

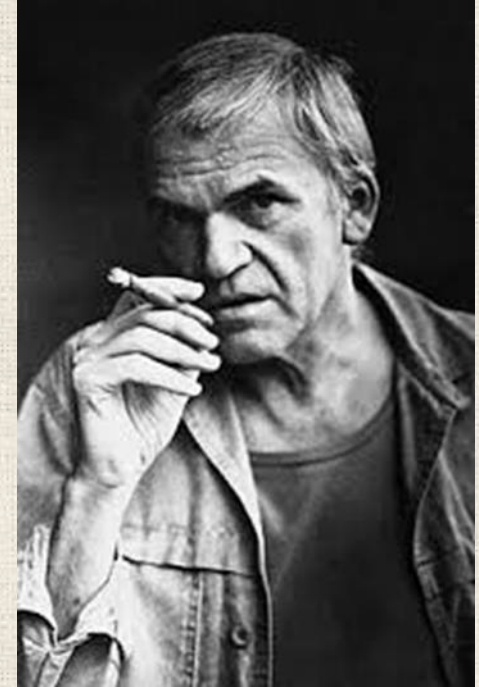
1. What is (East-)Central Europe?

Required and recommended texts to read

- Milan Kundera: The Tragedy of Central Europe. The New York Review of Books. Vol. 31, No. 7 (April 26), 1984, https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2016/MEB404/um/Kundera_1984.pdf
- Szűcs, Jenő (and Julianna Parti): The Three Historical Regions of Europe: An outline. Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae. Vol. 29, No. 2/4 (1983), pp. 131-184

What is the tragedy of Central Europe according to Milan Kundera?

What was the 1956 revolution?



1929-

1956 October 23rd – November 4th

What was the 1956 revolution?



1956 October 23rd – November 4th

How is the 1956 revolution connected to the notion of Europe?
How is the 1956 revolution connected to culture?



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„We are going to die for Hungary and for Europe”
(director of the Hungarian News Agency, in nov. 1956)



How is the 1956 revolution connected to the notion of Europe?

„The moment Hungary is no longer European – that is, no longer Western – it is driven from its own destiny, beyond its own history: it loses the essence of its identity.”

„... the small nation is one whose very existence may be put in question at any moment; a small nation can disappear and it knows it. (...) The Polish anthem (...) starts with the verse: ‚Poland has not yet perished...’ ”



How is the 1956 revolution connected to culture?

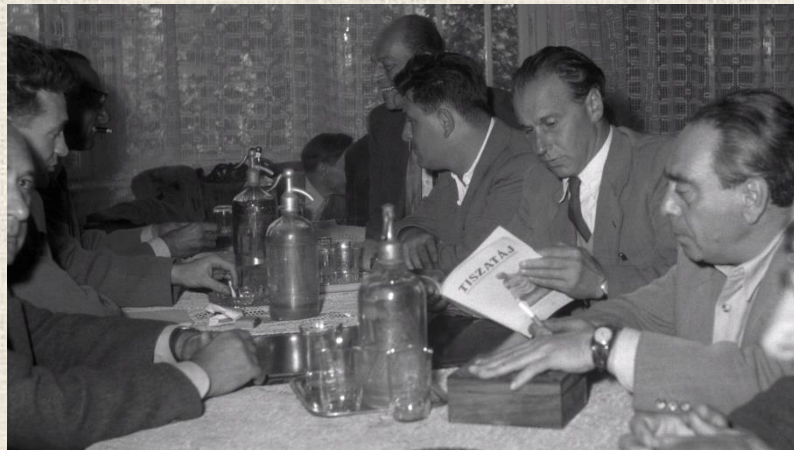
What value is European unity based on?

Middle Ages: Shared religion, God

Modern era: Culture

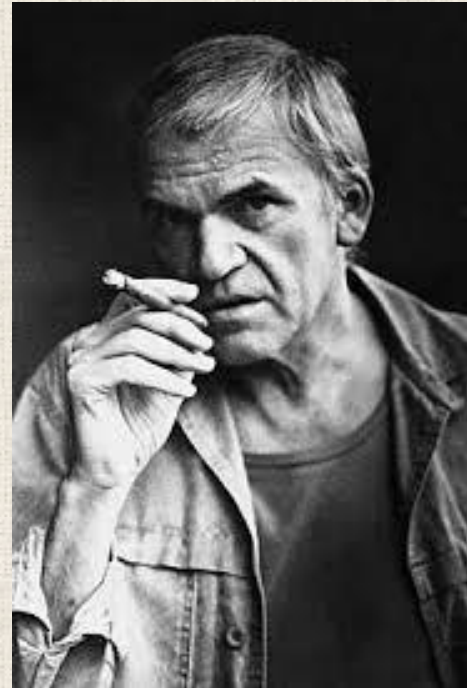
Now: Tehnical feats? Marketplace? Mass media? Politics? (But which politics?)

„... the Central European revolts were not nourished by the newspapers, radio, or television-that is, by the "media. They were prepared, shaped, realized by novels, poetry, theater, cinema, historiography, literary reviews, popular comedy and cabaret, philosophical discussions-that is, by culture.”



What is Kundera's Central Europe?

- Not a geographical term, but cultural and political
- It is Europe (West) kidnapped by Russia
- It is a part of Europe (West) that still lives in the modern era



Szűcs, Jenő: The Three Historical Regions of Europe



1928-1988



Szűcs, Jenő: The Three Historical Regions of Europe

Around 800 AD Carolingian Empire , Occidens, Imperium, Europa to the **Elbe-Leitha lines**: Christian and feudal society ↔ Byzantium and Islam

From Great Schism of 1054 Europa Occidens stretched further to include a new region to the East to the **eastern borders of the Polish and Hungarian Kingdom**: Roman Catholicism ↔ Orthodox Church

From 1500 AD **Elbe-Leitha lines** becomes dominant again: Western Europe, modernization, liberties ↔ second serfdom

Szűcs, Jenő: The Three Historical Regions of Europe

West: Romanesque and Gothic styles of architecture, Renaissance, Reformation, autonomous cities, Estates, separation of sacred and secular, modernization, liberties, free contractual relations....

East: caesaropapism, patriarchal relations, second serfdom:
„The unmistakable legislative omens of the ‚second serfdom‘ appeared with awesome synchronicity in Brandenburg (1494), Poland (1496), Bohemia (1497), Hungary (1492 and 1498), and also in Russia (1497)“

Szűcs, Jenő: The Three Historical Regions of Europe

In-between (East-Central) Europe:

Eastern developments on (weaker) Western basis

„Europe in our own times, another 500 years later still, is divided more clearly than ever before into two ‚camps‘ almost exactly along that same line (with a slight deviation in Thuringia). It is as if Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt had studied carefully the status quo of the age of Charlemagne on the 1130th anniversary of his death.”

„The ‚East-Central European‘ character of Hungarian history is a specific formula, since in a hybrid way it has a dual aspect: on the one hand its early modern, ‚Eastern European‘ turn increased the distortions and unbalance of the economic and social structure to a degree inordinate by comparison with the Western formula, and on the other the turn could not eliminate the ‚Western‘ elements of that structure.”

Divided Europe (until 1914)

N.A. [French? Dominican? monk] Descriptio Europae Orientalis.
[Description of Eastern Europe] 1308 [geographical treatise in Latin]: Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Russia, Albania, Hungary, Poland, Bohemia.

Regional differences in cultural or economic development begin to appear in the 16th, 17th century.

Dichotomy:

Catholic-Protestant ↔ Orthodox-Muslim

Germanic-Latin ↔ Slavic-Greek

German „Mitteleurope“ [=Central Europe]: German Empire + Austria-Hungary + Skandinavia, Low countries, Switzerland, Balkan

Divided Europe – Interwar period

Oscar Halecki:

Russia is not Europe. Eastern Europe is: Poland, Baltics, Belorussia, Ukraine.... Former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Jaroslav Bidlo:

Western Christianity	Byzantine Orthodoxy
Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Slovenes, Baltic, Hungarians...	Belorussians, Ukrainian, Serbs, Bulgarian, Macedonians, Greeks, Romanian, Russians

@ universities and institutes (in the „West“):

Eastern Europe, Europe de l'Est, Europa Orientale, Osteuropa
Russian and East European Institute

Other approaches

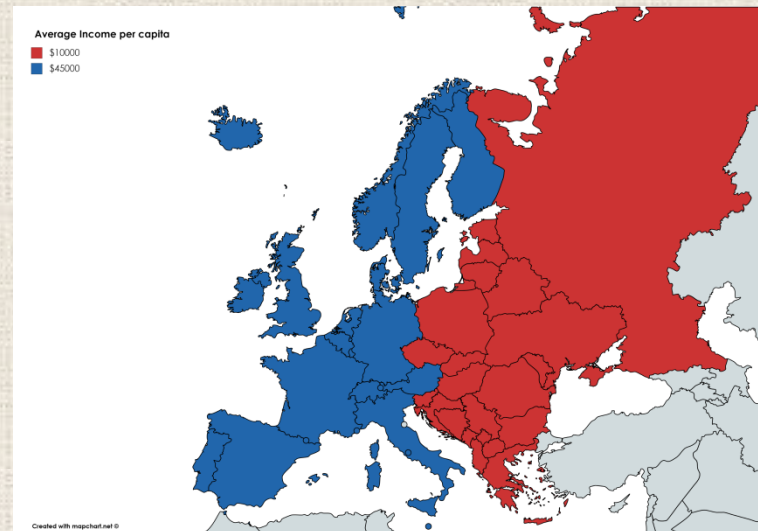
Zwischen Europe (In between Europe)

Eastern part of Mitteleuropa... between Germans and Russians

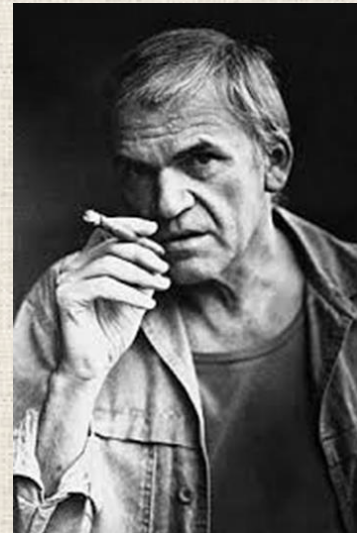
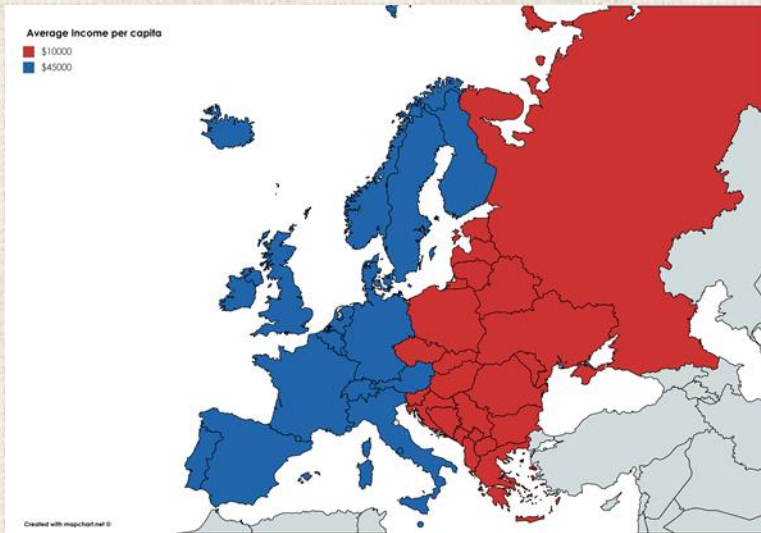
Südost-Europa (South-East Europe)

What starts when you leave Vienna towards Istanbul

Eastern Europe = Behind the Iron Curtain, Communist Europe



(East-)Central Europe?



In the
1980s

East-Central Europe post-1989

(for the purpose of the course)

In a narrow sense: Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary

In a broader sense (Oscar Halecki, post-1945): All the countries that are in between the Baltic, Adriatic, Aegean, Black Seas or between Russia and Germany: Baltic states, Poland, Czechoslovakia (Czechia), Carpathian Basin, Balkan peninsula (minus Greece)

= Post-Communist small countries; the „New Europe”
(Donald Rumsfeld)

East-Central Europe – topics of the course

- 2.) National “revival” of imagined communities => Empires, belated nationalisms and ethno-territorial conflicts
- 3.) Great power dictates, limited options => outside influences, coercion, occupations, forced peace treaties („dictates”)
- 4.) The idea of confederation => plans for regional unions
- 5.) Bloodlands => the 20th century mass-killings and genocide committed by totalitarian regimes and allies
- 6.) Shades of red => the era of communism and Soviet-type systems
- 7.) Transition to the end of history => political, economic transformation (system change) in 1989
- 8.) Defreezing: ghosts return => contemporary political-ideological-cultural turning back: nationalism, populism, illiberalism
- 9.) Future paths => predicting the political future (?)
- 10.) Similar in being unique => what are the typical cultural traits of the nations in the region (are there such things at all?)

Thank you for your attention!

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