹ “today’s world is the work of Hitler. Without Hitler no divided Germany and Europe, without Hitler no Americans and Russians in Berlin.” And without Hitler, one is tempted to add, no Sovietization of Central Europe. The fate of the Central European nations has been shaped by the two dominant powers, Russia and Germany. Stalin would never have conquered Central Europe if Hitler had not been let in first. Thus the flip side of “the Russian question” (Soviet domination over half of Europe) is the German question (a divided nation which in the long run cannot accept that Europe remains divided).

The ghost of Central Europe is back to haunt the lands of what used to be known as “real socialism.” From Prague to Budapest, from Cracow to Zagreb, and evoking powerful echoes in Vienna and Berlin, the rediscovery of Central Europe will remain one of the major intellectual and political developments of the 1980s and will no doubt be a vital ingredient in the reshaping of the political map of Europe in the post-Yalta era.

Central Europe represents, on the one hand, an assertion of a historical and cultural identity distinct from that imposed for forty-five years on the nations of the other half of Europe by the Soviet empire. On the other hand, it is also part of the continuing political search for an alternative to the partition of Europe.

The protagonists of the debate range from writers such as Milan Kundera, Czesław Miłosz, and György Konrád to Pope Karol Wojtyła,² and from dissidents on the Eastern side of the divide to eco-pacifists (Greens) on its Western flank. Though it originated in the post-Solidarity depression, it took on a new, more political dimension with the formidable acceleration of change in the Gorbachev era. The return of Central Europe as an idea is an attempt by the nations of the area to think of themselves as subjects, not merely as objects, of history.

The current search for a Central European identity as an alternative to the Sovietized present tends to put emphasis on ascertaining the area’s otherness from Russia. “The tragedy of Central Europe” is seen as having come from without. The German question does not allow such a convenient cop-out; it forces the protagonists also to confront the tragedy that has come from within.

The rediscovery of Central Europe is more than nostalgia for a lost innocence, more than “the invention of a tradition.”³ It is above all

an attempt to rethink the predicament of the area beyond official Marxist clichés as well as old nationalist stereotypes. Its starting point is often an attempt to reclaim a world that is lost, a culture that was and is fundamentally pluralist, the result of centuries of interaction between different cultural traditions.

CULTURE VS. NATIONALISM: FROM KOKOSCHKA TO MODIGLIANI

Odon von Horvath, author of the famous *Tales from the Vienna Woods* (1930), gave himself as a typical example of the Central European mix: “If you ask me what is my native country, I answer: I was born in Fiume, I grew up in Belgrade, Budapest, Pressburg, Vienna and Munich, and I have a Hungarian passport; but I have no fatherland. I am a very typical mix of old Austria-Hungary: at once Magyar, Croatian, German and Czech; my country is Hungary, my mother tongue is German.”⁴

Czesław Miłosz writes in a similar vein about the ethnic and linguistic mix of his hometown before the war: “The Poles say Wilno; the Lithuanians, Vilnius; the Germans and the Byelorussians, Wilna. The inhabitants of the town spoke either Polish or Yiddish; the other languages—Lithuanian, Byelorussian, Russian—were spoken only by small minorities.”⁵ Though the city was predominantly Catholic, there were also Jews, Calvinists, and Russian Orthodox.

Another Polish writer, Adam Zagajewski, was born in Lwów-Lemberg-Lvov in 1945 just as the Red Army moved in, and of the three possibilities to spell the name of the city, only one officially remained. Though too young to remember the cultural diversity that characterized the town of his ancestors, he writes about their forced departure from Lwów with the same sense of loss for the vanishing pluralist world of prewar Central Europe as do writers from the previous generation.⁶

The Central European city as a bridge and a divide now survives only in literature. Today Gdansk-Danzig is a Polish city identified with the birth of Solidarity, and few of its present-day inhabitants are even aware that it used to be a place of contact between Germans, Poles, and Katchubs (one of the oddest and most ancient of Central European minorities surviving on the margins of two worlds), described in *The Tin Drum* and other novels by Gunther Grass.

Prague, the birthplace of Franz Kafka and Jaroslav Hasek, the author of *The Good Soldier Schweik*, was a meeting ground of Czech, German, and Jewish cultures, with the latter often acting as a bridge across the Czech-German divide. Kafka's father's mother tongue was Czech but Kafka wrote in German. (To make things even more complicated, Czechs often had German names and vice versa.) "I am 'hinternational,'" wrote Johannes Urzidil, reminiscing in his *Prager Triptychon* on his Prague childhood. "One could live 'behind' nations [hinter is German for 'behind'] and not just below or above them."⁷

Prague as a cultural frontier, writes Central Europe's leading literary historian, Claudio Magris, was "felt by its inhabitants in their bodies as a wound."⁸ And Kafka as a German-speaking Jew in the Czech capital epitomizes the "in-betweenness" of the Jewish community caught between its traditional allegiance to Germanic culture (and language) and the new assertiveness of the Slavic nation of Central Europe.*

Perhaps no one has summed up more movingly the grandeur and the tragedy of that German-Jewish symbiosis than Elias Canetti, who in one of his wartime aphorisms says, "The language of my intellect will remain German—because I am a Jew. Whatever remains of the land that has been laid waste in every way—I want to preserve it in me as a Jew. *Their* destiny too is mine; but I bring along a universal human legacy as well. I want to give back to their language what I owe it. I want to contribute to their having something that others can be grateful for."⁹ (1944!)

It has been argued that the artistic and intellectual creativity of Central Europe was related not just to its mere ethnic diversity, but to the interaction and even the rivalries among the various national cultures. Here Canetti's words about his universalistic allegiance to the German language should be read in parallel with an essay by Béla Bartók written at the same time and entitled "Race and Purity in

*Since the late eighteenth century German was the lingua franca of enlightenment in Central Europe. Prague's Charles University, founded in 1348, and the University of Czernowitz, founded in 1875 in the far-off Austrian province of Bukovina, illustrate the changing status of that language in Central European universities. At Czernowitz (as in Königsberg, now Kaliningrad, the town of Kant and Hannah Arendt), German was the academic language, but the students included Jews, Romanians, Ukrainians, and Magyars. In Prague the University became divided along national lines with a Czech-speaking branch established in 1882 to which a certain professor Masaryk was called from Vienna.

Music.” The essay, written in 1942, transcended the problems of musicology per se. In sharp contrast to those for whom folklore was a means to exalt the supreme virtues of national distinctiveness, Bartók stressed “the continuous give and take of melodies” among the Hungarians, Slovaks, and Romanians over the centuries. “When a folk melody passes the language frontier of a people, sooner or later it will be subjected to certain changes determined by the environment and especially by the differences of language. The greater the dissimilarity between two languages in terms of accents, metrical conditions, syllabic structure and so on, the greater the changes that, fortunately, may occur in the ‘emigrated’ melody. I say fortunately because this phenomenon itself engenders a further increase in the number of types and sub-types”¹⁰

Thus in the process of spreading, musical elements (as well as other spheres of cultural life) become richer, more complex, offering new possibilities for artistic creativity. Bartók argued that the richness of Central European folk music was “the result of uninterrupted reciprocal influences” and concluded that “racial impurity” was therefore “definitely beneficial.”

The implications of Bartók’s insights might help explain the explosion of intellectual and artistic creativity in Central Europe since the turn of the century. In addition to the interaction of emerging and competing national cultures, there also existed a genuinely supranational or cosmopolitan outlook, often identified with the Jewish community. Many of the great names associated with Viennese *fin-de-siècle* cultural life were Jewish and not originally from Vienna: Freud, Mahler, Musil, and Husserl came from lands that are today part of Czechoslovakia.¹¹ Joseph Roth, the author of one of the finest novels about that period, *The Radetzky March*, came from Polish Galicia. Budapest, Prague, and Cracow were not just suburbs of Vienna, but rather part of a cultural network strongly connected with Vienna.

Hermann Broch suggested that, at the turn of the century, an “enlightened” Jewish bourgeoisie had replaced the Catholic aristocracy as the main force behind the development of a universalistic, cosmopolitan Central European culture. (The baroque tradition had been implanted in the far corners of the Habsburg Empire, leaving us architectural boundaries of Central Europe stretching from Prague to Vilnius and from Cracow to Ljubljana.) At the turn of the century,

the bearers of a common culture that was often German in form but universalistic in content were liberal, middle-class Jews caught between the Empire and the emerging nations.

The Austrian Empire was par excellence the embodiment of that supranational concept of Central Europe. Roth quipped: “All nations of the Empire could call themselves Austrian, except the Germans”; it was the last state based on a supranational idea which, as Franz Werfel put it, expected its citizens “to be not just Germans, Czechs or Poles, but to acquire a superior, universal identity.”¹² The disintegration of this culture (and of the above-mentioned German-Jewish symbiosis) coincided with the destruction of the Austrian Empire as a supranational state in the face of competing nationalisms.

The current rediscovery of that Central European culture thus also entails an implicit rejection of ethnic nationalism (and its by-product, anti-Semitism). It has little to do with the superficial nostalgia for an embellished imperial past illustrated by the popularity of the Viennese exhibition “Traum und Wirklichkeit” (later presented in Paris under the title “Vienne: l’Apocalypse Joyeuse”). Indeed, Viennese longing for the ersatz of a distant past tends to be all the more fervent when it coincides with a rather selective memory concerning more recent history (as the Waldheim case has shown). For Milan Kundera, as before for Stefan Zweig, the disintegration not only of a supranational state but also of a pluralist culture foreshadows the coming of a European crisis.¹³ It is a metaphor for a vanishing Europe whose spirit now survives only in the memory of those “unhappy few” Central European “Dichter und Denker” recovering from a double hangover: that of nationalism followed by that of communism.

The cultural and political rediscovery of the idea of Central Europe, which started in Budapest and Prague, has now also reached Vienna and Berlin. Karl Schlögel’s essay, appropriately called “The Middle Lies in the East” (*Die Mitte liegt ostwärts*), gave this rediscovery the most perceptive reading from Berlin.¹⁴ The overcoming of borders—real and imaginary—is understandably a highly attractive theme in a divided country in search of its identity.

The reinterpretation of German history became in the late 1980s the focus of a major political and intellectual debate. In East Germany it brought a rereading of Prussian history. In West Germany it focused on the “exceptionalism” of Nazism. But to reassess

modern German history in a wider European context requires, according to Schlögel, seeing it first of all as part of the history of Central and Eastern Europe—German history as the history of an eastward expansion: “One can deal with the history of Prussia only in connection with the history of Poland, and vice versa; with the history of the University of Leipzig, founded in 1409, only in connection with the earlier developments at the University of Prague; the founding of Berlin as part of the German settlement policy in the East; civilizing and Germanizing trends, both fruitful and catastrophic.”¹⁵

For these historical reasons, as well as contemporary political ones, German intellectuals tend to be more familiar and more involved in the Central European debate that originated in the East than their counterparts in London, Paris, or Madrid. Moreover, revising German history and reclaiming a Central European heritage raises questions about the motives involved, even (or especially) when they are not clearly stated. Many Eastern neighbors must have wondered what Peter Glotz, a leading spokesman for the Social Democratic party, meant when he advocated (in *Neue Gesellschaft*) that West Germany should act as “guarantor [*Machtgarant*] of Central European culture.”¹⁶

Schlögel’s and Glotz’s observations (like the recent East German rehabilitation of Prussian history), reflect the two traditional faces of German influence in Central Europe: a long history of interaction and the tendency to seek hegemony; a duality still present in Central European perceptions.¹⁷

Two Czech historians, Jan Kren and Vaclav Kural, authors of a major (*samizdat*) study of the subject, speak of a “community of destiny” in their survey of the often conflictual relationship between the Germans and the Slavic nations of East Central Europe.¹⁸ If one of the features of Central Europe is national fragmentation, the inadequacy of ethnic and state boundaries, then Germany too is an integral part of it. In this perspective the German minorities (*Volksdeutschtum*) are both an important component of the Central European space and an integral part of the German nation (*Gesamtvolk*).

In their Eastern neighbors the Germans evoked a mixture of fear and attraction, a model of Westernization and a threat of domination.¹⁹ On the one hand, the threat of Germanization was

very real. In the Habsburg Empire under Joseph II, it was assimilation through “enlightenment”: the German language gained supremacy in schooling and administration. In Poland, Germanization was carried out by the much more ruthlessly implemented Prussian *Kulturkampf* of Bismarck and later of Hitler.²⁰

Yet at the same time the German presence was also identified with modernization, the development of towns and the spread of Western civilization. In the words of Kren and Kural, “The same way France has long been identified with the idea of revolution, Germany represented in Central Europe a development model of industrial capitalism as well as its socialist alternative.”

With the other nations of Central Europe the Germans share a similar pattern of nation building: they are a *Kulturnation* in search of a political identity. Hence some of the common features of Central European nationalism were a feeling of insecurity, revealed in recurrent debates about the national character, and the tendency for nationalism to invade social and cultural life. But whereas in the German case the nation-building process in the nineteenth century led to the unification of Germany, for the Slavic nations from the Baltic to the Balkans it was centrifugal, leading to political fragmentation.

Although the nationalism of the Slavs developed in reaction to the rise of German (and Hungarian) nationalism, the Slavic pattern mirrored the German one: it was Herderian, romantic, and ethno-linguistic. A nation was defined by “ethnos,” by language, and an often mythicized version of its history.*

The conflict between these adverse—yet in some respects also similar—nationalisms (as well as the parallel conflict between Prussia and Austria over the solution of the German question) eventually brought about the destruction of Central Europe as a pluralist and multicultural society. The two phases of that disintegration coincided with the two world wars, which originated in Central Europe.

In the first stage, the very idea of *Mitteleuropa* as defined in Friedrich Naumann’s influential book published in 1915 became

*Guiding the initial phase in the early nineteenth century were ethnographers (such as Vuk Karadzic, expert on the folklore of the South Slavs and author of a famous ethnographic dictionary published in 1818), linguists (such as Josef Jungman, who compiled the first Czech dictionary), and romantic poets (Poland’s Mickiewicz was perhaps the most widely admired).

merely a code word for a German sphere of influence from the Rhine to the Danube or “from Berlin to Bagdad,” as Masaryk saw it.²¹ Especially for Poles the word *Mitteleuropa* remains associated with the German *Drang nach Osten*. This indeed was Masaryk’s reading of German intentions; “the New Europe” of independent democratic nations which he and R. W. Seton-Watson conceived of in London during World War I was precisely meant as an alternative to a German-dominated authoritarian *Mitteleuropa*.²²

The new Central Europe of 1918–1938 was conceived of not only without Germany but against it. A pro-Western buffer zone between Soviet Russia and Germany, it was the product of exceptional circumstances: the power vacuum created by the simultaneous World War I collapse of Germany and Russia. And it lasted only as long as these exceptional circumstances did.

In the 1930s Hitler used the German minorities to challenge the Versailles settlement and seek a new *Lebensraum* in the East. Conversely, when German domination was replaced by Soviet power, Stalin used the idea of protecting the Slavic nations against the common German enemy to legitimize his conquest. A policy of de-Nazification—identified with de-Germanization—became an instrument of Sovietization in Central Europe.

Munich in 1938 and Potsdam in 1945 provide two landmarks, two faces, of the break of Central European nations’ relations with Germany. It was a trauma not just for the Poles and the Czechs, who were the first victims of Nazi Germany’s expansionism, but also for the nations whose nationalism compromised itself with Germany. Hungary’s irredentism and opposition to the Versailles treaty boundaries helped to turn it into the last, if reluctant, ally of Hitler. The claims of the Romanians on Soviet-annexed Bessarabia led them to fight with Nazi Germany on the Eastern front. The anti-Czech nationalism of the Slovaks and the anti-Serbian separatism of the Croats led them to seek independence under the sponsorship of Nazi Germany.

The interwar concept was a Central Europe without Germany. The post-World War II concept was a Central Europe without Germans. The expulsion (or transfer, as it was called at the Potsdam conference in 1945) of over 10 million Germans was the main result of this policy: 6 million when Poland’s borders were shifted to the West (Pomerania, Silesia, and East Prussia); nearly 3 million from the

Czechoslovak Sudetenland; and several hundred thousand from Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia.²³ In Hungary, the German transfer was considered secondary to “the Transylvanian question” (the Hungarian minority in Romania) and the proposed “population exchange” with Slovakia. The Hungarian primate, Cardinal Mindszenty, expressed doubts about the wisdom of the expulsions. But in Poland and in Czechoslovakia, following the unspeakable suffering inflicted by the Germans during the war, the expulsions had the support of the overwhelming majority of the population. It was seen as a painful yet necessary outcome of a centuries-old conflict of which Hitler’s barbarism was the culminating point.

Thus, 1945 and the ensuing Soviet domination brought with it both a Stalinist “final solution” of the German problem and an end to the “private civil war” waged among Central European states since 1918. The method, as the common wisdom of the day had it, might not have been a very elegant one, but it seemed the necessary price for future peace in Europe.

For more than forty-five years, the main problem in Central Europe was less a German than a Russian one. This fact, as well as the current reexamination of nationalist ideologies of the past, has encouraged a reassessment of the trauma of 1945. Jan Josef Lipski, in a lucid and courageous analysis of Polish nationalism written at the height of the Solidarity period, invited the Poles to rethink their relationship with their neighbors. The expulsion of the Germans is for him “an injustice,” at best “a lesser evil” sanctioned only by “the necessity to organise the life of millions of Poles forced to leave their country” (the Eastern territories, now part of the Soviet Union). Lipski summed up on the Polish-German relationship as follows:

For centuries we’ve held many grudges against the Germans: German emperors used to invade our country to keep it in submission; the Teutonic knights were the nightmare of the Prussians, the Lithuanians, the Pomeranians and the Poles; Prussia, Russia and Austria divided the First Republic. National and religious persecutions in the lands occupied by Prussia already foreshadowed what was to come during World War Two. We shall not dwell on the enormity of Hitlerian crimes in Poland. Despite all this, since we identify with Christian ethics and European civilisation, somebody had to come and say concerning the Germans, “We forgive and ask for forgiveness.” In the dependent situation of our country, it was the highest independent moral author-

ity which said it: the Polish Church. Despite all our resentments, we must make this sentence ours.²⁴

Czech soul searching over the expulsion of the Germans is both more tormented and farther reaching in its conclusion. The issue was cautiously raised during the Prague Spring of 1968, but the real debate was only launched a decade later, with a samizdat essay by a Prague-based Slovak historian, and Charter 77 signatory Jan Mlynarik. Entitled "Thesis on the Expulsion of the Czechoslovak Germans," it sparked heated debate which focused on three issues challenging the hitherto accepted orthodoxy. First was the moral question: by endorsing the theory of "collective guilt," President Beneš, and more generally the whole Czech postwar political elite, broke with Masaryk's humanist principles on which democratic Czechoslovakia had been founded in 1918.²⁵

Next came a political problem. The expulsion of the Germans was the dubious centerpiece of Beneš's alliance with the Communists under Stalin's sponsorship. In the twentieth century, population transfers have been the specialty of two totalitarian great powers, Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. Mlynarik posed the question of whether by depriving its non-Slavic minorities of civic rights (including the right to vote) on ethnic grounds, the newly restored democratic Czechoslovakia was not in fact succumbing to the logic of exclusion characteristic of its two totalitarian neighbors. In other words, was not the expulsion of the Germans the first step in the slide toward the establishment of a totalitarian system in 1948?

Finally, there is the question of national identity. In his monumental *History of the Czech Nation*, Frantisek Palacky had argued that the "meaning" of Czech history was to be found in the interaction and rivalry of Czechs and Germans of Bohemia and Moravia. The expulsion of the Sudeten Germans put an end to that conflictual coexistence that went back to the thirteenth century and thus represented a radical caesura in the nation's history. What was supposed to be the meaning of Czech history, asked Czech historian Milan Hauner, now that its partner (adversary or interlocutor) had disappeared from the horizon?²⁶ Was not therefore, in this perspective, the expulsion of the Germans a Pyrrhic victory for the Czechs?

The question could apply not just to the Czechs; it holds for the whole of Central Europe. One of the essential features of Central

Europe was the historic presence there of Jewish and German minorities. Using Poland as the base for the Holocaust, Hitler destroyed the Jews. Stalin expelled the Germans. What was then supposed to be the meaning of *Central Europe* without two of its vital common denominators?

The complex Central European ethnic puzzle was simplified through murder, migration, and forced assimilation. What was left in 1945 was a series of ethnically “pure” states incorporated into the Soviet empire. The great dream of right-wing nationalists finally came through under the Communists.

Central Europe used to be about multinational states that claimed to be multinational. It was then turned into multinational states that claimed to be merely national. Finally, it became a series of nation-states which actually (almost) were ethnically homogeneous nation-states. Summing up this evolution, Ernest Gellner observed fittingly that Central Europe before the war resembled a painting by Kokoschka made of subtle touches of different shades; after the war it was turned into a painting by Modigliani, made of solid single-color patches.

It is in Central Europe that since the nineteenth century the conflict between two ideas of the nation and of culture has been the most acute. The first, inspired by the ideas of the French revolution, was a democratic, political definition of the nation as a community of citizens. The other was the German, romantic, “blood and soil” concept of the nation. Conversely, two ideas of European culture were at stake: the universalistic, humanist concept of European culture defined by Julien Benda as the “autonomy of the spirit” versus the concept of culture as identity, or *Volksgeist*, unique to each nation.²⁷

The transition from the “traditionalist,” ethnolinguistic or cultural, concept of the nation to the democratic idea of the political nation between 1848 and 1918, associated for Czechs, Hungarians, and Poles respectively with the names of Tomáš Masaryk, Oscar Jaszi, and Józef Pilsudski, was merely an apparent success. The noncorrespondence of ethnic and political borders, the permanent state of insecurity, the almost pathological fear for the “fate” of the national community, account for the persistence of a combination of defensive (*vis-à-vis* the Germans) and aggressive (*vis-à-vis* minorities, especially those that were Jewish) features of Central European

nationalism. Thus “the German hysteria,” as István Bibó described the rise of German nationalism from the trauma of the defeat at Iena to the 1930s, had also produced its East Central European counterparts. In this sense, Hitler, the Austrian, was also a product of Mitteleuropa.

Bibó, the Hungarian political thinker who became in the 1980s a key inspiration for independent-minded intellectuals in Hungary, wrote three seminal essays between 1943 and 1946: “The Reasons and the History of German Hysteria,” “The Jewish Question in Hungary,” and “The Misery of the Small East European States.” These are indeed the three closely intertwined components of “the tragedy of Central Europe.”

This tragedy did not start with the arrival of the Red Army in 1945 and the Sovietization that came with it. The Holocaust, the destruction on national grounds, had preceded destruction on a class basis. Totalitarianism from the Right prepared the ground for totalitarianism of the Left. It did not come just from without, from the East; it also came from within. In 1945 in Central Europe, all, even apparent victors, were in some way vanquished.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTITION

Reflecting, in the late 1940s, on the meaning of the postwar partition of Europe, the Polish historian Oscar Halecki introduced a subtle distinction to the conventional wisdom about Eastern and Western Europe. In his study *The Limits and Divisions of European History*,²⁸ Halecki observed that the Soviet expansion into Europe had pushed Western Europe into a close association with the United States and created a new Atlantic community. He daringly compared that trend with the period at the end of the first millennium when the Islamic conquest of Spain was offset by the extension of Christendom to Poland and Scandinavia. The development of the Atlantic dimension, which admittedly has for Western Europe gained after the war, could be seen as a compensation for the loss of “the other Europe.”

But Halecki’s most interesting insight, forty years ago, concerned the lasting cultural and historical division within each camp, the Western and the Soviet. Challenging the then dominant “bloc” approach, he distinguished between what he identified as West Central Europe, consisting of the defeated German-speaking coun-

tries, and East Central Europe, comprising the lands between Germany and Russia.

Twenty years later it would probably have been dismissed on the grounds that the experience of socialism in the form of an identical social, economic, and political system was allegedly reducing the difference between the Soviet Union and its allies. And to distinguish sharply between Western and West Central Europe seemed even more obsolete, given that old rifts had been healed by de Gaulle's partnership with Adenauer and that the West Germans were behaving like model pupils of the postindustrial society and the American way of life.

Today, however, the validity of Halecki's insight seems easier to confirm. The differences between what he called East Central Europe and Soviet Russia are as great as ever. In terms of history, and cultural and political traditions, the real Iron Curtain runs further East than commonly assumed—along the Russian border with the Baltic countries.*

The 1980s have also revealed a growing latent dissatisfaction in West Germany with its postwar Atlantic identity. The debates there on the Central European theme often combine anti-Americanism (and Gorbomania) with a dose of *Heimat* provincialism.²⁹ The renewed discussion of the German question and the priority given to relations with East Germany; the loosening of old-fashioned ideological stereotypes about the East bloc, used too often as a negative legitimation for an insecure democracy; and the "Euro-missiles" controversy, with the two Germanies stockpiling weapons over which they had no control, have all contributed to the ongoing reassessment of Germany's role in Europe. In this context, Germany's rediscovery of Central Europe, of cultural and economic affinities with its Eastern neighbors, became compensation for its eroding Western (Atlantic) self-definition.

In 1987 the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (associated with the Social Democratic party) organized a conference entitled "*Mitteleuropa*: Dream, Nightmare, Reality." On the invitation was a map of the two

*What is the difference between Poland and the Baltic countries in their relations to Moscow? Five years. Now that on the fiftieth anniversary of the Nazi-Soviet pact the illegitimacy of Soviet rule in the Baltic has been exposed, the Baltic states' demands for greater autonomy combine with their return to Central Europe and the gradual restoration of relations with their main historical partners, the Poles and the Germans.

Germanies, Poland, the Baltic countries, and the former lands of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Karl Schlögel, one of the speakers at the conference, said that the word *Mitteleuropa* should be a “provocation” in front of “the wall in our heads.” The term certainly represents an unspoken farewell to the postwar settlements.

Here cultural trends clearly blend with political aspirations. The interaction between East and West Central Europe has developed in at least two areas where the spillover into politics is obvious: one is the growing concern about the environment; the other is the parallel search for alternatives to the partition of Europe.

The Greening of Central Europe

Acid rain; the slow death of the Central European forests; the hotly contested plan to build two dams on the Danube in Hungary, Austria, and Slovakia; and the fallout from Chernobyl brought into the open the scale of the ecological disaster facing the area as well as the realization that environmental issues are oblivious to borders. The cooperation of the Greens in the two Germanies has spread to the whole of Central Europe, especially Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, and Slovenia.

Perhaps nowhere today is popular concern over the environment so acute, so desperately felt as a matter of survival, as in Central Europe. It is undoubtedly the most polluted area in the industrial world, with East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and some areas of Poland on the verge of ecological disaster. In 1982, East Central Europe (excluding the Soviet Union) emitted over 40 million tons of sulphur dioxide, well over double the amount of the European Community countries.³⁰ Pollution is sometimes associated with level of industrial development, but the German case disproves the theory: though its industrial development is much lower, East Germany's per capita sulphur dioxide pollution (the highest in Europe) is four times higher than that of West Germany.

According to a 1983 study by the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, a third of the forests in the Western half of the country are dead or dying and another third are at risk. If urgent measures are not taken, 30 percent of all animal life and 50 percent of all plant life will be threatened. A third of all rivers are biologically dead. The water is contaminated with a high level of nitrates. Nearly half of the

country's population lives in ecologically devastated areas. Prague is one of them.

According to an official report, the average amount of fly-ash fallout in greater Prague is between 220 and 240 metric tons per square kilometer. The top values sometimes exceed 1,000 metric tons per square kilometer. Moreover, fly ash contains high concentrations of heavy metals and other poisonous elements. Recently a two-stage warning system, which goes into effect when pollution reaches dangerous levels, was introduced in the Czechoslovak capital.

These official documents have been made public by the Charter 77 movement, which in 1987 released a lengthy document entitled "Let the People Breathe."³¹ According to the charter, whose documents are not known for excessive dramatization, the situation has reached a point where "national survival" is at stake.

One of the issues that has most inflamed public passion and also provoked the best-organized opposition is the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros hydroelectric power station currently under construction. The whole landscape between the Slovak capital of Bratislava and the Hungarian city of Budapest is to be "reshaped"—destroyed say the Hungarian Greens. Their fears range from water pollution in Budapest to a flood threat posed to the city in the event of an accidental break in the dam. They also point to the likely disappearance of the Hungarian rural communities on the Slovak side of the Danube and question the financial wisdom of a venture whose main purpose seems to be to secure cheap electricity for Vienna.

Between 1984 and 1986 the unofficial Hungarian environmental movement, called the Danube Circle, gathered thousands of signatures of people protesting the construction of the dam. In the spring of 1986, the Hungarian police broke up a joint demonstration of Austrian and Hungarian environmental activists on the site of the planned power station. But the situation changed in the post-Kádár era: the Greens not only acquired the right of city, but their campaign, fueled by the democratization process in the country, eventually made an impact. First Parliament, and then the government, was brought to reexamine the issue. Whereas under Kádár it seemed impossible for Hungary to back down from an agreement with neighboring countries not to antagonize Czechoslovakia, such a decision became a possibility, even a necessary concession, for a retreating Communist government facing transition to a multiparty

system. To be sure, the Hungarian decision to cancel the project contributed to the growing tension between the two countries because of their conflicting domestic policies, to Dubček's interview on Hungarian television, which could be seen in Slovakia, or to the Hungarian party's self-criticism of its involvement in the suppression of the Czechoslovak Spring of 1968; but it will remain as the first major victory of an independent Green movement in East Central Europe.

The Greens' conception of grass-roots "antipolitics," based on concrete issues, and the distrust of party machines and the circumvention of the state bureaucracy appeal especially to young people who feel alienated from the regime but do not belong to the political opposition and the milieu of "dissident" intellectuals. The development of single-issue politics and the "greening" of Central Europe became one of the major developments of the 1980s. Yet it will be interesting how it will fare in the context of the current return of "real" politics: will it lose its specific identity and become absorbed by the transition to a pluralist, democratic political system, or will it seek institutionalization on its own on the West German model?

The Uses and Abuses of the German Question

The second area in which the concerns of Europeans on both sides of the divide converged or partially overlapped was the relationship between disarmament and the issue of the partition of Europe. In the context of missile deployments in both East and West Central Europe in the first half of the 1980s, cooperation involved Western (particularly German, but also British and Scandinavian) peace movements and dissidents from "the other Europe." It started as a debate about the meaning of détente, peace, and human rights; it turned into a reassessment of Yalta, the Central European status quo, and the German question.

Reflecting on the connection between Soviet domination of his country and the division of Germany, former Charter 77 spokesman Jiri Dienstbier wrote:

Long after the war, the division of Germany served the internal consolidation of the Stalinist regimes. After the terrible experiences of the war, many anti-communists accepted an anti-German and pro-Soviet political orientation as a lesser evil. . . . The events of 1968 dealt

a heavy blow to this way of thinking, especially since, unbelievably and perhaps thoughtlessly, the East Germany army took part in the invasion, so that for the first time since the Second World War a German Army entered a foreign territory. . . . The unification of Germany is still a spectre which haunts Europe.³²

Since 1945, the Soviet bloc leaders have justified the division of Europe by conjuring the bogey of German “revanchism.” There were the “good” de-Nazified Germans building socialism in East Germany, and there were the “bad” Germans, in the Federal Republic presented as nostalgics of the Third Reich.

However strong the anti-German feeling initially was, especially in Poland and Czechoslovakia, it gradually gave way to anti-Russian sentiment. The realities of Soviet domination and the emergence of West German *Ostpolitik* help account for this evolution. There was also growing popular aversion to government manipulation of the German issue to justify the unjustifiable. The Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia was presented as a prevention of a “revanchist plot” (even the Russian soldiers expected to fight the Germans). In Poland the repression against students in March 1968 was accompanied by denunciations of an alleged “Germano-Zionist” conspiracy. There was a strange innovation on the part of official propaganda: could waning anti-German feeling be propped up by anti-Semitism? Tadeusz Walichnowski, head of the police academy in Warsaw, obviously thought so when he published a book entitled *Israel and the FRG*, in which most dubious parallels were made. In short, until 1967, Israel was accused by the official propaganda of behaving like the German revanchists. After the Six-Day War the Germans were accused of behaving like Israelis!

The anti-German rhetoric gradually died down, however, in the post-1969 atmosphere of détente and Chancellor Brandt’s *Ostpolitik*. Following the signing of treaties recognizing the Oder-Neisse border with Poland in 1970, Western recognition of the GDR in 1972, a treaty with Czechoslovakia describing as null and void the Munich Agreement in 1973, and simply in view of the fact that the Federal Republic was led by an anti-Nazi Nobel Peace Prize winner, the “German threat” argument became out of date. And it seems likely to remain so unless Chancellor Kohl’s preelectoral appearances at gatherings of Silesian refugees under the banner “*Schlesien bleibt*

unser” (Silesia is ours) give occasionally unexpected ammunition to tired propagandists. Or unless the prospect of a reunified Germany revives old fears.

The thinking behind German Ostpolitik was that, in the aftermath of 1968, one had to accept the status quo in order to be able to transform it in the long run, and the existing borders in order to make them more permeable. The inter-German approach was extended to the whole of Central Europe. Détente between states, it was assumed, would also help to bring about internal improvements in the Soviet bloc countries.

Note that there was gradual improvement, not fundamental change. The basic tenet of the German, particularly the Social Democratic party’s concept of détente, was that inter-German relations constituted a model for the coexistence of the two Europes.³³ Now the Central European idea became a useful extension of the model: it helps, as Pierre Hassner put it, to “Europeanize” the German problem or, if you prefer, to “Germanize” the European question. Hence the idea of a web of mutual dependence and joint responsibility for peace in Central Europe. This, of course, has an economic dimension (trade, credits), of which the East Germans, but also the Poles in the 1970s and the Hungarians in the 1980s, have been the prime beneficiaries.³⁴

The “security partnership” was considered the centerpiece of this policy: the draft treaty on the ban of chemical weapons that was signed between the SPD and the East German Communist party was presented as an example to be followed in the whole of Central Europe. The SPD’s signing, in 1987, of a joint ideological platform with the very orthodox and anti-*perestroika* East German ruling party was presented as an even higher stage in this development: the bridging of the historical divide between Communists and Social Democrats as a step toward overcoming the ideological partition of Germany and of Europe. Totally underestimating the illegitimacy of the East German regime, the SPD, in dealing with the ruling Communist parties, has gone further than most Western Communist parties. And in view of the massive rejection of SPD ideology and policies by the East German people and even attempts to recreate a Social Democratic party in East Berlin, the SPD line appears to be not only an irrelevant but a pathetic illustration of the shortsightedness of *realpolitik*.

It also reflects a major misjudgment of the linkage between the German and the Russian question in Central Europe. The rapprochement between the two Germanies, between West Central and East Central Europe, depends on West Germany's understanding with the Soviet Union. This general point requires two qualifications. First, although launched in the late 1960s by a Brandt-led SPD, the basic features of Ostpolitik were followed when the Christian Democrats came to power in the 1980s. The staying power of Genscher symbolizes that continuity. Second, East Germany has often been considered merely a Soviet pawn in Soviet West German policy. Now, in the Gorbachev era, with East Berlin's stability unsettled from the West, from the East the effects of *glasnost* and perestroika, but also from below, the value of the pawn may decline to a point where a "for sale" sign will have to be put up. Meanwhile, the East German regime appears as an actor in the Moscow–Bonn–East Berlin triangle, whose relative autonomy has faded proportionally to the exposure of its fragility.

Stability in the neighboring lands of so-called real socialism used to be considered a vital precondition for inter-German rapprochement. Change was meant to be so gradual as to be acceptable to Moscow. In the 1970s relations with the Gierek regime in Poland was often presented as the perfect illustration of the low-key approach to détente at work. The emergence of Solidarity was its paradoxical and most unexpected by-product, and Jaruzelski's military coup certainly marked its demise. Poland's "self-limiting" revolution of 1980-1981 was anathema to the German concept of détente, and the Poles remember that on December 13, 1981, the primary concern of Helmut Schmidt and Eric Honecker was that General Jaruzelski's military coup not spoil their progress in inter-German relations. The restoration of "order" and "stability" in Warsaw was perceived in both Germanies as a prerequisite for the pursuit of *Deutschlandpolitik* and for East-West détente. Now with a Solidarity-led government in Poland, the promoters of this approach have been overtaken by events and left in the cold. A similar point could be made about the recent changes in the GDR: they might have been indirectly helped by the legacy of the above-mentioned "realistic" approach to Ostpolitik. The result completely disproves the SPD theories about East Germany and invalidates a concept of inter-German relations between states at the expense of society. All the more so in the case of an

artificial state such as East Germany. After fifteen years of Ostpolitik from above comes reunification from below.

There were two types of responses in East Central Europe to this German-centered concept of *détente*. One was very suspicious toward the concept of stability of neighboring countries. The other was the conviction that since in the West only the Germans actually mind the East-West divide, there should be a parallel search for alternatives to the partition of Germany and of Europe.

Overcoming Yalta without a Return to Rapallo?

Is Eastern Europe under the shadow of a new Rapallo? This was the most provocative question Hungarian philosophers Ágnes Heller and Ferenc Fehér raised in an essay assessing the meaning of what the authors saw as the “neutralist” drift of the German Left for the countries of the other Europe.³⁵ According to their reading, the “ecolo-pacifism” and neutralism of the Left is merely German nationalism in disguise; the real goal is German unity at the price of “self-Finlandization.” A drawing together of the two Germanies in a neutralized Central Europe implies American withdrawal from Europe. It can only be achieved on terms acceptable to the Soviets, since for geographical reasons there can be no real equivalence between American and Soviet withdrawal. Moreover, it would provide for the Soviets a “necessary *cordon sanitaire*” around an unruly East Central Europe. In other words, such an approach has many drawbacks and few very hypothetical advantages: it could mean a Finlandization or a “Hong-Kongization” in the West and improved stability in the East.

“A new Rapallo—why not?” asked Rudolf Bahro, the East German dissident, now active in the West German Green movement. For the German Left the price of such an arrangement might well be acceptable, especially in the Gorbachev era. But, as Fehér and Heller have argued, such an inter-German and Soviet-German attempt to heal the wounds of Yalta would most likely take place over the heads of the Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians.

East and West German attitudes toward Solidarity and even more toward martial law have confirmed in Warsaw the suspicion that, as often in history, a German-Russian rapprochement could only be anti-Polish. The Polish opposition journal *Nowa Koalicja* (New Coalition) favors cooperation of dissidents from all over Central Europe, but leaves the GDR out of the “new coalition” considering

that “the natural representative of the interests of East German citizens is the German Federal Republic,” in other words, a Central Europe preferably without the Germans. This view is strengthened by the widespread impression the Poles have had since 1981 that inter-German rapprochement tends to ignore Polish aspirations for freedom. Now that Solidarity has (and that perhaps the SPD may) come to power, this legacy may have repercussions for the relations between the two countries: German realpolitik giving overriding priority to state-to-state relations (as opposed to contacts with society) has proved in the long run not to be the most realistic policy. This Polish mistrust of Germany has by no means vanished with the recent changes in Moscow, Warsaw, and East Berlin. In the words of Adam Michnik, “The end of the Stalino-Brezhnevite order in Central Europe has paradoxically reinforced in Poland the obsessive fear of a new Sovieto-German variant against the interests of Poland.”³⁶

One of the most significant documents in the launching of the Central European debate on the link between the German question and the overcoming of the division in the heart of Europe was the *Prague Appeal*, published by Charter 77 signatories in 1985 on the eve of the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II:

We cannot ignore the existence of certain taboos. One of them is the division of Germany. If we cannot, in the perspective of the unification of Europe, deny anybody the right to unification, this applies to the Germans too. This right should not be used at the expense of others nor should its use disregard their fears. Let us declare unequivocally that the solution cannot lie in any kind of revision of the present European borders. In the context of a European rapprochement, borders should become less important, and not provide the occasion for nationalist relapses. Let us nevertheless recognize the Germans’ right to decide freely if—and under what form—they desire the union of their two states within their present borders. As an extension of Bonn’s agreement with its Eastern neighbors and of the Helsinki agreement, the signing of a peace treaty with Germany could become a significant instrument in a positive transformation of Europe.³⁷

The main idea of the *Prague Appeal* was that Germany is no longer dangerous, while the partition of the continent into two antagonistic military blocs is. This became the basis for a dialogue between Western pacifists and Eastern dissidents that centered on the connection between peace and human rights. The result was a joint

document submitted to the delegations at the Third Helsinki Review Conference in Vienna in November 1986.³⁸

This document is remarkably revealing about East-West intellectual and political communication in the 1980s. The result of a trade-off between the concerns of Western peace activists and those of dissidents, the *Appeal* can be considered as the manifesto of the “greening” of Central Europe. Its common starting point is the rejection of the Western habit of identifying Europe with the European Community and, conversely, of calling Eastern Europe the countries that “by geography as well as political and cultural traditions belong to Central Europe.”

The link between peace and human rights came clearly from the dissidents: the idea of a *détente* “from below” involving societies rather than governments. Indeed, the document suggests that the measure of East-West *détente* between states is the degree to which *détente* exists between state and society.

The Western pacifists’ input was the symmetrical treatment of the two superpowers, one involved in Afghanistan, the other in Central America. Their military industrial complexes are the main source of conflict. The document suggests that both withdraw their troops and missiles so that Europe can break free of its bipolar straitjacket and become a place where all peoples and nations “have the possibility to organise their mutual relations as well as their internal political, economic and cultural affairs in a democratic and self-determined way. It should be clear that the German question is a European question and therefore efforts to solve it should be part of a democratic programme to overcome the bloc structure in Europe.”³⁹ It was the first joint document conceived across East-West as well as East-East borders and concerned not just a protest or a commemoration of a particular event but an alternative vision of Europe.

A Central Europe under the double ecological and military threats of two parallel systems of domination—that seems to be the German Greens’ contribution to the Central European *Zeitgeist* of the 1980s. The United States and the Soviet Union are often perceived as external, non- or at most semi-European powers. “What were once role models have become mere guardians,” said Peter Bender, whose writings on Germany and the “Europeanization of Europe” should be read along with György Konrád’s critique of “the Yalta legacy.”

Central Europe is a laboratory for the competitive decadence of the two rival alliances.

Fundamental differences appeared, of course, between Western peaceniks and Eastern dissidents. In his famous 1985 essay “The Anatomy of a Reticence,” Václav Havel discussed why the political naiveté and utopianism of the former are not easily swallowed in a Central Europe long since grown allergic to any promises of a “radiant tomorrow.” The very word *peace*, because of its place in the official ideology and propaganda, arouses “distrust, skepticism, ridicule, and revulsion” in the population, says Havel—distaste not for the goal of peace but for its official association with the “struggle against Western imperialism.”

Other voices among the dissidents’ proclaimed that the alleged symmetry between the two superpowers and the two political systems is based on false premises. Not only is there no geographical symmetry between the United States and the Soviet Union vis-à-vis Europe, but as Janos Kis noted, the nature of the two systems cannot be compared either.

Why have so many dissident intellectuals been prepared to put aside their “reticence” toward the Western Left and get involved in what might seem to be a dubious dialogue? One pragmatic reason is that, for most of the 1980s, “peace and human rights” seemed the only game in town. In the 1970s, calls for human rights were voiced within the Helsinki framework of East-West détente; in the mid-1980s they had to be presented in the context of the dominant East-West issue of the moment, the superpower arms race. After “no détente without human rights,” the slogan of the 1980s became “peace and freedom are indivisible.”

As prospects for internal change, after the crushing of Solidarity, seemed distant, the focus of peoples’ hopes for the better part of the 1980s tended to switch to external factors. The loosening of the Soviet grip, it was hoped, could be fostered by a mutual disengagement from the center of Europe by the two superpowers. The way to overcome “the Yalta legacy” is through the denuclearization of a “neutralized” Central Europe. Seen from Paris, this looks like a nightmare raising the specter of German reunification. But seen from Prague, Budapest, and above all East Berlin, *neutralism* is by no means a dirty word.

All this is now being overtaken by the pace of change in East Central Europe. In the Gorbachev era the Green discourse, or “antipolitics,” has been overtaken by the upsurge of democratic politics, which after Poland and Hungary has now reached East Germany and Czechoslovakia. After the Central Europe of nostalgia associated with a search for a historical-cultural identity and the Central Europe of utopia in the guise of denuclearized neutrality, now comes a time for a political concept of Central Europe as an answer to the current process of dismantling communism and de-Sovietizing the Western periphery of the Soviet empire. The combination of the massive exodus and of mass protest in East Germany has now made explicit the connection between political change in East Central Europe and the German question. The idea of Central Europe as part of a wider process of Europeanizing Europe is not devoid of ambiguities and misunderstandings. All the main protagonists—the democratic opposition, the Germans and, of course, Mikhail Gorbachev—have their hidden agendas. For the democratic opposition in East Central Europe, the agenda is primarily a quest for autonomy, for emancipation from the Soviet empire. In West Germany, the new interest in Mitteleuropa is related to the search for a solution to the German question, which entails greater distance from the United States and the West. At the same time it implies a degree of understanding with the Soviet Union. The fact that these different concepts of Central Europe, east and west of the political divide, have been rediscovered almost simultaneously does not imply that they are compatible (let alone desirable).

A middle Europe emerges which does not match up with either of the two competing visions of Europe: that of a unified West European market after 1992 (with its de facto barriers between East and West) and that of Gorbachev’s “common European house” stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals. Rather, it is a third Europe, straddling the two Cold War alliances as their internal cohesion and perhaps their *raison d’être* deteriorate. What would be the role of the Warsaw Pact with a democratic Poland and a neutral Hungary? As for NATO, it used to be said that this alliance was meant to “keep the Soviets out, the Americans in, and the Germans down.” The prospect of German reunification would for all practical purposes mean the end of the Atlantic alliance.

The future shape of this reemerging of Central Europe will depend on the linking of the democratization process in East Central Europe with the German question. With the Berlin Wall coming down and *Unter den Linden* no longer enjoying the status of the most spacious deadend street in Europe, it must have dawned on even the most Stalinoid *apparatchiks* in the Prague bunker that their days are numbered. There seems to be a domino effect in the disintegration of Communist rule in East Central Europe. And when Prague goes, the de-Sovietization of the area will become irreversible. The Germans are the European nation with the deepest long-term interest in altering the postwar status quo. It is also the nation best equipped to fill the Central European power vacuum and thus to recover its traditional sphere of economic and cultural influence in the area. This change would, of course, ultimately depend on Soviet consent, which means keeping German political ambitions toned down.

But how would Germany's Eastern neighbors see the return of Germany? Though all compete for German economic involvement, they are watching with some concern that the reunification debate bring with it also the question of the borders, especially when they hear statements—admittedly not the most widespread—such as those of Theo Weigel, the finance minister in Chancellor Kohl's government: "The German Reich in its 1937 borders still exists in law. . . . The territories East of the Oder-Neisse border are an integral part of the German question. . . . It will remain open legally, politically and historically so long as there will be no peace treaty."⁴⁰ Such statements are bound to refuel old anxieties of the Eastern neighbors about a greater Germany which once stretched "from the Meuse unto Memel, the Tyrol to the Baltic sea." West Germany's self-limitations, its capacity to articulate the opening to the East with its role in the European Community will be decisive in the shaping of East Central European attitudes to German reunification.

Adam Michnik, the editor of *Gazeta*, put the Polish view (but one could extend it to others as well) this way: "The Polish minimum for German-Polish relations must today be formulated as follows: the reunification is a matter for the Germans themselves, but also for all the nations which have payed [sic] with their blood the crushing of the Third Reich. It thus depends on the guarantee that the Germans can never be a threat for anybody." It is with this in mind that Michnik made perhaps the most explicit statement by a Pole in favor

of German reunification: "It is our duty to state that the Germans have the right to have a state corresponding to their own wishes."⁴¹ Michnik admits that his is a minority view in Poland, but his view is an act of faith in the capacity of democracy in Central Europe to overcome the old demons of nationalism.

An East Central Europe stabilized with West Central European (German and Austrian) assistance would be a double-edged weapon. On the one hand it would challenge West European cohesion and America's commitment to Western Europe. Gorbachev is a master at using the internal weaknesses of his empire as foreign policy assets in Western Europe: the process of de-Sovietization would be "compensated" for by German neutralism and American isolationism. Gorbachev's "common European house" would be a more fragmented one and one more open to change. It would also be a Europe that would have room for Russia but not for America.

On the other hand, a neutralized Central Europe, by reducing what Moscow perceived as an external threat to the Soviet Union, could facilitate democratic change in East Central Europe. The end of the Yalta system implies the symmetrical decay of the two alliances and the overcoming of the partition of Europe and of Germany. But it leaves open the question of what is to come in its stead: a new Central Europe as a community of nations between Germany and Russia or a new version of Mitteleuropa as a German sphere of influence.

ENDNOTES

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³Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

⁴Quoted in Jean Claude François, *Histoire et fiction dans le théâtre d'Odon von Horvath* (Grenoble: Presse Universitaire, 1978), 31.

⁵Among the numerous writings by Mitosz on the multicultural uniqueness of the Baltic countries, see chap. 9 of his *Captive Mind* (London: Secker and Kasburg, 1953) and his novel *The Issa Valley* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1981).

⁶Adam Zagajewski, "Nekde i nikde" (Somewhere and Nowhere), *150 00 SLOV* (17) (1987): 32–34.

- ⁷Johannes Urzidil, *Le Triptique de Prague* (Paris, 1988).
- ⁸Claudio Magris, "La Mitteleuropa et ses rêves," in *La Lettre Internationale* (20) (1989).
- ⁹Elias Canetti, *The Human Province* (London: Peador), 53, or (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1986).
- ¹⁰Béla Bartók, *Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), 29–32.
- ¹¹Michael Ignatieff, "The Rise and Fall of Vienna's Jews," *New York Review of Books*, 29 June 1989.
- ¹²In F. Werfel's words, "The idea of the Austrian Empire required from the men who composed it their own transformation . . . It implied that they were not just Germans, Czechs, Poles but men with a higher, universal, identity . . . The renunciation of the unlimited affirmation of the self . . ." In F. Werfel, *Aus der Dämmerung einer Welt*, quoted by V. Belohradsky in his essay "La precession de la légalité ou l'Empire d'Autriche comme métaphore," *Le Messager Européen* (1): (1987): 252.
- ¹³Stefan Zweig, *Le Monde d'hier* (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1948) (first ed. in German, 1944).
- ¹⁴Karl Schlögel, *Die Mitte liegt ostwärts* (Berlin: W. J. Seidler, 1986).
- ¹⁵Schlögel in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21 February 1987.
- ¹⁶See also Peter Glotz, "Deutsch-bohmische Kleinigkeiten oder: Abgerissene Gedanken über Mitteleuropa," *Neue Gesellschaft* (7) (1986): 584–85.
- ¹⁷Claus Hammel's play *Die Preussen Kommen* was first performed in Berlin in January 1986.
- ¹⁸A substantial part of Kren and Kural's study was published under the title *Integration oder Ausgrenzung, Deutsche und Tschechen, 1890–1945* (Bremen: Donat & Temmen, 1986).
- ¹⁹In 1945 A. J. P. Taylor wrote: "No one can understand the Germans who do not appreciate their anxiety to learn from, and to imitate, the West; but equally no one can understand the Germans who does not appreciate their determination to exterminate the East." In *The Course of German History* (London: Methuen, 1982), 3.
- ²⁰See Sylvia P. Forgas, "German Nationality Policies in Poland: from Bismarck to Hitler," *East European Quarterly* (March 1986).
- ²¹T. G. Masaryk, *Nova Evropa* (Prague: G. Dubsy, 1924) (written in 1917).
- ²²H. Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe* (London: Methuen, 1983).
- ²³Alfred M. de Zayas in *Nemesis at Potsdam, The Anglo-Americans and the Expulsion of the Germans* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977) gives somewhat inflated figures for the transfer. The disappearance of German minorities is now being contemplated with the dramatic surge in the number of ethnic Germans emigrating from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. As many as 600,000 of an estimated 3 million ethnic Germans remaining there are expected to settle in West Germany by 1990. Gorbachev's easing of restrictions as well as

economic collapse in Poland and the repressive policies of the Romanian government have turned the flow of migrants into a flood. While assimilation of East German refugees in West Germany is relatively easy, that of Germans from East Central Europe is proving difficult, providing a focus for the campaign for the extreme nationalism of the Republican party.

- ²⁴Jan Josef Lipski, "Examen de conscience," *Esprit* (1987) (first published by the NOWA samizdat press in Warsaw in 1986).
- ²⁵Jan Mlynarik (Danubius), "Tézy o vysídlení Československých Němcov," *Svědectví* (57) (1978): 105–34.
- ²⁶See Milan Hauner, "The Meaning of Czech History: Masaryk vs. Pekar," paper presented at the T. G. Masaryk conference at London University 13–16 December 1986 (publication forthcoming).
- ²⁷See the first part of Alain Finkielkraut's essay *La défaite de la pensée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987). On Herder's view of the Slavs, see chap. 16 in his *Idées pour la philosophie de l'histoire de l'humanité* (Paris: Aubier, 1962).
- ²⁸Oscar Halecki, *The Limits and Divisions of European History* (London and New York: Sheed & Ward, 1950).
- ²⁹Anti-Americanism and Gorbymania are abundantly documented by opinion polls of the past five years. Although a clear "majority" does not want American troops to leave, 79 percent want all nuclear weapons eliminated from Western Europe. See Josef Joffe, "Les Allemands et leur sécurité," *Libération*, 11 April 1989.
- ³⁰See Jan Winiecki, *Economic Prospects—East and West* (London: Centre for Research into Communist Economics, 1987).
- ³¹"Let the People Breathe: Czechoslovakia's Ecological Crisis," *East European Reporter* (3) (1987): 15–20.
- ³²"Pax Europeana (On the Thinkable and the Unthinkable)," *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* (1) (1985), quoted by Peter Brandt and Gunter Minnerup, in "Eastern Europe and the German Question," *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* (July–October 1987): 8. For a more elaborate Czech view of the German problem, see Alexander Ort, *Evropský dum 1989* (Prague: Samizdat, 1989), 57–66.
- ³³See Pierre Hassner's essay on the two Germanies in the context of East-West relations in the *Revue française de sciences politiques* (June 1987).
- ³⁴See an unpublished paper by Centre d'études prospectives et d'informations internationales, "L'Effet Habsbourg" (December 1986 and June 1987). The study examined the resurfacing of traditional patterns of trade in the economic relations of Austria and Germany, with the countries of East Central Europe.
- ³⁵Ferenc Fehér and Ágnes Heller, *Eastern Europe under the Shadow of a New Rapallo* study no. 6 (Wien: Research Project Crises in Soviet-type Systems, 1984).
- ³⁶A. Michnik in *Der Spiegel*, 16 October 1989.
- ³⁷The *Prague Appeal* was published in *La Nouvelle Alternative* (1) 1986: 32–33.
- ³⁸The manifesto was signed by leading dissidents in Czechoslovakia (Havel, Benda, Simecka, Uhl), in Hungary (Kis, Konrád, Haraszti, and Demszky), in East Germany (Templin, Eppelmann, Poppe), and in Poland (Onyszkiewicz, Romas-

zewski, Lipski, Czaputowicz—but not Kuron and Michnik), noted in *East European Reporter* (1987).

³⁹Published in the *East European Reporter*.

⁴⁰Quoted in K. Christitch and D. Audibert, “Faut-il une seule Allemagne?” *Le Point*, 23 September 1989.

⁴¹A. Michnik in *Der Spiegel*, 16 October 1989.

In an interview with the author (in Rome on 28 October 1989) Michnik gave three reasons for coming out in favor of German unity: (1) as a nation that has been partitioned for over a century, Poland cannot wish partitioning on anybody else; (2) one cannot call for a reunified Europe without Germany being reunified in one form or another; (3) it is necessary to take away from the Communists their last nationalist argument for an alliance with Moscow. Democratic change in the GDR will mean that West German funds, that Poles or Hungarians, are likely to be “diverted” to East Germany. This is not likely to strengthen popular support for German reunification in neighboring countries of East Central Europe.

The visit of Chancellor Kohl to Poland in November 1989 highlighted the impact of the question of German reunification on Polish-German relations. First, the visit was preceded by a controversy about a planned visit to the German community. The actual visit was heralded in Bonn as “historic”: the meeting of two Christian Democrats, Kohl and Mazowiecki, was meant to be the equivalent for German-Polish reconciliation of de Gaulle’s meeting with Adenauer for Franco-German relations. Yet meanwhile history was made in the streets of East Berlin. The West German chancellor interrupted his visit to Poland to be in Berlin for the opening of the Wall. German reunification clearly had precedence over Polish reunification.

The Polish government merely stated that the question of German reunification should not imply changes in existing borders; it should be placed in a “European context” so that it would not “threaten European security” (reported in *Le Monde*, 12–13 November 1989).