

Boris Dubin

Virtual Europe and the other Europe

The global and the local in East European intellectuals' identity

Chronologically, the scope of this article is limited to the four and a half decades that elapsed between the end of the war and the disappearance of the socialist bloc, which was followed by a process of European integration. Assessments of this period vary widely in East European (or, according to a different terminology, Central European) countries and among their political and cultural elites. At first glance, there seems to be no scope for discussing globalization here. That idea took shape in the Western social sciences and media at the turn of the 1990s, among other reasons, in response to the East European revolutions, German unification and the disintegration of the USSR, which gave many people a sense of living in a world without borders and without enemies. Moreover, because of the iron curtain that used to divide Europe, the earlier stage of European globalization (or proto-globalization), Americanization, which Talcott Parsons considered to be the main tendency in Western Europe's post-war development,¹ also barely affected intellectual circles in the USSR's satellite countries. They scarcely perceived the United States either as a positive role-model

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or as something repulsive (aside from demonstrations of servility towards the Soviet regime and its official ideological and foreign policy line, a topic that falls outside the scope of this study). In short, it seems as if the phenomenon of globalization, or rather, the very idea of globalization such as it was elaborated in the Western social sciences and journalism, only came to be seen as relevant among East Europe's educated circles much later (if at all), towards the end of the 1990s. As I hope to show, this is not entirely true.

Globalization and modernization

Theoreticians of globalization² usually stress the intentional and instrumental aspects of the behaviour of people, groups, and communities as well as the communicative and organizational elements of their activity: the dynamics of social and cultural mobility as well as people and information freely crossing geographical, political and social borders, guided only by universal legal principles and generalized means of interchange. In my understanding, all of these denote the process of modernization, or rather the state of development that sets in after a certain stage of modernization has been completed and made sense of. The construction of democratic and market-oriented "modern" society based on mass production and mass media in a number of leading countries concluded a cultural programme that had been articulated and developed in Europe through an intense struggle of values from the late 18th and early 19th century roughly up to the mid-20th century. To my mind, the concept of globalization and other related notions (homogenization, unification, centralization) denote primarily the appearance of new levels in society's

institutional organization and new technical means of cumulating, transmitting and representing the new meanings and models of behaviour related to those levels. These are above all models of goal-oriented, rational action: Certain social functions and forms of interaction that had earlier been the prerogative of informal institutions, small groups and, in particular, organic and communitarian communities (*Gemeinschaft*), and had been confined to private or family life, are now conferred upon large, mass-scale systems, trans-national organizations, global communication networks, etc.

On the social level, the concept of modernization implies a constant differentiation of the bases and forms of action and the corresponding institutional systems (economics, politics, law and culture). One of its stages is a differentiation of society, and later a system of societies, into a centre or centres (the capitals) and a periphery (the outskirts), leading to tensions and even a symbolic rupture between these junctions of the social system. This can be represented on the temporal axes of sociological analysis as an increasing diachronicity of different levels and types of action, allowing for advances, lags, delays, even backward movements, or, on the contrary, returns of previous types of action in new garb (more precisely, we should speak of action governed by different rhythms and measures).³ The plurality of social and cultural spaces and times and their incongruent borders, which often intersect and correlate with each other in complex ways (i.e. the borders of individual and collective identity), constitute “modern” society. This plurality functionally requires an idea, programme or project of culture, denoting the totality of all forms of complex, imaginary, conventional self-identification and mutual understanding in the “modern” era. These historical circumstances are also what called into being the very stratum of

free or public intellectuals, the intellectual elite or elites, who put forward, formulated, supported and to a certain degree realized this programme.

On the level of culture, modernization may be understood above all as encompassing on the one hand the problems and tasks of symbolic identification, and on the other hand new, generalized, "modern" ways of regulating behaviour beyond the wholesome role-models that used to be furnished by stable traditions, rites, customs or directly imperative norms. Accordingly, the task of producing symbols of individual and collective identity, ordering and refining them and, partly, relaying and reproducing them, is fulfilled in modern societies by intellectual groups. So much for the theoretical foundations of this article.

Eastern Europe as a laboratory of modernity

The situation of East European intellectuals after the Second World War (obviously, in connection with this stratum's previous experience as well as the larger social context both within and outside these countries) may be described as a peculiar historical laboratory of modernity, one of the enclaves of "deferred" or "disjointed" modernization. We should remind ourselves that for several centuries, the countries in question constituted the outskirts of conflicting powers (the Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires). They were targets for Jesuit activities and the cradle of the Zionist (and earlier the Chassidic) movement. In the 20th century, they provided the settings for authoritarian political regimes, the victims of numerous military invasions and coups and finally the expansion of the century's two largest totalitarian systems, communism and Nazism. Then these lands and their masses,

intellectuals and the authorities underwent a lengthy process of mutual adjustment, although in their case this process wasn't as protracted as in the USSR.

Historically, the intellectual strata in this region (who, in this respect, were similar to the bureaucracy and the army) owed their position not to the development of independent social forces, which through their interaction and self-organization would have constituted a "society", nor to economic competition and achievement, nor to wealth or market structures, but to the state, the "supreme will" of the monarch or authoritarian leader and the groups and cliques who backed him.⁴ Engendered as they were by supreme state power and looking to it for confirmation of their existence, intellectuals appeared here as bearers of the authorities' modernizing ideas and plans and became a social force in the course of the modernization processes that were initiated and carried out by the authorities. Intellectual elites in modernizing societies generally experience identity problems fuelled by tensions between "the old" and "the new". These stimulated the emergence and development of the idea of "modernity" as a proper, autonomous "tradition" of independent intellectuals. In the case of East European intellectuals, these tensions were aggravated by conflicting references to "the authorities", along with appeals to "the people", who embodied the traditional way of living and thinking, and to "culture", which was in many ways related to images of "the West" and "Greater Europe". On an ideological level (the level of a corresponding ideology of culture), the "nation" was conceived as a principle that was supposed historically to resolve these conflicts.

Thus, finding an identity for their group in this polycentric framework became the intellectuals' main task, and their constant problem. It would be fair to say that in Eastern

Europe the problems, conflicts and perspectives of symbolic identity of the “modern” type appeared in a peculiar form: concentrated in time and space, in closed societies and in an “intermediate” type of culture, in the face of individual unfreedom and in forms of existence and interaction such as underground or émigré culture. In this region, the post-war situation was in many ways a continuation and even exacerbation of tendencies that had been at work in previous decades. Some of these problems and conflicts can now be identified as being identical to the latest phenomena of globalization and spontaneous forms of resistance to it – processes of “glocalization” (Roland Robertson), fragmentation, hybridization and creolization of cultures (Néstor García Canclini, Ulf Han-nertz), including the appearance of a nomadic or diasporic personality (May Joseph, Rosi Braidotti), “aesthetical” forms of representing identity and “playing” with sociality (Michel Maffesoli, Wolfgang Welsch), etc.⁵

In the post-war period, the countries of Eastern Europe were societies modelled on the USSR in the sense that processes of social differentiation were blocked there. Such societies are characterized above all by harsh asymmetries and constant contrapositions such as the state vs. society and the regime vs. culture). That social progress and cultural complication were blocked there created the phenomenon known to the most educated strata as the underground and gave rise to a transformed and compensatory “second culture”. The forms of existence, symbols of belonging and types of communication that were most important for these groups were thereby forced out of public life into the private realm, where they were either left without any institutional form or were interpreted as “informal” or even “illegal” by outsiders and, subsequently, by insiders to those communities. On the one

hand, this circumstance generated and consolidated a systematic double-think in the minds of these groups: They divided life into official and unofficial sides.⁶ On the other hand, it forced intellectuals to build their identity on more diffuse aspects of “morality” and meanings of the “purely human” that are difficult to rationalize.

The dissidents made certain attempts at creating forms of underground institutional life. Their concept of the human being was by contrast well-defined: Man was seen as a citizen, a subject of universal and unalienable rights and liberties. The dissidents strove to create and maintain such social institutions as journals, clubs or even universities. The near-impossibility of developing and reproducing such ideas and forms of life then led to emigration. (I am excluding the question of the extent to which these processes resulted from the decomposition of the Soviet system both in the centre and on the periphery, or stimulated and accelerated that decomposition.)

East European intellectuals’ axes of reference and figures of identity

The main lines in East European intellectuals’ post-war systems of self-identification link the problematic areas of their identity: the authorities, the nation and mass culture. The three empirical social entities to which Eastern European intellectuals felt the need to define their relationship were the Soviet Union (the regime that embodied military violence and ideological uniformity), the United States (an idealized prosperous society and source of mass culture), and one’s own national community as a cultural whole (consistently and openly setting oneself off from German Nazism and from the satellite countries’ official national-

ism, which was especially explicit in Romania, Hungary and Poland⁷). On the whole, the supreme values and the most general anthropological views were defined by Christianity (religion and church institutions in some cases, and the historical, cultural and everyday tradition of Christianity in others). It is important to note that Christianity (either as Catholicism or as Protestantism) also appeared as a principle linking the Central European countries to “Greater Europe” or “the West”. (These points, although essential, also fall outside the scope of this article.⁸)

The intellectual’s social and cultural role was imagined in different ways, according to which imaginary groups one referred to. The images used included that of the bearer of culture, the “teacher”, the dissident or human rights defender, the “European”, the “victim”, the “little man,” etc. Every one of these types corresponded to a different symbolic code and mobilized different rhetorical resources.

On the whole, East European intellectuals took a positive view of “the common” in their identity, adopting a programmatic stance against any kind of “elitism”, or in Czesław Miłosz’s phrase, “angelism”. This level of identity was defined on the one hand by the semantics of such collective entities as the nation, the people, the local community (one’s region, village or “god-forsaken place”), or e.g. the proletariat, the labourers, the “working people”, etc. Images of the nation or the people, however, could be part of a more three-dimensional and ambivalent construction of identity based on the notions of inclusion and exclusion; as will be evident from what follows, this is the basic model for East European intellectuals’ identity. In these cases, the intellectual would individually distance himself from the collective, the popular or the national (or some of their interpretations, especially officially recognized ones); he would deny all these things any value and

criticize them from the point of view and in the name of the “individual”. He would undermine or demonstratively discredit national myths, intending to provoke and indeed reaping a harshly negative reaction on the part of the official authorities (e.g. in the case of Andrzej Wajda’s films) or émigré public opinion (e.g. the grotesque novels of Witold Gombrowicz).

At the opposite end of the value spectrum, there was the “general”, which stood for “Man as such”, excluding any particularistic definitions and conceptions. This was embodied in complex and multi-layered characters representing the absence of any social specificity, such as Nobody (Niemand, the ultra-generalized Other) in Paul Celan’s poetry, or Danilo Kiš’s socially unidentified, as though inexistent character enciphered in the Kafkian letter K – a cipher without a key (see below).

I should stress that what I have enumerated are different levels of an anthropological construction, an image of society and Man, separated out by the sociologist to serve his analytical interests. In the thoughts, actions and texts of the intellectuals themselves, these levels are usually correlated, supporting and justifying each other. Thus the mythico-poetical conception of Man and society of the Polish prose writer and essayist Stanisław Vincenz, who had distant French origins, combines characters based on the Hutsul shepherds and shtetl Chassids of his native Carpathian mountains with the idea of a unified European tradition extending from Homer to Dante, and that of a “Europe of home towns” close to Denis de Rougemont and the European Federalists’ “Europe of regions”.⁹ The bounds of all such conceptions are defined, at the top level, by the image of a whole that can still be represented in material terms (“the Mediterranean civilization”) and, at the bottom, by a vanishing, small but still material whole

of a small town, village or “home”, the important thing being that both levels are seen as universal or global such that the part equals the whole.¹⁰

Finally, there is an image of the common or general that is rejected as being “false”. This is represented by negative interpretations of “vulgar and trivial” mass culture and the evaluative construct of “standardized Western Man”. Miłosz wrote, not without irony, that the “mass culture” denounced by East European intellectuals masks the “division into ‘the intelligentsia’ and ‘the people’” that they are accustomed to as well as their habit of “noticing only those manifestations of mass culture that appear systematically and on a mass scale” such that in their eyes they “grow into the sole symbols of the ‘rotten culture of the West’”.¹¹ At the same time, these intellectuals created images of “the regime” that allowed them to distance themselves from authoritarian rule, which nevertheless remained part and parcel of public intellectuals’ self-images by virtue of their view of themselves as “ideological and moral leaders” and the like. Historically, these self-images were actually linked to the initial stages of modernization, when intellectuals had chosen organizational forms such as “currents” or “movements”. On this model, intellectuals based their identity on an imagined competition, where the image of the adversary was repressed, setting off a process of alienation from him. This is how, reflexively, they elaborated more and more generalized and mutually correlated figures of “I” and “the Other”, including an image of “me as the (undesirable) Other”.

The plurality and complexity of this frame of reference manifested itself in the form of several intersecting levels of dual identification. One’s identity as a member of one’s national cultural community, partly defined in relation to Russia (the USSR, the socialist camp) and using oppositions such as that between East and West, civilization and

barbarity etc, was superimposed upon one's self-image as defined in the official and unofficial value systems.¹² In addition to this, there was the ambiguous membership of an imagined Europe based on the above-mentioned model of inclusion vs. exclusion. Just as Western Europe was a "virtual Europe" to East Europeans, in Kiš's phrase,¹³ Eastern Europe to them was also Europe, but a special Europe, a Europe "of one's own", as in the title of Czesław Miłosz's book *Rodzinna Europa*.¹⁴

Thus Europe, in its various images, was represented by different cultural symbols, different eras, different zones of imagined geography, "preserves of European-ness", e.g. France or turn-of-the-century Austro-Hungary, the Danube basin or the Mediterranean, and cities from capitals such as early 20th century or inter-war Prague, Budapest or Bucharest via "nests of culture" like L'viv, Timișoara or Chernivtsi, down to distant necks of the woods such as Kolomyia or Brody. Each one of them correlated with different conceptions of the generalized West, including an ambivalent image of the United States. One East European's Europe as the embodiment of cultural universalism (Vincenz's "heritage of Antiquity" or the Czech philosopher and human rights defender Jan Patočka's Platonist philosophy) might be provocatively contrasted with another's image of an archaic, pre- or even anti-Christian, "barbaric" Europe (e.g. in the early writings of Mircea Eliade and those of similar esoteric Traditionalists in other countries, who rejected Christianity because it was individualistic and linked to Judaism). We can picture this as several echelons of images of Europe, or partially superimposed circles or levels of self-reference, from intimate to distant, one of which would determine and justify the other's reality.

Furthermore, another special zone of reference was constituted by the various waves and generations of East Euro-

pean émigrés in Western Europe and the West as a whole, from those who had left as early as in the 1920s to exiles from post-1968, post-1980 or later. This was another ambiguous reference point for many East European intellectuals, including the émigrés themselves, as can be seen in Gombrowicz's constant attacks on the (generalized) Polish émigré and on specific exiles laying claim to intellectual authority (including his disputes with Miłosz, both in person and in absentia) or in Miłosz's aversion to "the émigrés' melodrama and tragicomedy", their "sobs" and permanent "expectation to return (return to what?)".¹⁵ Finally, from the 1960s and especially the 1970s on, Soviet dissidents and the underground, *samizdat* and "second" culture in the USSR became a separate point of reference for East European intellectuals.¹⁶ Their images of Russia, both historical and contemporary, also multiplied and differentiated.¹⁷

The symbol and semantics of Jewry in the structures of East European intellectuals' collective identity

East European intellectuals' images of Eastern (or Central) Europe were based on repulsive symbols that were constituted by the memory of Nazi Germany and the idea of a state machinery geared to total organized violence (denoting everything dangerous and undesirable) and an attractive symbol representing the utmost limit of positive identity: the fate of European Jewry, which by that time had mostly been destroyed in the Shoah, pulverized in Stalin's camps and forced into emigration during the war and, increasingly in the 1960s and 70s, by the official policies of the Soviet satellite states. They transferred their interpretations of this latter symbol onto "memory", i.e. introduced an imaginary

semantic barrier or even system of barriers that made direct access to the past impossible and at the same time protected the individual from the most unbearable of these interpretations, those that would have threatened to destroy his identity. Thereby these intellectuals cleared the ground for efforts to shape, symbolically process and positively assimilate their collective historical experience (“the work of mourning”, as this has been called since Freud).

The collective image of inter-war European Jewry is of exceptional and fundamental importance in this context.¹⁸ This “figure of the absent”, the “vanishing” or even “eradicated” turned victimhood into a cornerstone of the entire edifice of East European intellectuals’ self-identification and their constructions of history. It determined the most “distant” or extreme symbolic level of reality, which could only be represented by such signs of absence or premonitions of inevitable loss, and thereby by identifying oneself with the victims, with images of the dead. Such is Czesław Miłosz’s image of “the sunken Atlantis of inter-war Wilno”, such is Paul Celan’s justification of his right to poetic speech by appealing to the collective “us” of those who turned into smoke and ashes in “The Death Fuge” and other poems. These are not just emotions, but the normative horizon of a co-ordinated perception of oneself, other people, collective existence, and all of history under the sign of “the end”. Miłosz stresses that, in emigrating, he carried this constant feeling of living “in a world nearing its end” over to the West, where he was “surrounded by people entirely devoid of this feeling”.¹⁹

Later on, the intellectuals of disintegrated and war-torn Yugoslavia perceived the lot of their peoples in a similar “eschatological” perspective (this perception was intensified by the war, but the feeling of imminent doom had preceded it). Kiš quotes a typical statement by the Slovene

prose writer and playwright Marjan Rožanc: “We are not dying alone, because the mildly Baroque area stretching all the way from Trieste to the Baltic, loosely called Central Europe, is dying with us. Croats, Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, and Poles are dying with us. I might even add Bavarians. Yes, all nations and peoples indelibly marked by Central European culture. We are not dying alone; we are dying with the Jews of the region, Central Europeans par excellence and hence the first to fall, long since transformed into crematorium smoke”²⁰.

History, language, and literature as imaginary identities

The construction of history also constituted a complex system of correlations between different levels of meaning. On the one hand, there was an officially imposed, ideologically processed “history of the victors”, which the East European intellectuals rejected (and which included Hegelian and Marxist interpretations of history as an “objective”, supra-human and inhuman force). This kind of history was contrasted with a “history of the victims”, which also equated history with mortal danger and the threat of annihilation (the negative side of the memory of the Shoah). On the other hand, the systematic amnesia and the constant official re-writings of the official worldview in the ideological practice of the USSR and the “people’s democracies” (the Russian émigré writer Boris Khazanov called the totalitarian states “the place where history is chewed to death”) gave rise to a resisting urge to remember, to record images and meanings related to more “distant” and “deeper” horizons of identification that were being forcibly destroyed. This is why history, and historical discourse in general, was so specially but once more

ambiguously significant for East European intellectuals' self-definitions. Thus, Gombrowicz held that "only in opposing History itself we can resist the history of our own day"²¹, and Cioran thought that "people from Eastern Europe, whatever their ideology, are always against History.... Why? Well, because they are all victims of History"²². It should be noted that the historical novel and the historical film are among the best-developed genres in the East European countries, including the greatest inter-war and contemporary masters.

A similar interweaving of different references is evident in East European intellectuals' conceptions of language, the deepest level of self-identification and the semantic constitution of the world. These conceptions extend between two poles: an awareness of the imperfection of one's native language, its "backwardness" and "barbarity" compared to the "advanced" European languages, the "languages of culture", e.g. French (especially apparent in Cioran's writings), and, at the opposite end, the desire to uphold one's mother tongue and even local dialects and resist the uniform ideological newspeak. Thus, for East European intellectuals and especially writers, the mother tongue becomes a sign of social and cultural stigma, "the mark of their exile", in Kiš's phrase.²³ Inside the common, generally accepted language, they create as if a part of a special underground a code that outsiders, but also the writers themselves, perceive as "alien". In its extreme form, this self-alienation expresses itself in the form of switching to another language, as in the case of Ghérasim Luca, Benjamin Fondane, Émile Cioran and Milan Kundera, who chose French, or that of Andrei Codrescu (originally Andrei Perlmutter), who switched to English²⁴; I should add that Codrescu, just like Péter Esterházy, furthermore masquerades as a female writer. But Celan's

choice appears even more radical: In his youth he wrote fluently in Russian and Romanian, brilliantly translated from English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and other languages, but eventually chose German, “the language of the conquerors” (his relatives died in a Nazi concentration camp because of their Jewish origins) and consistently and systematically “estranged” and undermined it from within.²⁵ “Pavel Lvovitsch Tselan / Russki poët in partibus nemetskich infidelium / 's ist nur ein Jud”,²⁶ he signed one of his letters. (This macaronisme conveying his multiple “I” is also typical of his poetry.) Multilingualism became the standard for East European intellectuals, not just an everyday, adaptive multilingualism, but a consciously chosen and programmatic one. This is also why translations are so important in East European culture. This is the region where such models of cultural polyglottism as Celan, Kiš and Miłosz were possible, necessary and important. Under these conditions, literature becomes the chief means of representing the structures of this complex identity, which we may call centauric or protean.²⁷ The conventional modality of representing different reference groups and axes of identification in the form of interacting characters – the heroes of biographical narrative or “internal theatre” – allows the writer to express the conflicts inherent in defining himself and others, to give these conflicts a general validity, to make them general, controllable, repetitive and thereby to a certain extent to get a grip on them. In situations such as the East European conditions described here, literature and art in general are characterized by irony, absurdity, parody, including self-parody, and such are indeed the typical traits of East European art that have been repeatedly stressed by authors from this region (Frigyes Karinthy and Gombrowicz, Hrabal and Václav Havel, Kundera and

Sławomir Mrożek, Slobodan Šnajder and Dubravka Ugrešić). By using such techniques, authors constantly distance themselves from any ultimate definition of the situation and express the impossibility of reaching a single authoritative position that would allow judging their characters. In literatures of this kind, the author as performer of a cultural role can only express himself through such figures of absence, just like the characters are often equated with quotations, and historical documents appear as parodies. (All of this is typical of the poetics of Kiš.²⁸) Another model trait of art and literature in such situations is a peculiar “baroqueness”, the canon that had defined the artistic whole, the balance of its parts, styles etc for traditionalist aesthetics being weakened or problematic. On the contrary, the Slavic “neo-baroque” style of the 20th century, from Bruno Schulz and Tadeusz Kantor to Jan Švankmajer and Goran Petrović, systematically defies and constantly, inexhaustibly transgresses the “classical” norms of combining the large and the small, the comical and the serious, the natural and the artificial, the real and the fantastic (or the mythological, which combines these opposites).²⁹ In this regard, East European literature (novels and drama) is pronouncedly allegorical: One may say that it consists of parables on insufficient modernization (i.e. forced top-down military-bureaucratic modernization). Finally, 20th century East European literature and art are characterized by a special, programmatic concern for form, a “will to form” as a way of resisting an imposed and falsified external reality, a means of taking control over oneself and self-cultivation: “form as a desire to make sense of life..., form as the possibility of choice, form as an attempt to pinpoint an Archimedean fulcrum in the chaos surrounding us”, in Kiš’s words³⁰ (cf. similar manifestos by Witkacy or Gombrowicz and the practice of

Schulz or Zoltán Huszárík, or, under “geographically” different but semantically similar conditions, the statements and works of Vladimir Nabokov).

The collective figure of collective identity: the debate on Central Europe

The well-known debate about “Central Europe” may be analyzed as a case study in how the bases of East European intellectuals’ self-identification are discussed and how these intellectuals polemically construct multi-layered images of their collective identity. In the early 1980s, several texts on this topic appeared in rapid succession: Jenő Szücs’s essay “The Three Historical Regions of Europe” (1983, although it had been circulating in samizdat since 1979)³¹, an article entitled “The Tragedy of Central Europe” by Kundera (1983, almost simultaneously in French, German and English)³², Konrád’s book *East European meditations* (1985), “Variations on Central European Themes” by the Serb Kiš (more precisely, a Hungarian-Montenegrin Jew living in France and writing in Serbian) and others. At about the same time, this subject was widely publicized by the well-known British historian Timothy Garton Ash in his article “Does Central Europe Exist?” (*New York Review of Books*, 9 October 1986), before it was picked up by dozens of authors within Eastern Europe and outside it.

A brief reminder of the socio-political and cultural context may be useful.³³ For many West European (and, more generally, Western) intellectuals, the 1980s were a time of public disillusionment with their former left-wing political views and their hopes for reform in the USSR and other socialist countries; a time of harsh condemnation of the

Soviet military aggression against Afghanistan and widespread acknowledgement of the books of Soviet dissidents. At the same time, there was a beginning of public debate on the perspective of German unification and, as a result, a discussion on politically and culturally restructuring the European continent. A peculiar “nostalgia for Europe” appears among Europeans, they go on a “search for Europe” in the past or on the “margins” of the continent. (To name just a few landmarks of this intellectual movement, it will suffice to refer to the well-known Trieste writer Claudio Magris’s books *Danube* (in Italian 1986, English 1989) and *Trieste: un’identità di frontiera* (1987), which continued his 1963 monograph *Il mito asburgico nella letteratura austriaca moderna* (The Habsburg myth in contemporary Austrian literature). For some European intellectuals, this nostalgic frame of mind was also an indirect expression of their anti-Americanism.³⁴ This nostalgia was met with appreciation by those East Europeans most intent on integration into Europe as well as the East European dissidents who aimed politically and culturally to dissociate the East European region from the Soviet Union and the socialist regimes it had established. This was Kundera and Konrád’s position. They set the pitch for a dissident discourse that was developed and relayed at that time by the newly created US-based yearbook of Central European culture *Cross Currents* and other similar publications in Western Europe and North America. It should also be noted that by the late 1970s and early 1980s, a peculiar dissident sub-culture had taken shape in Europe, and generally in the West, with its own way of life, system of organizational forms, communication channels and the like. There was, accordingly, a need for effective short-hand codes of self-definition, but also for more long-term cultural symbols and symbolic sys-

tems. The multi-layered, historically rich notion of Central Europe became the main such symbol, as it was especially productive for grounding many-sided identities.

For Kundera, "Central Europe longed to be a condensed version of Europe itself in all its cultural variety, a small arch-European Europe, a reduced model of Europe made up of nations conceived according to one rule: the greatest variety within the smallest place."³⁵ Russia appears as the main pole of repulsion here, and the Central European countries' main error is "the ideology of the Slavic world".³⁶ This is the prospective axis of identification. There is also an historical axis: "Central Europe therefore cannot be defined and determined by political frontiers. . . , bit by the great common situations that reassemble peoples, regroup them in ever new ways along the imaginary and ever-changing boundaries that mark a realm inhabited by the same memories, the same problems and conflicts, the same common tradition."³⁷ Kundera defines the identity of Central (Eastern) Europe through historical memory. This is also the basic type of identification for the Lithuanian émigré poet Tomas Venclova: "It is in Eastern Europe that the quest to remember things past and to recover from amnesia... has gone especially far – so far that Big Brother... is feeling rather uneasy."³⁸

At the same time, Kundera's attitude towards history is deeply ambivalent. For him, the Central European worldview is based on a "deep distrust of History [. . .] the History of conquerors. The people of Central Europe are not conquerors. They cannot be separated from European History; they cannot exist outside it, they represent the wrong side of this History: its victims and outsiders".³⁹ In this sense Central Europe, for Kundera, is embodied by the Jews of this region: "The Jews in the twentieth century were the principal cosmopolitan, integrating element in

Central Europe: they were its intellectual cement, a condensed version of its spirit, creators of its spiritual unity.⁴⁰ The predicament of the “small” peoples of Central Europe anticipates the fate of Europe as a whole, which is why the Central European experience is so significant for the future of the entire continent. Kundera asserts the “great historical mission of the small peoples in the modern world abandoned to the arbitrariness of the great powers striving to lump everyone together. The small peoples . . . resist this terrifying unification”.⁴¹ For Kundera, the fact that Europe “did not notice” the loss of the Central European countries, part destroyed and part swallowed up by the 20th century’s two biggest totalitarian states, means that “Europe no longer perceives its unity as a cultural unity”: “Culture, which has become the expression of the supreme values by which European humanity understands itself. . . is giving way.”⁴² According to Kundera, the peoples of Central Europe, as it were, remind today’s Europeans of the whole idea of contemporary Europe as a cultural space, because in resisting externally-imposed unification there is something “conservative”:

That’s why in Central European revolts, there is something conservative, almost anachronistic: They are desperately trying to restore the past of the modern era. It is only in that period, only in a world that maintains a cultural dimension, that Central Europe can still defend its identity, still be seen for what it is.⁴³

Arguing against Kundera, Kiš stresses that a united Central Europe (the idea of which is shared, albeit with qualifications, by Predrag Matvejević, Krzysztof Pomian, Barbara Skarga and others) is no more than a figment, “the

differences in national cultures being greater than the similarities, the antagonisms more alive than the agreements".⁴⁴ Kiš clearly sees the political objective behind the unification that is threatening the East Europeans, meaning the establishment of Soviet-type political uniformity: "The ultimate goal of the ideological struggle waged for the past forty years in the 'lands of real socialism' against 'decadence' in art and all branches of culture is homogenization and Bolshevization. The epithet 'pro-Western' is thus an ominous political attribute meaning anti-Soviet, anti-Communist" (108).⁴⁵ But Kiš also refuses to accept unification according to the West European model. This is why he is a stranger to the "Habsburg myth" with its image of "splendid Vienna" as Central European intellectuals' imagined capital. Kiš points out that Serb and Croat intellectuals, e.g. Miroslav Krleža, regarded Vienna as a distant province... of Germany.⁴⁶ This is also why, on the one hand, they entertained close ties with Russia, which to them was the place "where two myths converge: Pan-Slavism (Orthodoxy) and revolution, Dostoevskii and the Comintern" (106), and, on the other hand, like Krleža or Kiš himself, who translated many works of Russian and French literature (or his contemporary Celan or their predecessor Rilke), combined a taste for Russia with a predilection for France.

Kiš's position consists in supporting, stressing and even maximizing cultural difference, including the fundamental and insurmountable differences between Eastern and Western Europe (maximizing the contradictions in his characters' self-definitions, in a kind of "trial by multidimensionality", is also typical of Kiš's literary anthropology and a central trait of his novels' poetics). For him, "all that 'Central Europe' still means in terms of culture is the desire for a place in the European family tree... a legiti-

mate desire to see a common heritage acknowledged in spite of or, rather, because of differences. Indeed, the differences are what make it unique and give it an identity of its own within the European whole". (104).

In Kiš's work, exile is used as the most intense image of Central Europe's permanent being-outside, its inclusion and exclusion from Europe, the conclusion of the drama of its "non-authenticity". (After a massive anti-Semitic baiting campaign against him in the press triggered by his novel about Stalin's purges, *A Grave for Boris Davidovich*, Kiš was himself forced to emigrate in 1978.)⁴⁷ This is why, for Kiš, the Kafkian initial K. – "that lone letter, both masking and telling" – stands for the "eternal ambivalence" of the East European intellectual (114).

At the beginning of the 20th century and in the inter-war period, this sense of an "inauthentic" self-definition most often pushed East European intellectuals' to ideological and political radicalism, usually of a left-wing variety; in the post-war situation, the memory of Nazism and the experience of Soviet domination usually restrained them. West European intellectuals, it seems, began moving away from their left-wing, including Soviet, sympathies, only later; this happened in several waves: After events in Berlin in 1953, after what happened in Hungary in 1956, after the 20th Party Congress and the publication of articles about Stalin's camps in the Western press, after the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, after the introduction of martial law in Poland in 1981, etc. Every one of these milestones made it clearer to people in the USSR and especially to intellectuals in its East European satellite states that the Soviet social, political and military system was disintegrating. The gap between reality on the one hand and the totalitarian regime's once-convincing legend

about the socialist countries' "global mission" and its loud-mouthed promises of social welfare to the masses on the other hand was widening.

The new situation in the 1990s

By the beginning of the 1990s, the situation that had informed the debate about Central Europe had become a thing of the past and so had the alignment of forces, system of references and tactical and strategic tasks that came with it. As the countries of Eastern Europe became independent from the USSR and entered a period of autonomous political development, the intellectuals' position in society changed radically. The disintegration and replacement of the former elites and the rise of nationalist sentiment among the new elites and officials in Serbia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania made the whole issue of Central Europe as a symbol, as it had been discussed in the above-mentioned debate, obsolete. The language of resistance to the USSR and struggle for civil liberties and human rights had been supplemented and partly supplanted by a discourse of Central Europe around the late 1970s and early 1980s, which was in turn superseded by a national and nationalist rhetoric in certain circles of younger, more provincial and therefore more radical (or on the contrary more pragmatic) intellectuals, including those who had gone into politics.

The shock felt by many of the former intellectuals in the first half of the 1990s and later (I am leaving out what happened in former Yugoslavia) was due, among other things, to the fact that societies exiting a totalitarian regime require institutional forms of competitive and co-operative non-repressive action offering a universalistic organizing

framework for everyday economic, political, social and cultural life. The absence or weakness of such institutions and the fact that the former underground intelligentsia was not prepared to do the day-to-day work required to create and maintain such institutions called into being a totally different set of ideas and groups: the ideas and symbols of an “offended” nationalism, expressed in the slogans of populist and extreme-right nationalist groups. The rhetoric of “the nation” and similar forms of communitarian commonality (*Gemeinschaft*) based on a harsh opposition between “us” and “them” accentuated the negative symbols of catastrophe and deadly threat to the social whole⁴⁸ and was intended to compensate for the weakness of institutional muscle in societies coming out from under the shadow of totalitarianism. As usual in populist ideologies, it promised quick and irreversible solutions “for all” (all “of us”, of course).⁴⁹

Under these circumstances, the stock of symbols of collective identification appealing to a unified Central European culture that had been elaborated by East European intellectuals was useless. The point is not that these symbols could not become a basis for societal mobilization at that particular point in time. (That was not what they had been created for, their fabric and structure were designed for other, more long-term aims, and cultural symbols never have a quick and direct impact anyway.) The point is that they were not distinct, reasoned and convincing enough to alleviate the conflicts and aggressive potential that were brewing in society and make people and groups view each other with a more tolerant and open-minded eye. This, I believe, is the (only) meaning of Esterházy’s statement that “the intelligentsia of so-called Eastern Europe has suffered a fiasco”. A certain cycle of collective discussion and, what is more, of historical movement, has ended. In

Esterházy's words, "We have returned to where Musil left off: A man without qualities is looking for his identity."⁵⁰

Instead of a conclusion: on certain difficulties in the study of the current stage of modernization

To sum up and return to my starting point, let me repeat that, to my mind, sociologists should discuss globalization in terms of modernization. This enables us to talk about the "movements" and "tendencies" that make up this process in perfectly empirical terms; to identify those who take the lead in these movements, their support groups, and the "masses" of more or less broad strata and groups that follow them one way or the other; and to recognize the obstacles, barriers and stages of this process. In particular, the 1960s-1970s were evidently a turning point for the Western world, a junction of several movements of different types taking place at different levels. It seems that a number of advanced West European countries "simultaneously" exhausted the potential of the pure nation-state and the 19th century European project of a national culture that it had institutionalized and appropriated, and that had been subjected to criticism throughout the first half of the 20th century. (This doesn't mean that the nation-state as a pattern of societal organization is disappearing, only that it is becoming functionally transformed – in particular, shedding certain administrative powers but in return underscoring its function as *Kulturnation*, etc.⁵¹) The middle of the past century was a time of titanic social displacement – including mass migration of intellectuals – and cardinal cultural shifts. Among the results were the transformation of the United States into the world's leading power (not only economically and politically, but also

in terms of moral authority and cultural significance), the emergence of a bipolar bloc world, Third World countries' striving for independence and self-determination and finally the "return of the other Europe" that has been described above. Sociologically, I would interpret the appearance of the concept of post-modernity and, later, multi-culturalism, post-colonialism, globalization, etc. as a certain type of intellectual awareness of the above-listed circumstances.⁵²

In cases such as this, what we are faced with are successive stages of the development of a modern-type mass society, as the very pattern, symbols and significance of modernity spread ever more widely across society; in other words, stages of the differentiation of society and social groups, which may include phenomena such as blocked differentiation, involution, disintegration and the like. Each of these stages – which could be counted, as e.g. Talcott Parsons does, from the Reformation, the French Revolution, or the industrial and educational revolutions of the 19th century, is seen as being linked to the end of another closed universe of "high" culture (one such crisis of Europe and the West is identified by Kundera in his above-quoted article) and a process of barbarization that opens the way to something ever more primitive, stereotyped, and generally available. This is how Ortega y Gasset and others diagnosed the "revolt of the masses", this is how the American Left denounced mass culture in the 1950s-1970s or how their French colleagues debated the "leisure civilization" at around the same time; the same goes for the current debate on "homogenization", "unification", "MacDonaldization", "cultural imperialism", etc. Accordingly, every time there is also a discussion of "borders" (the utmost limits and most general interpretations of collective identity) and of the image, or

rather multiple images, of the Other – ethnic strangers, women, children, the ill and other figures of otherness, already present in Romanticism at the beginning of the process of modernization³³.

On the macro-sociological level, every one of these stages signifies a shedding of “spent” interpretations of culture and a step onto lower, but also more general levels of action, or else the handover of cultural functions to large and anonymous institutions and systems of contemporary society (or a system of societies, say, a region) and the transfer of leading and norm-creating functions to other types, structures and generations of new candidates for membership of the “elite”. It may be observed that the 20th century witnessed a consistent decline of such early and diffuse ways of rallying intellectual groups as movements or “trends”, with their traditional relations between the leader and his followers. On the contrary, managerial organizations have become more and more functionally significant and socially called for, and the prestige of the “expert” has grown, as has society’s dependence (especially that of its most peripheral groups) on the specialized knowledge and instrumental skills of the ubiquitous professional, which finds its expression in widespread and media-relayed fears of being manipulated, irrational notions of “global danger” etc. Patterns of thought, behaviour, feeling and expression elaborated by individuals or small circles of people are reproduced over and over again by technical means, becoming commonplace and therefore inevitably trivial.

On the level of the sociology of knowledge and ideology, the above-listed forms of conceptualizing events (from “the revolt of the masses” to “globalization”) may be interpreted as intellectuals’ ways of stressing different aspects or elements of the semantic construction of the process of modernization: this is how different types and

levels of social action are broken down into parts or stratified in intellectuals' collective consciousness. This is followed by a primary codification of such interpretive building-blocks (usually without attempts at functionally correlating them, systematically working through them, or methodologically analyzing them) and a disorganized reification of these building-blocks.

This is what usually happens, for example, to the key term that is "culture", which is used exclusively in a naturalized, material sense, as a thing or a practice – hence the collections of practices and things in contemporary multicultural studies. This is why, despite recognizing the multiplicity of cultures, practitioners of this approach treat them all according to a single closed model derived from traditional or estate-based societies, or from the canonical image of "classical" (more precisely, classicist) culture. The predicate "multi-" denotes the mutual impenetrability of cultures. To put it very briefly, what we have here is a very tardy version of the Romantic conception of cultural cycles that was successively reproduced by retro-Romantics (Nikolai Danilevskii, Oswald Spengler, Lev Gumilev). I should add that virtually the same isolationist image is used by Samuel Huntington, who, for purely ideological reasons and entirely arbitrarily, additionally endows these "essences" with an aggressive impulse to clash.

Translated from Russian by Misha Gabovich, Moscow

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- ¹ Talcott Parsons, *The System of Modern Societies* (Englewood Cliffs 1971).
- ² For a survey and synthesis of different approaches to globalization, see Ul'rikh Bek [= Ulrich Beck], *Chto takoe globalizatsiya?* (Moscow 2001).
- ³ Conscious returns to "the past" or "the simple" (e.g. the *Gemeinschaft*-type ties that we find in traditional societies or forms of "popular culture") are typical of modernization processes: More archaic forms come to be regarded as new and "avant-garde" resources for technical innovation and are rationalized and universalized in the process. An oft-used example is the transfer of some elements of "informal relations" or, more precisely, traditional institutions of tribal societies into contemporary Western managerial culture. This is also a hackneyed technique in modern art and literature. Thus these phenomena are in no way recent expressions of globalization and post-modernity, but a feature of modernization, modern society and the modern way of life.
- ⁴ The flipside of this construction is the relatively belated and difficult formation of intermediate social strata, whose cultural legitimacy remains problematic in the countries of Eastern Europe. This makes them socially weak, which in turn is one of the reasons for the general political instability in this region and makes intellectuals' search for their identity even more difficult since it narrows down their choice of positive reference points.
- ⁵ Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London 1992); Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis 1995); idem, *Consumers and Citizens: Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts* (Minneapolis 2001); Ulf Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning* (New York 1992); idem, *Transnational Connections. Culture, People, Places* (London 1996); May Joseph, *Nomadic Identities: The Performance of Citizenship* (Minneapolis 1999); Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York 1994); Michel Maffesoli, *Le temps des tribus. Le déclin de l'individualisme dans les sociétés de masse* (Paris 1988); idem, *La transfiguration du politique. La tribalisation du monde* (Paris 1992); idem, *Au creux des apparences. Pour une éthique de l'esthétique* (Paris 1990); Wolfgang Welsch, "Transculturality. The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today", in M. Featherstone and S. Lash (eds.), *Spaces of Cultures Today* (London 1999), pp. 194-213.
- ⁶ As the Hungarian writer Péter Esterházy later summed up this situation, "[In] the countries we represent, the main concept, the main feeling of life and the key word is *lies*. We live... in operetta-like, mendacious countries." See Peter Esterkhazi [= Péter Esterházy], *Zapiski sinego*

- chulka i drugie teksty* (Moscow 2001). See also, Dubravka Ugrešić, *The Culture of Lies. Antipolitical Essays* (University Park 1998).
- ⁷ This is why for most East European intellectuals of that period, nationalism is, in Danilo Kiš's well-known phrase, "paranoia, individual and collective paranoia". See Danilo Kiš, "The Gingerbread Heart, or Nationalism", in Danilo Kiš, *Homo Poeticus. Essays and Interviews* (New York 1995), pp. 15-34, quote on p. 15. Elsewhere in the same essay, he describes nationalism as "kitsch and folklore – folk kitsch, if you prefer" (op. cit., p. 17).
- ⁸ On the complex interweaving of these elements of cultural and political identity (Eastern vs. Western Christianity, etc), see, for example, Krzysztof Pomian, "Les particularités de l'Europe centrale et orientale", in *Le Débat*, Nr. 63, 1991, pp. 26-28ff.
- ⁹ See *Studia o Stanisławowi Vincenze* (Lublin, Roma 1994); Stanisław Vincenz, *Eseje i szkice zebrane* (Wrocław 1997); Denis de Rougemont, *Écrits sur l'Europe*. Vols. I+II (Paris 1994).
- ¹⁰ What is meant here is not, of course, geographical territory, but the significance of a place or space, i.e. symbolic landscapes. Thus, the Lwów bred Vincenz stressed, "Lwów cannot be reduced to its space, or to the pre-war or any other years. Lwów is an idea, a promise and a possibility." Stanisław Vincenz, *Tematy żydowskie* (Gdańsk 1993), p. 48.
- ¹¹ Cheslav Milosh [=Czesław Miłosz], *Lichnye obyazatel'stva. Izbrannye esse o literature, religii i morali* (Moscow 1999), pp. 142, 144-145.
- ¹² See Iver B. Neumann, *Russia as Central Europe's Constituting Other*, in *East European Politics and Societies*, No. 7 (1993), pp. 349-369; idem, *Russia and the idea of Europe: a study in identity and international relations* (London 1996); Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the other: the 'East' in European identity formation* (Minneapolis 1999).
- ¹³ Kiš, op. cit., p. 98.
- ¹⁴ *Une autre Europe* in the French translation, Czesław Miłosz, *Une autre Europe* (Paris 1964); Czesław Miłosz, *Rodzinna Europa* (Warsaw 1998).
- ¹⁵ Cheslav Milosh, op. cit., pp. 298, 305. Miłosz is summarizing Vincenz's position. See also Miłosz's obituary of Gombrowicz, *ibid.*, pp. 306-311 and his essay "Ob izgnanii" in *Inostrannaya literatura*, Nr. 10 (1997), pp. 157-160.
- ¹⁶ Respect, interest, and a feeling of solidarity didn't preclude argument, as illustrated by Leszek Kołakowski's repugnance against Solzhenitsyn's idealization of Tsarist Russia, which the Russian writer set off against Stalin's Soviet Russia, see *Zeszyty literackie*, 2, 1983.
- ¹⁷ See the "Rosja" chapter in Miłosz's *Rodzinna Europa* (Warsaw 1998), pp. 159-188.

- ¹⁸ See Riccardo Calimani (a cura di), *Le vie del mondo. Berlino, Budapest, Praga, Vienna e Trieste: Intellettuali ebrei e cultura Europea dal 1880 al 1930* (Milano 1998); Beller S. *Vienna and the Jews 1867-1938: A Cultural History* (Cambridge 1989).
- ¹⁹ Cheslav Milosh, "O kontse sveta. Beseda s K. Yanovskoi i P. Mukhar-skim", *Novaja Pol'sa*, 1, 2000, pp. 61-62. As usual, Miłosz precisely defines his point of reference: "[Today] we are all émigrés. We all come from some forsaken village, some lost past", *ibid.*, p. 61.
- ²⁰ Danilo Kiš, "Variations on Central European Themes", in Danilo Kiš, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-114, quote on p. 107. Other aspects of the complex image of Jewry were based upon several inter-war varieties of Jewish life and worldviews. The main references were, firstly, Israel, the diaspora (or even diasporization as a process), and Gershom Scholem-type orthodox Judaism; secondly, the Lithuanian émigré Emmanuel Lévinas's view of 'the Jews' as an existential paradigm of Man as such; and thirdly, Theodor Adorno's radically left-wing critique of bourgeois civilization and Enlightenment rationality.
- ²¹ Quoted in Milan Kundera, "A Kidnapped West or Culture Bows Out", *Granta*, 11, 1984, pp. 95-118, p. 109. The original, "Un Occident kidnappée ou la tragedie de l'Europe centrale", is to be found in *Le Débat*, Nr. 27 (1983).
- ²² E.M. Cioran, *Œuvres* (Paris 1995), p. 1,749.
- ²³ Kiš, *op. cit.*, p. 112. For Kiš, "every work of value is an act of revolt against the writer's own and only language" (*op. cit.*, p. 34).
- ²⁴ "My religion is Creolisation, Hybridization, Miscegenation, Immigration, Genre-Busting, Trespassing, Border-Crossing, Identity-Shifting, Mask-Making, and Syncretism", Codrescu admits in a recent interview (<http://www.codrescu.com/reference/index.html>).
- ²⁵ Julia Kristeva describes the language of his poetry and lyrical prose as "German filtered through Romanian and Yiddish but also through English, Italian, Greek, Latin, and French, and which the poet, pressed on by his horror, is so overwhelmed and squeezes so as to produce a *totally different German*", see Julia Kristeva, *Celanie, la douleur du corps nomade*, in *Magazine littéraire*, No. 400 (2001), p. 52. See also Jean Bollack, "Paul Celan sur sa langue", in A.D. Colin (ed.), *Argumentum e silentio* (Berlin 1987), pp. 113-153, and Jean Bollack, *Poésie contre poésie. Celan et la littérature* (Paris 2001).
- ²⁶ John Felstiner, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* (New Haven, London 1995), pp. 185-186. The Czech surrealist poet Ivan Blatný (1919-1990), who emigrated to the United Kingdom in 1948 and was confined to a mental asylum in 1954, used a mix of English and Czech in his poetry.

- ²⁷ The special significance of literature in cases such as this should not be confused with the high status of literature as a means of enlightenment, a tool of cultural improvement, etc., that represents the use of an already existing system of literary values by the reproductive institutions of the nation-state and its appropriation by groups of second- and third-degree intellectual imitators.
- ²⁸ On this see Katarina Melic, *La fiction de l'histoire dans Un Tombeau pour Boris Davidovitch de Danilo Kis*, <www.fabula.org/effet/interventions/18.php>, and Alexandre Prstojevic, "Un certain goût de l'archive (sur l'obsession documentaire de Danilo Kis)", <www.fabula.org/effet/interventions/13.php>.
- ²⁹ See Danilo Kiš, "Baroque and truth", in Kiš, op. cit., pp. 262–268.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 114.
- ³¹ A French translation, with a preface by Fernand Braudel, appeared as early as 1985. The essay was translated into German in 1994, into Polish in 1995 and into Russian in 1996 *Tsentral'naya Evropa kak istoricheskii region* (Moscow 1996), pp. 147–265.
- ³² See Hana Pichova, *Milan Kundera and the Identity of Central Europe*, in Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (ed.), *Comparative Central European Culture* (West Lafayette 2001), pp. 103–114.
- ³³ The political and ethno-national problems of Central Europe in previous periods of history, which were of course taken into account in the debate that I am discussing, will have to be excluded. A concise account by one of the best experts on this region is Jacques Le Rider, *La Mitteleuropa* (Paris 1994).
- ³⁴ For more detail see Boris Dubin, *Antiamerikanizm v evropeiskoi kul'ture posle Vtoroi mirovoi voiny*, in Boris Dubin, op. cit., pp. 286–299.
- ³⁵ Milan Kundera, op. cit., p. 99. For Kundera, Central Europe is the quintessence of all that is European, more than "just" Europe; for Gombrowicz, the Poles have created "a special type of European, born in a place where Europe is not quite Europe yet", in Witold Gombrowicz, *Dziennik 1953-1956* (Cracow 1989), p. 43, and Gombrowicz cherishes this "unripeness" that for him is the embodiment of Polishness. The model of dual identity based on axes of inclusion and exclusion allows alternately to stress different inter-related levels of identity.
- ³⁶ Milan Kundera, op. cit., pp. 102–104. Kundera's evaluative opposition between the West (including Central Europe) and the East (above all, Russia) and his rationalistic and ironic aversion against everything linked to the mythology of the 'Slavic' and 'Russian soul', its 'depths' etc., provoked Joseph Brodsky into writing his harshly polemical 1985 essay "Pochemu Milan Kundera nespravedliv k Dostoevskomu" [Why Milan Kundera is wrong about Dostoevskii], see *Sochineniya Iosifa Brodskogo*, Vol. VII (St. Peters-

burg 2001), pp. 87-96. An English translation is posted on Kundera's Web site <www.kundera.de/english/Info-Point/Dostojewsky/dostojewsky.html>. Brodsky rejects Kundera's "geographic" idealization of the West and defamation of the East as well as the elegiac tone in which he bids farewell to "the lost Europe"; he considers all this to be overly simplistic: "Western civilization and its culture, Mr. Kundera's qualifier included, is based first of all on the principle of sacrifice, on the idea of a man who died for our sins. When threatened, Western civilization and its culture always finds enough resolve to fight its enemy, even if it is the enemy within." This is why for Brodsky, "in many ways, the last war was Western civilization's civil war", from Brodsky, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

³⁷ Milan Kundera, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

³⁸ Tomas Venclova, *Svoboda i pravda* (Moscow 1999), p. 195. See also Alain Brossat et al. (dir.), *A l'Est, la mémoire retrouvée* (Paris 1990).

³⁹ Milan Kundera, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Quoted in *Regionalizatsiya postkommunisticheskoi Evropy* (Moscow 2001), pp. 75-76. The Czech writer Petr Král, who has been living in France since 1968, stresses more or less the same ideas in his conception of "provinciality": For him, "the 'provincial' way of feeling... may become something like a useful antidote to the aggressive ideas peculiar to large nations and generally against any ideological abstraction", see P. Král, "Être tchèque", in *L'Autre Europe*, Nr. 5 (1985), p. 82.

⁴² Milan Kundera, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-111. For Kundera, the high significance of culture, so understood, is embodied e.g. by literary journals. In Eastern Europe, their topics and circulation reach far beyond the bounds of literature and the literary milieu. (The Czech literary review *Literární Noviny* had a print run of up to 300,000 in the 1960s, making it virtually the country's most important magazine.) "If all the revues in France or England disappeared, no one would notice it, not even editors", Kundera adds (p. 117). See also Donald Fanger, "Central European Writers as a Social Force", in *Partisan Review*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (1992), pp. 639-665.

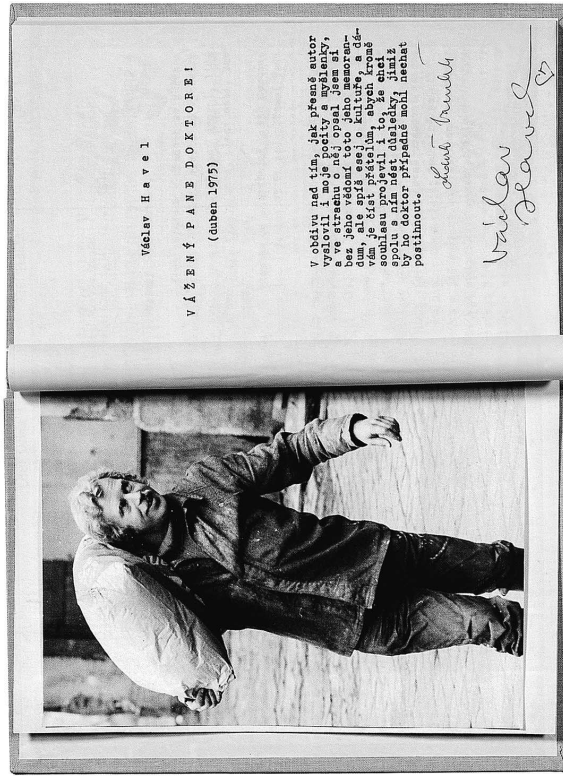
⁴³ Milan Kundera, *op. cit.*, p. 118. For Kundera, the model European after "the end of Europe" is the French-speaking Romanian émigré Émile Cioran, an apatriote by vocation. Characteristically, the American writer Susan Sontag perceives Cioran, a "model European mind", as "one of the last sympathizers of the receding 'Europe', of European suffering, European intellectual courage, European energy, European complexity", "one of its most talented sympathizers". See Syuzen Zontag [= Susan Sontag], *Mysl' kak strast': Izbrannye esse 1960-70-kh godov* (Moscow 1997), p. 106.

- ⁴⁴ Kiš, op. cit., p. 96 (page numbers of this edition are henceforth indicated in brackets). Miłosz distinguished at least two Central Europes: Austro-Hungary in the south and a Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian commonwealth in the north that was inextricably linked to Russia; he realized that he was born and raised on the border between Rome and Byzantium. Kiš, Kadaré and Canetti added to this the border with the Islamic world. Konrád stresses that Europe is ‘a multitude of autonomous and effective forces... Of all the sources of energy at the Europeans’ disposal, autonomy is the most reliable’, see György Konrád, “La nation européenne, une mission pour l’avenir”, <<http://www.internationales.de/d/frames/presse/sonder/f/brjahre-f-9.html>>. The poly-centricity of this image of Europe is also linked to the role of *culture* as the model expression of what is European: culture as an aggregate of meaning and images that can have no centre. By consequence, “Central Europe” in this reasoning denotes Europe as such – in the sense that it has no *external* centre: “What does Europe mean? It means that no-one is able to dominate it”, Konrád, op. cit.
- ⁴⁵ “A desire for European culture often takes the form of national pride (“We are Europe”) and antagonism (“And you aren’t”), which is ultimately no more than a form of resistance to uniformity and Bolshevization” (106).
- ⁴⁶ See Predrag Matvejević, *Razgovori s Miroslavom Krležom* (Zagreb 1978); Ralph Bogert, *The Writer as Naysayer: Miroslav Krleža and the Aesthetic of Interwar Central Europe* (Columbus 1991). Kiš links the cultural attractiveness and former significance of Vienna to East-European Jewry: ‘...with the disappearance of Jewry as gadfly, Vienna has sunk into intellectual provincialism. By an irony of history, Vienna has become a transit point for Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union and its satellites, a stopping place on the journey to Israel and America’ (103). On the predicament of Vienna after the loss of its Jewish component see George E. Berkley, *Vienna and Its Jews: The Tragedy of Success* (Cambridge, Mass., Boston 1988).
- ⁴⁷ On exile as the paradigmatic state of the people of the 20th century (not only intellectuals, of course), see Miłosz’s above-quoted essay and Brodsky’s article “Sostoyanie, kotoroe my nazываем izgnaniem” in Iosif Brodskii, op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 27-36. This essay appeared in English as “The Condition We Call Exile”, *New York Review of Books*, 21 January 1988. See also Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (London 1994); Hermann Haarmann (ed.), *Innen-Leben: Ansichten aus dem Exil* (Berlin 1995); Anthony Coulson (ed.), *Exiles and Migrants: Crossing Thresholds in European Culture and Society* (Brighton 1997); and Susan Rubin Suleiman (ed.), *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances* (Durham, London 1998).

- ⁴⁸ In 2001, the Hungarian writer Imre Kertész stressed the link between the minimalist code of passive survival that had developed in Eastern Europe over the previous decades, and the explosive rise of nationalist sentiment and a rhetoric of catastrophe in the 1990s: 'Precisely because they did not conquer their liberty, and their values, which had mostly served strategies of national and personal survival, suddenly turned out to be, at the very least, useless..., did wide sections of these societies experience the liberty that fell into their lap almost as a catastrophe[;] indulging in self-pity and nursing historical resentment and frustrations unleashes the worst forces of the nation, who see nothing but catastrophe in everything and make use of this perception in their own interest'. See *Vengry i Evropa: sbornik esse* (Moscow 2002), p. 489.
- ⁴⁹ See Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge 1996); Joseph Held (ed.), *Populism in Eastern Europe. Racism, Nationalism, and Society* (Boulder 1996); Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe* (Princeton 1998); Andras Bozoki (ed.), *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe* (Budapest, New York 1999); N.V. Korovicina, *Srednee pokolenie v sociokul'turnoi dinamike Vostochnoi Evropy vtoroi poloviny XX veka* (Moscow 1999), pp. 148-153ff., Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York 2000; Cas Mudde, "Populism in Eastern Europe", in *East European Perspectives*, Vol. 2, Nr. 5-6 (2000), see <<http://www.rferl.org/eeepreport/2000/03/05-06>>. On similar intellectual phenomena and initiatives in the Baltic states, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, see e.g. Karl Ajmermakher [= Karl Eimermacher] and Gennadij Bordyugov (eds.), *Natsional'nye istorii v sovetskom i postsovetskom gosudarstvakh* (Moscow 1999), pp. 83-94, 123-131, and 195-230, Natalya Yakovenko, *Parallel'nyi svit: doslidzhennya z istorii uyavlen' ta idei v Ukraïni XVI-XVII st.* (Kiev 2002), pp. 333-379. Urs Altermatt devotes the entire second part of his monograph on ethno-nationalism to these processes, which may be termed a kind of collective rebellion against Europe, heralding among other things the end of a short (15-20 year) period of the spread and domination of a "transitional" ideology and rhetoric of post-modernity and post-modernism in the West. Altermatt uses his discussion of the "new" state nationalism to discuss anew the old model of the nation-state, which had seemingly become obsolete in a period of globalization, post-modernity, European unity etc. See Urs Altermatt, *Etnonatsionalizm v Evrope* (Moscow 2000), pp. 123-228.
- ⁵⁰ Peter Esterkhazi, op. cit., p. 176. The scope of this article does not allow me to discuss this search and its results, a search that had already been conducted in the 1990s by intellectuals on the Western "margins" of the

former USSR who were trying to picture their regions as parts of Central (or East-Central) Europe. The Western Ukrainian (L'viv, Ivano-Frankivs'k, etc.) example is discussed in Igor' Klekh's essays collected in his *Kniga s mnozhestvom okon i dverei* (Moscow 2002), pp. 245-329 and reflected in the L'viv-based cultural journal *J* (Yi), especially in its special issue on Globalization, the European Union, and Ukraine <www.ji.lviv.ua/N19texts/N19-glob.htm>. See also Mykola Ryabchuk, "Halychyna mizh Skhodom i Zakhodom", in Mykola Ryabchuk, *Dvi Ukraïny: real'ni mezhi, virtual'ni viiny* (Kiev 2003), pp. 195-245.

- ⁵¹ "The nation remains the fundamental framework for any cultural activity", stresses Krzysztof Pomian. See his contribution in *Entre mondialisation et nations: Quelle Europe?* (Paris 1997), p. 46, as well as his other works on this topic: Krzysztof Pomian, *L'Europe et ses nations* (Paris 1990); idem, "Integration européenne, déchirements européens", in *Le Débat*, Nr. 114 (2001), pp. 18-30.
- ⁵² The development and expression of notions of "splendid" and "terrible" Europe in European art house films in the 1990s is analyzed in the works of Natalya Samutina such as *Sovremennoe evropeiskoe kino i ideya kul'tury (proshlogo)* (Moscow 2003).
- ⁵³ This is why some contemporary authors who start by describing or even "discovering" globalization (just like modernization earlier on) quickly move on to codifying forms of "resistance" to globalization or phenomena that don't fit their earlier conception. These phenomena, however, are in fact what makes up the processes they are groping to describe, they are the form of these processes – and often enough, in their exaggerated and grotesque way, their most striking form.



Václav Havel

VÁŽENÍ PANE DOKTORE!
(duben 1975)

V obdivu nad tím, jak přešed autor
vyslovil i moje pocity a myšlenky,
a ve strachu o něj, opsal jsem
svou reakci na jeho dopis. Jsem
šťastný, že se s ním můžu se-
dět a psát esej o kultuře, a dě-
vám je čist přání, abych kromě
souhlasu pro jeho názory, se
soudržně mohl občas i hádat. Měl
by to doktor případně mohl nechat
postihnout.

Dear buddy

Václav Havel