Lily Gardner Feldman / Raisa Barash / Samuel Goda / André Zempelburg (eds.)

The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

V&R

Research in Peace and Reconciliation

Edited by
Martin Leiner

in co-operation with
Benoît Bourgine (Louvain-la-Neuve),
François Dermange (Genf), Dennis Doyle (Dayton/Ohio),
Matthias Gockel (Jena), Makoto Mizutani (Kyoto),
Arie Nadler (Tel Aviv), Bertram Schmitz (Jena)
and David Tombs (Belfast/Dublin)

Volume 4

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The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

With 12 Figures and 10 Tables

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Contents

Lily Gardner Feldman et al. (eds.): The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

6

Contents

Lily Gardner Feldman

Introduction to the Present Volume

Most of the essays in this fourth volume of Research in Peace and Reconciliation (RIPAR) originate in the 2014 Summer School at Jena University on "Societies in Transition:the Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation." The remainder of the essays are provided by outside experts in the field. At the time of the Summer School of the Jena Center for Reconciliation Studies, the former Soviet Union was in the throes of crisis following the March 2014 Russian annexation/ integration of Crimea and the movement of Russian soldiers into Eastern Ukraine to aid Ukrainian separatists. By summer 2016, the violence had taken the lives of 9, 500 people, with many more wounded and displaced, providing a dominant image of conflict in this region rather than reconciliation. However, entrenched conflict is just the time when we should be thinking creatively about how to achieve reconciliation in the medium-term and long-term; we cannot wait passively until the conflict is over. Moreover, elsewhere in the region there have been small steps towards reconciliation. Most of the essays assembled in this volume were written in 2015; even though they do not cover subsequent developments, they do provide a bench mark to measure the subsequent degree of progress.

"Reconciliation" is a frequently ill-defined term. As a reality and as an aspiration in this volume it encompasses three senses: an incipient, thin and minimal form amounting to passive, peaceful coexistence after enmity; a more elaborate, intermediate and engaged form that is captured by the term rapprochement; and a thick or fuller form denoting active friendship, empathy, trust, magnanimity and, ultimately, amity. Beyond the definitional goal, the volume addresses ten themes:

1. Reconciliation as a process and/or as a terminal condition.
2. The requirements for the transition from conflict to a reconciliatory process, and the obstacles to beginning a process of reconciliation.
3. The emotional and symbolic dimensions of reconciliation ("soft" expressions) and/or the pragmatic and political ("hard" expressions).
4. The role of identity formation in either encouraging or inhibiting reconciliation.
5. The stages or sequencing of the steps involved in reconciliation.

Lily Gardner Feldman et al. (eds.): The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

8   Lily Gardner Feldman

6. The institutionalization or instruments of reconciliation so that it is an enduring rather than ad hoc phenomenon.
7. The challenges to reconciliation from the domestic and international systems.
8. The actors involved, whether individual leaders, societal groups (civil society), governments, the media, third parties.
9. The role of "history," "memory" and "remembrance" either as catalysts for or obstacles to reconciliation.
10. The connection among the past, the present and the future in actual or prospective reconciliation.

The first two essays (Leiner; Goda) focus on conceptual issues. The next two (Barash; Konkka) consider internal developments in Russia concerning attitudes toward the West. The next two (Rojansky; Korostelina) analyze attitudes of Russia and Ukraine toward one another. Two essays (Wezel; Kiss) address Russia's relations with other parts of the former Soviet Union: the Baltics and Georgia/the Caucusus. The penultimate two essays (Jonaszko; Bachmann) encompass the broader East Central Europe: Polish-Russian relations and Polish-Ukrainian ties. The final chapter takes us further into East Central Europe through its focus on the Balkans.

In his chapter on setting the stage, *Martin Leiner* examines in depth the term "East Central Europe," using analysts' categories of race, ethnicity, religion, language, geography and identity. "History," particularly World War II and communism, is both cause and consequence of conflict and still presses indelibly in a limited process of reconciliation. The 2015 refugee crisis, itself a product of the absence of reconciliation in the Middle East, is the biggest challenge for reconciliation within the EU as a whole, between member-states and within individual countries.

Samuel Goda's analysis of the OSCE and reconciliation discusses both theory and practice. In addition to looking at reconciliation as a relational, structural and procedural term, he unpacks the attendant Deutschian concepts of "security community" and "pluralistic security community." In its comprehensive goals, institutions and practices, he finds the OSCE well-suited to conflict resolution and reconciliation, although the challenges are considerable in frozen conflicts such as over Transnistria between Moldova and Romania and Moldova and Russia.

Raisa Barash identifies the officially-stated, internal goal for Russia of historical reconciliation (address divisions over civil war; accept crimes of communism; reevaluate attitudes toward Stalin; revisit post-war relations with Eastern Europe). She shows, however, with some exceptions for Hungary and the Czech Republic, how reality is quite different, for Russian officialdom is incapable of fulfilling the primary ingredients of reconciliation: self-criticism and self-reflection regarding the past. Focusing particularly on the Putin-Medvedev period, she demonstrates the Russian capacity for myth-

Lily Gardner Feldman et al. (eds.): The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

Introduction to the Present Volume 9

making as it glorifies the Soviet past, especially Victory Day in World War II, as a source of collective identity, pride in policy and social achievements, and social solidarity. Rather than using the last decade as an opportunity for reconciliation with the West, Putin has instead conducted a policy of foreign policy isolationism in which the West is perceived as the enemy.

In her chapter about Russian internal narratives about the past and present concerning images of the West, *Olga Konkka* paints essentially the same picture as Barash. She evaluates in detail some seventy school history textbooks and delineates four Russian strategies to depict as the enemy the West as a whole and individual countries, i.e. the opposite of reconciliation. There had been some tentative Russian steps in a more positive direction in the framework of the Council of Europe, but they have been marginalized in renewed ethno-nationalism as the basis for collective identity.

Matthew Rojansky's discussion of Russian and Ukrainian narratives about common history and memory (the Great Famine 1932–33; the Stalinist Great Purge 1936–1938; World War II) traces their concordance or competition depending on the nature of the regimes in both countries. The clearest discrepancy between the two narratives has been evident in the Euromaidan revolution and the war in Donbas. Drawing lessons for the Russian-Ukrainian situation from other international cases, Rojansky is hopeful that minimal reconciliation might be possible in the future. He specifies the ingredients for this forward movement: a breakout event, truth-telling, accountability, bilateral institutions at the societal and governmental levels, third-party involvement, a common agenda for the future. He assesses potential catalysts for reconciliation in human rights organizations, popular culture figures, the churches, political leaders, and generational change.

Karina Korostelina offers an identity-based approach to reconciliation by outlining social identity theories that limit the significance of rigid social identification to improve the chances of individual and inter-group comity and to balance power dynamics between actors. Korostelina utilizes public opinion polls and her own research on narratives regarding Ukrainian approaches toward history, Russia, and the West to disaggregate attitudes and inter-group identification. She demonstrates significant regional differences in the Western, Central, Eastern and Southern parts of Ukraine. She characterizes a reconciliation process in the full sense as a transformative process redefining relationships and stereotypes between conflicting parties, and offers recommendations for its realization that are linked to major changes in beliefs, perceptions, norms and values, and power.

Memory conflicts are seen as a barrier to active and deep reconciliation by *Katja Wezel* in her analysis of post-Soviet disputes between the Baltic states and Russia. She documents how the tensions between Russia and the Baltic states since the latter's independence in 1990 have revolved around three issues: the memory and interpretation of the past; the place and status of large Russian minorities in the Baltic states; and border conflicts of territory

Lily Gardner Feldman

remaining with Russia after 1991. In addition to detailing the vicissitudes of the various bilateral relationships, she looks at the internal actions and instruments to address history, such as the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian history commissions created in 1998. While deeming high the hurdles to active friendship, Wezel rates positively the possibilities for rapprochement, based on mutual understanding of shared everyday life under communism.

The prospects for Russian-Georgian "normalization," a weak form of reconciliation, are the center of the chapter by *Annamária Kiss*. She examines the ups and downs of Russian-Georgian relations, including the August 2008 war, and their post-war efforts for an improvement via bilateral and multilateral institutions. She uses Zartman's notion of a pragmatic "mutually hurting stalemate" as an incentive for reconciliation in the first step, to be followed by his long-term "mutually enticing opportunity." She concludes that the main sore-point between Russia and Georgia – the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia – is not likely to alter. Whereas de-occupation of the areas is the priority for Georgia, Russia is content with the influence it extends over these *de facto* states. The Georgia-Russia relationship still has not experienced either of Zartman's two forms of incentives for the process of reconciliation, despite some positive signs, such as improved relations after the 2012 change in government in Georgia.

Jolanta Jonaszko explores the place of the Katyn massacre in the larger picture of Polish-Russian relations. In addition to offering thinner and thicker conceptions of reconciliation (following David Crocker), she notes how Russia and Poland interpret the term differently. She identifies five periods of Russian-Polish interaction over Katyn in the years 1990–2015: Careful rapprochement, 1990–1995; symbolic reconciliation, 1995–2000; standstill, 2004–2008; warming and breakthrough, 2008–2011; cooling and crisis, 2011–2015. She elaborates on three general lessons of reconciliation from this case study: the first concerning process and structure, the second relating to attitudes, motivations, and the third centering on the subject matter in need of reconciliation. She concludes with observations about the limits of pragmatism, the role of values, and future historical frameworks of cooperation and commonality.

Klaus Bachmann seeks greater understanding of the nature of reconciliation between Poland and Ukraine. Using the Nadler-Schnabel framework for inter-group dynamics and a variety of survey results, he classifies the Polish-Ukrainian interaction as three different "emotional reconciliatory steps." Based on the socio-emotional model of reconciliation, he finds more talk about reconciliation in Polish-Ukrainian relations than reconciliation in practice in which shifts in attitudes would be evident, as was the case between France and Germany and Poland and Germany. The two sides remain divided, for example, on the key issue of who is the perpetrator and who is the victim. Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation is, then, an incipient, rather than well-developed, process.

Lily Gardner Feldman et al. (eds.): The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

Introduction to the Present Volume 11

Mimoza Telaku and *Shifra Sagy* also employ the Nadler-Schnabel socio-psychological approach to assess reconciliation, this time between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo, although their primary theoretical framework is the collective narratives and acculturation literature. Their statistical analysis shows that "integration attitudes of acculturation are found positively related to both empathy towards in-group collective narratives and 'other' group's collective narratives." In terms of practical implications, empathy could be the first step in limiting hostilities between groups involved in conflict; and psychological and emotional damage may be more enduring than cognitive or behavioral dimensions.

The editors hope that the observations about conflict and cooperation offered in this volume will add significantly to the burgeoning literature of reconciliation. These essays demonstrate that we need a variety of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives to grapple with conflict and to promote reconciliation. We are grateful to the Jena Summer School for inspiring these reflections, and extend our thanks to all the authors for their commitment and dedication to this volume.

Martin Leiner

Setting the Stage: An Introductory Clarification of Concepts of East Central Europe

Introduction

For the first time in 2014 the Jena Center for Reconciliation Studies organized its Summer School "Societies in Transition. The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation" together with an institution which focusses on history, namely the Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe (*Institut für historische Ostmitteleuropaforschung*) in Marburg. Throughout the world, history matters when reconciliation is at stake, but in East Central Europe, it seems that history is even more important. Marci Shore's *A Taste of Ashes* starts with an important characterization of Eastern Europe:

Eastern Europe is special. It is Europe, only more so. It is a place where people live and die, only more so. In these lands between the West and Russia, the past is palpable, and heavy. The past is also merciless: by history's caprice, here the Second World War and communism were inseparable historical traumas, one bleeding into the other, as Nazi power gave way to Soviet domination (2013, ix).

During the 2014 Summer School we were confronted with a de facto war in Eastern Ukraine, the annexation/reintegration of Crimea into Russia, the problems of civil dialogue and historical memory inside Russia and increasing tensions between the European Union and Russia. There were concerns about peace and the kind of future almost no one in Europe had experienced in decades. Of course, those conflicts can be understood only if we go back in history and appreciate better how history is influencing the present.[1]

The following chapter provides an overview of the specific problems and opportunities we encounter in a region some people call East Central Europe. And this specific region is directly touched by actual conflicts. The concept of East Central Europe is itself part of the conflict because it poses a fundamental question about where the borders of Europe are. Concerning the problems of this region one can pose some general questions. How far into the East do Western feelings of belonging reach? Does it make any sense to draw a border

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1 Already in the nineteenth century Russia considered itself as a protective power for the Northern Black Sea region and provoked violent reactions of Western countries, for example in the Crimea war.

Lily Gardner Feldman et al. (eds.): The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

14   Martin Leiner

somewhere between Germany and Russia or would it be better to see European commonalities from West and East, from Portugal to Siberia and to think in a framework of "our common European home"?[2] The other basic question is what are the consequences of the first fundamental question in terms of political borders, solidarity and cooperation in common institutions like the EU and NATO? In the following pages, I will give an overview of interpretations by American and German scholars as well as the perspective of Milan Kundera.

Samuel Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* draws a narrow border between Western European and Eastern European civilizations. Based mainly on religious criteria, countries like Ukraine, Romania, Bosnia, Serbia and Greece are part of Eastern Europe. According to Huntington, conflicts can easily break out between the different civilizations (Huntington 2002).
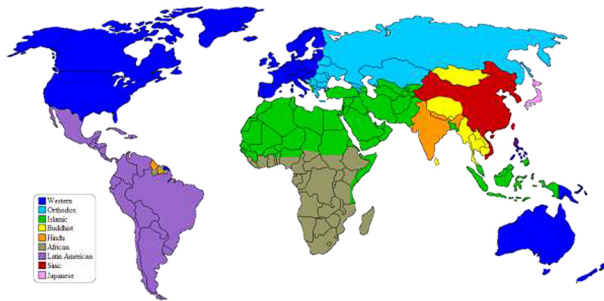
Figure 1: Huntington's View of East Central Europe; Source: https://en.wikipedia. org/wiki/Clash_of_Civilizations.

An even closer border between Eastern and Western Europe can be drawn if one uses the criteria of ethnicity and language. The Slavic languages also include the languages of formerly and actually Catholic countries like the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, Poland and Slovenia. Pan-Slavism in the nineteenth century was based on linguistic and ethnic similarities and made a strong argument for emphasizing the solidarity between all Slavic-speaking people.[3]

The closest border was drawn by the Cold War. Parts of Germany and Hungary clearly became elements of the East European bloc, dominated by the Soviet Union.

With the term of East Central Europe, we find ourselves in an ambiguous situation: On one hand, the idea of East Central Europe historically tried to give more importance to the nations, cultures and states in the region between

2 That formula was used by several leading politicians of the Soviet Union. Most famously Gorbachev used it in a speech delivered in Prague in April 1987. See Svec 1988.
3 See Petrovich 1985 and Milojkovic-Djuric 1994.

Lily Gardner Feldman et al. (eds.): The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

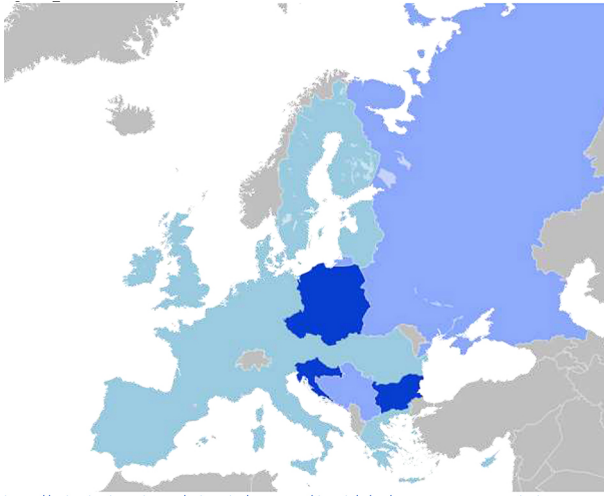An Introductory Clarification of Concepts of East Central Europe   15

Figure 2: A Pan-Slavic Conception of East Central Europe; Source: https://upload. wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/87/European_Union_and_Sla vic_countries.svg/1200px-European_Union_and_Slavic_countries.svg.png (the map does not include Lithuania and Latvia because of the absence of strong pan-Slavic thinking in these countries).

Germany/Austria/Italy on one side and Russia on the other. It was often used to foster either independence in the East or integration in the West (Germany, Austria or Western Europe and the EU). Focussing on East Central Europe means recognizing the importance of cultural achievements in music, art, poetry, and the sciences in countries like Latvia, Poland and Hungary which are impressive but underestimated. On the other hand, talking about East Central Europe also means dealing with the polemical legacy of that concept and it raises significant questions: Which nations belong to Eastern Central Europe and which do not? Are Ukraine and Belarus too close to Russia to be considered part of Eastern Central Europe? Are there enough commonalities between a Latvian and a Hungarian or between a Pole and an Albanian to bind them together as East Central Europeans? These are the questions, I would like to answer in the first part of this chapter by drawing on Milan Kundera's ideas. The second and third parts of the chapter address the problematic legacies of East Central Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries respectively, and the fourth part analyzes the efforts to deal with those legacies. The final section of the chapter relates to the contemporary challenges for reconciliation in the region.

Lily Gardner Feldman et al. (eds.): The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

16   Martin Leiner
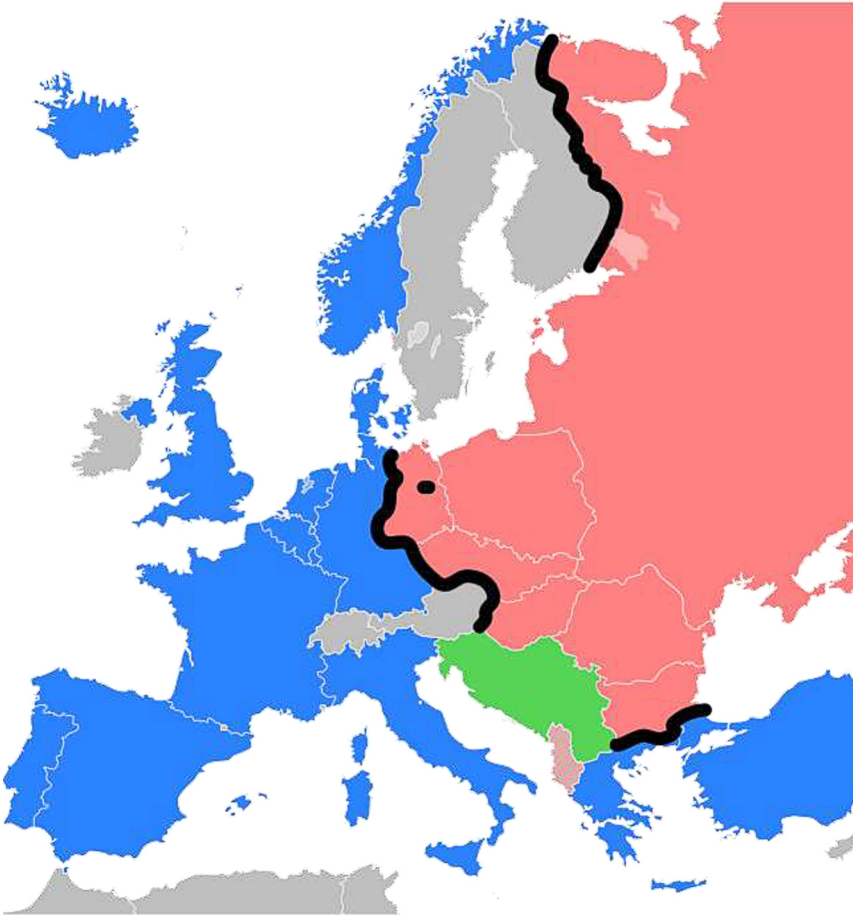
Figure 3: East Central Europe in the Cold War; Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Iron_Curtain.

The Central Europe Debate Revisited: Milan Kundera's Prophetic Article

In the early 1980s, Czech writer Milan Kundera published in the French revue *Débat* a pioneering article: "The Stolen West or the Tragedy of Central Europe" (*Un occident kidnappé ou la tragédie de l'Europe centrale*) (Kundera 1983). The article was prophetic in so far as it anticipated and inspired the debate about what he calls Central Europe years before the end of the Cold War. As parts of Central Europe, Kundera identifies three nations – the Hungarian, the Czech and the Polish – and then refers to commonalities with Slovaks,

Lily Gardner Feldman et al. (eds.): The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

An Introductory Clarification of Concepts of East Central Europe   17

Lithuanians, Romanians, Croats, Slovenes, Jews and even Austrians and Germans. He mentions Austria explicitly: "Today, all of Central Europe has been subjugated by Russia with the exception of little Austria, which, more by chance than by necessity, has retained its independence, but ripped out of its Central European setting, it has lost most of its individual character and all of its importance" (Kundera 1983, p. 8).

According to Kundera, there are some aspects that constitute the commonalities of Central Europe.

Like Huntington, Kundera points out the religious division: Europe "was always divided into two halves which evolved separately: one tied to ancient Rome and the Catholic Church, the other anchored in Byzantium and the Orthodox Church" (Kundera 1983, p. 1). With the exception of Romania the two halves are also divided by alphabets: the Latin in the West, the Cyrillic in the East. For thousands of years Central European nations participated in the history of the West.

That identity is constructed as pro-Western Europe in contradistinction to Russia. In Central Europe, Russia is seen "not just as one more European power but as a singular civilization, an other civilization" (Kundera 1983, p. 4).

The great Hungarian revolt of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968 and the Polish revolts of 1956, 1968, 1970, all were supported by almost the entire population in each case and were part of the struggle of Hungarian, Czech and Polish nations to be part of the West again. Even dissidents in those countries were very different from the opposition in Russia.

Besides the issue of Western identity, there are three main commonalities of Central Europeans which unite them also in comparison with Germans or Western Europeans. First is the reality of their experience of being small nations. "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" (Kundera 1983, p. 4). That vulnerability also affects the relationship of Central Europeans towards history and their character: "The people of Central Europe are not conquerors […] they represent the wrong side of this history; they are its victims and outsiders. It's this disabused view of history that is the source of their culture, of their wisdom, of their 'nonserious spirit' that mocks grandeur and glory" (Kundera 1983, p. 8).

The second common experience of most Central East European people is the fact of the Habsburg Empire, which, in its best practices, accepted pluralism to a previously unknown extent in Europe (Stourzh 1985). Kundera sees the Habsburg Empire as a missed political opportunity as well as an experience of cultural exchange and flourishing of Central Europe.

The most important group to integrate the culture of Central Europe were the Jews. "Indeed, no other part of the world has been so deeply marked by the influence of Jewish genius. Aliens everywhere and everywhere at home, lifted above national quarrels, the Jews in the twentieth century were the principal cosmopolitan, integrating element in Central Europe: they were its intellectual

Lily Gardner Feldman et al. (eds.): The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

18   Martin Leiner

cement, a condensed version of its spirit, creators of its spiritual unity"
(Kundera 1983, p. 7).

Kundera concludes that the fall of the Habsburg Empire, the Holocaust and
the Soviet occupation were the three tragedies of Central Europe, but the main
tragedy is that Europe forgot what it had lost.

In revisiting Kundera's views today, two considerations seem obvious. The
first one concerns the following question: does speaking about East Central
Europe as a region mean using the precise description Kundera gave? One
could also wonder: do nations he did not explicitly count as part of Central
Europe nonetheless belong to it? Contemporary Ukraine would be an
interesting case to test his perspective. Kundera wrote in 1983: "One of the
great European nations (there are nearly forty million Ukrainians) is slowly
disappearing" (Kundera 1983, p. 12), although his point was more to make a
distinction between Ukraine and Central European countries than to show
similarities. Nonetheless, we could find some resonance of his basic points
about Central Europe also in Ukraine: the experience of a small country that
can disappear; the important role of the Jewish population; the Habsburg
Empire experience in the Western part in cities like Lwiw/Lwow/Lemberg and
the Bukovina; a relatively strong Catholic minority; and a history of struggle
against the Soviet regime – all could be seen as reasons to count Ukraine as
part of East Central Europe and to reflect on the political consequences of such
an inclusion.

A further question to be posed is how would Kundera see Russia today?
Kundera wavers: "But am I being too absolute in contrasting Russia and
Western civilization? Isn't Europe though divided into east and west, still a
single entity anchored in ancient Greece and Judeo-Christian thought? Of
course" (Kundera 1983, p. 3). He also mentions the attraction of Russia toward
the West in the nineteenth century, but he believes that "Russian communism
vigorously reawakened Russia's old anti-Western obsessions and turned it
brutally against Europe" (Kundera 1983, p. 3).

Several critical reflections on Kundera regarding Russia are in order. First,
in Russia there is a long tradition of the conflict between more Western-
oriented intellectuals, politicians and citizens and those who stress more the
differences with the West? Reading Russian authors one could feel mostly the
disappointment about the West than traditional opposition. Russians often see
themselves as defenders of Europe against Mongols, against Turks, against
Napoleon and against Hitler. And we should consider that there has never been
much gratitude from European nations for what Russians did. On the
contrary, in the Crimea War (1853–56) the alliance between France, Great
Britain and the Kingdom of Sardinia with the Ottoman Empire against Russia
was considered a kind of betrayal by other "Christian" nations (Figes 2010).

The second aspect to be noted is that in the Soviet Union, as in
contemporary Russia, there was a struggle between Russian nationalistic
approaches and international solidarity with all nations. Even if Russian

Lily Gardner Feldman et al. (eds.): The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

An Introductory Clarification of Concepts of East Central Europe   19

nationalistic approaches became dominant during World War II and in relationship with occupied countries, the international ideology was never completely denied or ineffective.

The third reflection is that using Kundera's elements to describe a Central European identity, some are also valid for Russia, such as the importance of Jewish intellectuals or the suffering under communism and the struggle for identity and culture. Even the experience of being conquered or dominated by stronger nations is not completely unknown by Russia. Between 1240 and about 1350 Russia was dominated by the Golden Horde; in the Polish-Lithuanian War of 1605–18 Moscow was conquered by the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth; in 1812 Napoleon conquered Moscow; in 1941–42 Nazi Germany came close to Moscow. The Orthodox Church often adheres to a narrative describing Byzantine, Serbian or Russian Christians as abandoned and sometimes betrayed and attacked by Western Christianity. As is the case for Central European nations, victimhood is often part of Russian identity.

When talking about East Central Europe, even if it makes no sense geographically to include Russia, the borders of culture and identity between Central Europe and Russia should nonetheless be more fluid; and there should be more receptivity and understanding and less demarcation and opposition, not only between Europe and countries like Ukraine or Moldova, but also between Europe and Russia. Such an understanding would not only aid reconciliation, but also would mean more appreciation of history, cultural exchanges and different mentalities.

The Problematic Legacy of the Nineteenth Century: Imperial Domination and Aggressive Nationalism

Using the term East Central Europe also requires acknowledging problematic legacies. In the nineteenth century the term "Central Europe" (*Mitteleuropa*) often was used to express German claims to dominate the region between the Baltic Sea and the Adriatic Sea even in regions mainly populated by Polish, Czech or Hungarian speaking populations. Already the liberal economist Friedrich List developed his idea of a "Central Europe (*Mitteleuropa*) based on a close alliance between Prussia and Austria with Hamburg and Trieste as its two great harbour cities" (Quoted in Wandruszka 1980, p. 114). Besides that fundamentally economic vision of Central Europe, there were also more political versions, be it as an alliance of independent states (Constantin Frantz), or as a single nation-state (Heinrich von Gagern).

Referring to Central Europe in nineteenth century Germany was almost always associated with cultural aspects and with an anti-Russian attitude. First crucial discussions took place in the Parliament of Paulskirche in Frankfurt

Lily Gardner Feldman et al. (eds.): The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

20   Martin Leiner

during the 1848 revolution. The preparatory parliament (*Vorparlament*) invited representatives from the non-German speaking populations of the Habsburg Empire to join the parliament in Frankfurt: Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, Croats and others. As a response to that, on June 2, 1848 in Prague a Slavic Congress gathered with Croats, Czechs, Poles, Serbs, Slovenians, Slovaks and even two Russian delegates. That Slavic Congress was forced to leave Prague by the Austrian army bombarding the city in revolutionary unrest. Speakers in the Parliament of Paulskirche welcomed the end of the Slavic Congress that acted more nationalistically than by democratic solidarity. Several Austrian and other speakers in the Paulskirche articulated the conception of a greater Germany. The mission to bring German culture and civilization to the Slavs, to prevent Russian influence and to foster German immigration into Central Europe was often expressed in the speeches in the Paulskirche. The concept of a German-dominated Central Europe reappeared later in many German attempts to expand eastward.

Lacking clear goals for World War I, the German Empire returned to the idea of a Central Europe dominated by Germany (Münkler 2013, p. 216). In the September Program (September 9, 1914), one of the texts describing the aims of the German Reich after winning World War I included plans for Central Europe: "We have to attain a Central European economic alliance (*Verband*) with free trade including France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Austro-Hungary and perhaps Italy, Sweden, Norway. That alliance, probably without a common constitutional leader and respecting on the face of it equal rights of the member but in fact under German dominance, must stabilize the economic predominance of Germany over Central Europe (*Mitteleuropa*)" (Quoted in Mommsen 1977, p. 233). Other plans during the Great War understood *Mitteleuropa* as unification of Germany and Austro-Hungary (Friedrich Naumann) or wanted to include the Ottoman Empire into such a federation (Ernst Jäckh). Florian Greiner has demonstrated that American and British newspapers during World War 1 often used the word *Mitteleuropa* untranslated to describe the imperialistic and dangerous claims of the German Reich (Greiner 2012).

The current German notion of *Mitteleuropa* is more limited than the World War I plan, but nevertheless it more or less includes Germany before 1919 and the former Austro-Hungarian Empire (Beck 2012). The following map shows in blue how the Permanent Commission for Geographical Names (*Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen*) – made up of several German federal and regional ministries, the national library, geographical institutes and other institutions – defines Central Europe in two ways. The first designation is according to nation-states, including the Baltic states. The second definition embraces cultural aspects with territories like Alsace-Lorraine, Western Ukraine, the Italian province of Alto Adige, Oblast Kaliningrad, Banat and Transylvania.

Lily Gardner Feldman et al. (eds.): The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

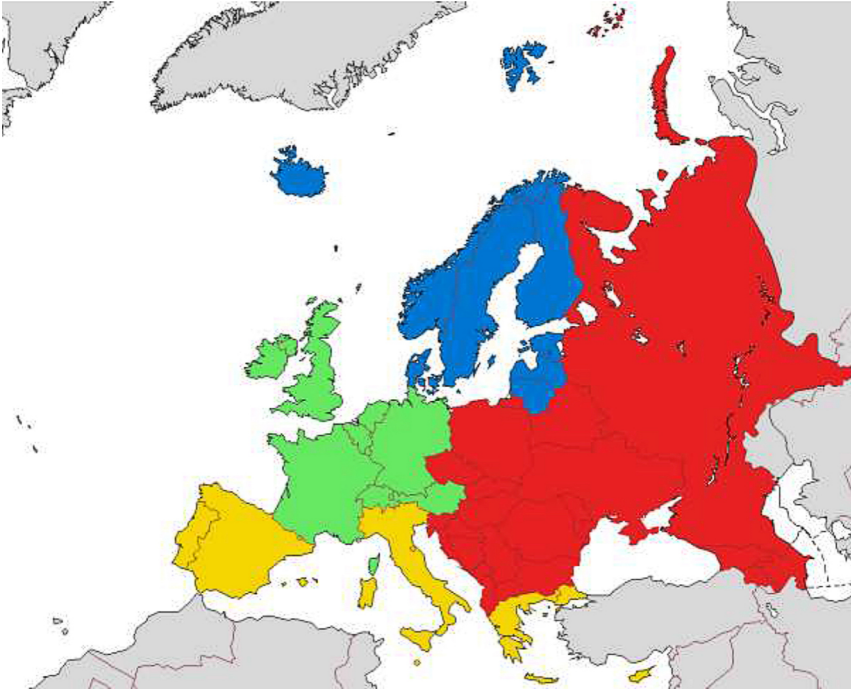An Introductory Clarification of Concepts of East Central Europe   21

Figure 4: The Permanent Commission for Geographical Names' Designation of Central Europe; Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/aa/ European_sub-regions_%28according_to_EuroVoc%2C_the_thesaurus_of_the_ EU%29.png.

The Problematic Legacy of the Twentieth Century: Wars, Genocide(s), Ethnic Cleansings, Cold War

As we have seen, the German notion of *Mitteleuropa* was sometimes an imperialistic and violent idea. Nevertheless there were more neutral versions linked to federalism of independent states and free trade and open borders and to ideals of the Habsburg monarchy. To talk about *Mitteleuropa* also implied limitations to expansion.[4] Those who wanted a much larger imperialistic extension of the German Reich, like Hitler and the National Socialist party, did not use that term, with the exception of some economists who wanted to

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4 Only in one case was the idea of *Mitteleuropa* clearly used for very far reaching plans of expansion. They did not go, however, in the same direction Hitler had in mind. During World War I, the idea of a greater Central Europe was constructed by the best-seller book of Ernst Jäckh, who thought of a Greater Central Europe as a combination of Germany, Austro-Hungary and the former Ottoman Empire as part of a great empire stretching from the North Sea to Arabia.

Lily Gardner Feldman et al. (eds.): The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

22   Martin Leiner

continue the work of the Central European Economic Association (*Mitteleur-opäische Wirtschaftstag*) founded in 1926.

As neither the Soviet Union nor the nation-states formed after the end of World War I were interested in using the term, for much of the twentieth century, only very few people referred to *Mitteleuropa.* The word was mostly used to describe a time zone, the very large Central European time (CET), without cultural or political claims. The map shows in red the Central European time area covering countries which in any other sense clearly are classified as northern (like Norway), southern (like Italy) or western (like France) European.

In the period between 1919 and the 1980s, the countries of East Central Europe shared (as Kundera noted) catastrophic, though contradictory experiences. After the fall of four empires – the Habsburg Empire, the

Figure 5: The Central European Time Zone; Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/ wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/71/Time_zones_of_Europe.svg/1200px-Time_zones_ of_Europe.svg.png.

Lily Gardner Feldman et al. (eds.): The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

An Introductory Clarification of Concepts of East Central Europe   23

Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire and the German Empire – several countries in East Central Europe enjoyed independence for the first time in centuries: the Baltic States, Poland, Czechoslovakia, for a short time Ukraine (1917–1919), and for an even shorter time Belarus (1918). Yugoslavia and Romania became relatively large multi-ethnic states. At the same time, the wars and civil wars and the migration of minorities led to millions of persons losing or leaving their homes. By 1922, some 2 million Russians fled from civil war. By 1920, 800,000 Germans had left Poland; 425,000 Hungarian people had left Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia; and in 1919 the policy of "purification" (*épuration*) forced 150,000 "Germans" to leave Alsace-Lorraine (Ther 2011, pp. 83–88). In 1922, the Lausanne agreement decided on an "exchange of populations" between Turkey and Greece, according to which at least 1,221,849 Greek people had to leave Turkey and 355,635 Turkish people had to leave Greece (Lausanne Conference 1923).

Whereas the emigration of Germans from Poland and of Hungarians from the neighbouring countries was not reinforced through pogroms by the population but rather was organized by the stripping of civil rights through the nation-state itself, the forced flight of the Greek minority from Turkey was clearly a case of ethnic cleansing. As that "exchange of populations" was acknowledged and approved by international law, the Lausanne agreement in a tragic way strengthened the (false) belief that states should be ethnically homogeneous. The activities of the Nazis and their allies during World War II, the new order of East Central Europe after World War II, and the wars in ex-Yugoslavia in the 1990s all put pressure on multi-ethnic, friendly coexistence in the entire regions of East Central and South East Europe.

Countries such as Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, have become nation-states where one language and one ethnic identity clearly dominate. Many of those countries protect minority rights, but rarely are minorities considered a problem-free benefit. After the break-up of Yugoslavia, only Romania and Bosnia are countries with a strong multi-ethnic population, but in a problematic way.

The false belief in ethnically homogenous states, had numerous terrible consequences. One special minority, the Roma, which has no nation-state to receive its refugees, has been a victim in many ethnic cleansings and was also a target of the Nazi Holocaust. As Figure 6 shows, South Eastern European countries from Slovakia to Bulgaria count more than 9 % of Roma in their population. Like Jews, but less systematically, under Nazi rule Sinti and Roma were murdered for racial reasons, with the figure of annihilation reaching, conservatively, at least 100,000. Porajmos (Romani for "devour") is the name Roma and Sinti gave to that extermination. Paradoxically, the situation of the Roma often worsened after the end of communism. After Roma lost their positions in agricultural areas they migrated into the suburbs of cities like

Lily Gardner Feldman et al. (eds.): The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

24   Martin Leiner

Bucharest, Plowdiw, Sofia, Belgrade or Skopje to build settlements (*mahala*) which are the largest slums in Europe.
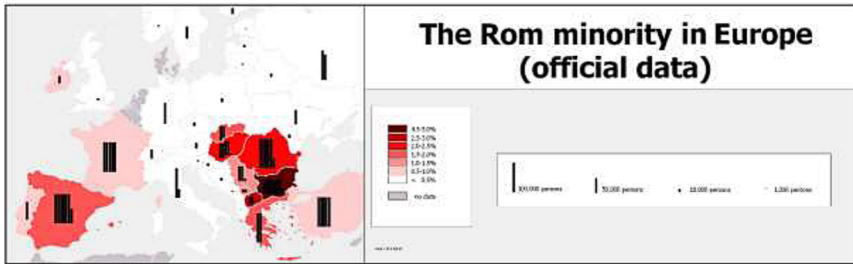

Figure 6: Estimated Percentages of Roma In Europe; Source: https://upload.wikimedia. org/wikipedia/commons/7/7e/Roma_people_in_the_world_ethnic_map.PNG.

Poland in particular has suffered from the displacement of population. Between 1944 and 1948, 2,1 million Poles were forced to leave Eastern Poland, which became part of the Soviet Union, and to resettle in former parts of the German Reich. In addition, up to 12 million Germans left East Central Europe as a result of the genocidal war Germany started, becoming, after the Jews, the second large ethnic group which almost completely left East Central Europe. The transfer of Germans was part of the Allies' plan to make it impossible for Germany to start another war and a new imperialistic policy. Ian Kershaw has summed up the Nazi strategy:

It was no accident that the war in the east led to genocide. The ideological objective of eradicating "Jewish-Bolshevism" was central, not peripheral, to what had been deliberately designed as a "war of annihilation". It was inseparably bound up with the military campaign. With the murderous onslaught of the Einsatzgruppen, backed by the Wehrmacht, launched in the first days of the invasion, the genocidal character of the conflict was already established. It would rapidly develop into and all-out genocidal programme, the like of which the world had never seen.

Hitler spoke a good deal during the summer and autumn of 1941 to his close entourage in the most brutal terms imaginable, about his ideological aims in crushing the Soviet Union. During the same months, he also spoke on numerous occasions in his monologues in the Führer Headquarters –though invariably in barbaric generalizations – about the Jews. These were the months in which, out of the contradictions and lack of clarity of anti-Jewish policy, a programme to kill all the Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe began to take concrete shape (Kershaw 2009, 668).

Part of that strategy was the German "starvation plan" (*Hungerplan*), which meant that 30 million civilians and Soviet citizens should starve in the first winter of the attack (Snyder 2010, p. XI). The total plan was never realized, but nonetheless more than 3 million Soviets, mostly prisoners of war, died from

Lily Gardner Feldman et al. (eds.): The Former Soviet Union and East Central Europe between Conflict and Reconciliation

An Introductory Clarification of Concepts of East Central Europe   25

hunger during the War. East Central Europe became more and more the place where the most terrible and the largest genocide in modern history took place: the Holocaust against the Jews. Exact estimations of the exterminated population were undertaken by Lucy Dawidowicz in the 1980s (Davidowicz 1986, p. 403):

Table 1: Estimated losses as a Result of the Holocaust.

Country	Estimated Pre-War Jewish Population	Estimated Killed	Percentage Killed
Poland	3,300,000	3,000,000	90
Baltic countries	253,000	228,000	90
Bohemia and Moravia	90,000	80,000	89
Slovakia	90,000	75,000	83

From those who survived, many emigrated to Palestine or to the US. The Jews who emigrated were a great loss for East European societies.

Timothy Snyder has described the regions mired in extensive suffering as the "bloodlands." German expansion involving an extremely brutal occupation regime; racism against Slavic populations, intellectuals, communists; even more brutal policies of genocide against the Jewish population; and Stalinist mass atrocities against millions of people including Ukrainians by starvation and by mass-executions and deportations of Poles, Latvians and other nations – all come together as a bleak picture:

In the middle of Europe in the middle of the twentieth century, the Nazi and Soviet regimes murdered some fourteen million people. The place where all of the victims died, the bloodlands, extends from central Poland to western Russia, through Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic States. During the consolidation of National Socialism and Stalinism (1933–1941), the joining German-Soviet occupation of Poland (1939–1941), and then the German-Soviet war (1941–1945), mass violence of a sort never before seen in history was visited upon this region. The victims were chiefly Jews, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Poles, and Russians, and Balts, the people native to these lands. […] The Second World War was the most lethal conflict in history, and about half of the soldiers who perished on all of its battle fields all the world over died here, in this same region, in the bloodlands. Yet not a single one of the fourteen million murdered was a soldier on active duty (2010, vii–viii).

Already the three places which are the corners of the triangle between Auschwitz, Leningrad/Saint Petersburg and Stalingrad/Volgograd forming the bloodlands were places where between 1941 and 1945 one million or more people died. Intentionally provoked starvation was the reason for many