

The Influence of Pangerman Ideology on Central Europe

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Résumé: *Pour ce qui est de l'Europe Centrale, Metternich en a une conception d'influence allemande, car il est contre le désir d'expansion des territoires vers l'est, cet aspect détruisant l'équilibre initial. Le terme de „Mitteleurope” – L'Europe de milieu - commence à être utilisé en 1914 quand on discute sur les objectifs de la guerre, mais aussi sur les thèses de Fridrich Naumann, d'autres concepts lui faisant concurrence, même dès le début. Zwischeneuropa ou L'Europe Intermédiaire, comme elle a été surnommée, fait son début dans la même période, mais elle disparaît sur le champ, le destin de ce concept étant temporaire. Le concept de Mitteleuropa s'est développé sous l'empire de l'idéologie panallemande qui conduit l'Anschluss de l'Autriche, traçant ainsi la théorie de l'espace allemand et de l'expansion vers l'est, vers la Russie, ce concept est donc, de la perspective indiquée, évité par une certaine catégorie des historiens et intellectuels allemands. La thèse se propose de mettre en relief l'impact de l'idéologie panallemande sur l'espace culturel, social central-européen.*

Mots clés: *idéologie, Anschluss, espace culturel, théorie*

As we can observe that historical and geopolitical concept of Mitteleuropa does not correspond to a clearly defined geographical reality “due to its own vague and variable coordinates which change according to circumstances.”[1]? Michael Rutscky points out in his work „Mitteleuropa, eine Kurzfristige”[2], that he could identify the arguments which would discard the New Brandeburg as well as Ukraine or Macedonia, even though he would also find arguments to justify that these regions belong to central-european area. The Hungarian historian, Peter Hnak, considered that Mitteleuropa defines itself not only in relation with the east, but also with the west if we were to consider the connection with these two poles.

Apart from this outlook on Mitteleuropa, specialists believe that Central Europe's genealogy [3] includes the danubian area and in this respect Metternich considers that northern Italy, the historical territories of Habsburg family and the German Confederation belong to the Reich.

Metternich is under the influence of the Germanic concepts on Central Europe and he opposes the term Mitteleurope, the Central Europe is introduced in 1914 when the war objectives are taken into account while Fridrich Naumann's theses as well as a series of other terms were available. Zwischeneuropa or the so-called Intermediate Europe appear in the same year to disappear immediately as it was only a temporary concept. The concept of Mitteleurope developed under the direct influence of pangerman ideology leading Austria's Anschluss [4] and shaped the theory of the German space and its expansion eastwards to Russia, this concept being avoided by a category of German historians and intellectuals. territory expansion eastwards since it would considerably affect the initial equilibrium. Another term which became popular is that of OSTMITTELEUROPA [5] and trying to avoid the pangermanic connotations, the Austrians preferred to use the term Zentraleuropa since Mitteleurope instills uncertainty or fear even to the French.

Whenever the German-speaking countries undergo a crisis or any significant mutations in their geopolitical identity, Mitteleurope reappears in their discussions about Europe. The 30-year war is the one which initially determines the necessity of an equilibrium governing the Central-European space, the nostalgia for the Holy Roman-German Empire with its feudal principle are present in Leibniz's texts as he defends the weakening German Reich as opposed to Ludovic XIV in the west and the Turkish in the east. From this historical moment up to the first decades of the XX century, the nostalgia for the Holy Roman-German Empire and the Central Europe lead to the emergence of a wide range of political beliefs and ideological projects. A study of the concept of Mitteleurope cannot be made without taking into account the turning points that have existed within the European boundaries which brought about a border reorganization, thus triggering questions about the shaping of Central Europe as well.

The notion of middle or center is expressed in the word Mitteleurope and the statement according to which the German-speaking nations belong to Central Europe suggest the fact that they constitute the middle of Europe, the national territory mentioned previously making the contact between West, France, England and East, Russia. The distance from the median position to that of a central point is only a step away, the German world finding itself at the crossroads of the Occidental and Oriental patterns, just in the same way in which Hans Castorp, the protagonist of the novel "The Magic Mountain" by Thomas Mann, since he is dejected between the Italian liberal Settembrini and Naphta, this Ostjude, the Eastern Jew. [6]

The adherence of this German Kultur to Mitteleurope is one of the Sonderweg ideological themes, the German world "peculiar path" of failure known by the democratic revolutions from the Third Reich. After the Berlin Wall's Fall and the revolutions from the Central Europe there appear arguments for and against the idea of Mitteleurope's revival in countries like Germany and Austria. During the 90s Germany envisages its "utopic potential of multiculturalism and multilingualism as well as the threat of political regression". [7] There are two possible interpretations: the one related to the pangermanic tradition originating in the debate on the war objectives and the other related to the Holy Roman-German Empire tradition. Thus, Mitteleurope appears both as a project and a myth or a utopia of peaceful communion being established in Central Europe.

Krzysztof Pomian makes a distinction between the Byzantine Europe and Central Europe [8], considering that a religious and cultural border separates Greek-Orthodox peoples like the Russians, Bielorrussians, Ukrainians, Macedonians, Bulgarians or Greeks from those Protestant Catholic peoples since the European history common to each group mentioned previously has a specific chronology. The researcher underlines the fact that if we were to consider the universities, we firstly encounter them in the Occidental and Central Europe in the XI century while the Russian world sees them laying their foundations in the XVIII century. The history of art knows the same evolution as its development in Central Europe differs from that in the Byzantine Europe. There is a lot of controversy in the attempt of locating the German-speaking countries in the above mentioned context due to the diversity of theories related to this issue. They belong to both areas just because their direct contact with Eastern Europe in Oriental Prussia or near the borders of Habsburg monarchy makes it possible to consider that they partially belong to Central Europe.[9]

More often than not the question is if this concept of Mitteleurope or Central Europe is under the German influence or the Polish, the Czechs or the Hungarians hold themselves their own outlook on the matter. K. Pomian goes further affirming that Central Europe has never been a forceful idea in any culture of this region. It is therefore noteworthy to acknowledge that the Pan-Slavic has never met the adherence of the large masses. Undoubtedly, there is a Central-European ideology affiliated to the Habsburgic tradition, but this Danubian tradition does not intermingle with that of Mitteleurope which will remain under the influence of some negative connotations in the Central-European neighbouring countries like Germany and Austria. The term Mitteleurope evokes the Europe under the German hegemony, this center's significance being reduced to a mere hinter land role in the German economy. K. Pomian underlines the fact that no Polish can be nostalgic about Mitteleurope since it reminds us about Poland's redistribution. He highlights the fact that there is "no cultural cohesion of Central Europe, no keen sense of belonging to a Central Europe. [10] One can notice that the alliances and agreements structuring Central Europe for a certain period of time are temporary, therefore in the Russian tradition there is no perspective on Central Europe, but there is a German vision on this region and an especially powerful German cultural attraction in the regions previously mentioned.

Jaques le Rider considers that Central Europe embodies a common destiny during a crisis, bearing in mind at least two decisive moments marking this criticality: the aftermath of the IIWW when Central-European escapes the pressure posed by the Nazi's and Fascist atrocities and is taken over by the Soviet powers; the 80's when the exiles, the antisoviet dissidents participate in nostalgic conversations about Mitteleurope.

In *Misère de petits Etats d'Europe de l'Est*, Istvan Bibó considers that the fate of Central Europe undergoes a turning point in the XVIII century when the Occidental states like France,

Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, Holland were formed, the Otoman Empire's advance towards the east of Europe destroying the old national conglomerates except for Italy and Germany. In Istvan Bibó's opinion the Habsburgic monarchy represents a disparate assembly which does not allow the natural formation of the national states and the Habsburg or Austrian identity emerges only at the end of the XVIII century.

At the beginning of the XIX century Central-European nations like the Polish, Hungarian or the Czech one awake but they lack the foundations on which they could build modern states. The ethnic, cultural and linguistic borders are uncertain; the space claimed by that national *ferma mentis* specific to every population segment is complex in comparison with the real one. The inexistence of this juxtaposition of the real and imaginary territory will plunge the above mentioned communities into an identity crisis along with lack of modern political culture, the archaism of the social and economic entities.

According to researchers, the one who introduced in everyday use the word *Mitteleurope* was Friedrich Naumann, a Lutheran pastor embracing the socio-christian movement, being the author of the book entitled *Mitteleurope* which was published in 1915. Naumann's *Mitteleurope* is marked by Darwin's ideology as he sees history as a struggle for survival between different races, some of whom fall and others rise from one époque to another. The researcher believes that the German people was situated on a rising axis in the first decades of the XX century, thus supporting the German expansionist policy. Naumann brings forward the idea of an Austro-German coalition with a view to rallying the central powers involved in the international competition. From Naumann's point of view, *Mitteleurope* appears to embody the "a war conception" [11] and its targets are the new obstacles launched by the Occidental Allied Forces blockade towards Central Europe against Germany and Austria. In his opinion, Germany was meant to play a decisive role in this sphere, that of "cultural, political and economic engine in the new federation of states from *Mitteleurope*. [12]

Hans Grimm's novel *Volk ohne Raum* (People without space) highlights the fact that *Libensraum's* claim opens complex new geopolitical perspectives to the German nation which aimed not only at the Central European space. Grimm's protagonist comes from Weser mountains and decides to emigrate to South Africa, a vital space which is missing within Reich' boundaries from 1871 and is to be conquered on another continent.

Naum's *Mitteleurope* is characterised by fluctuations and therefore in his brochure *Was wird aus Polen?* (What will Poland become?) from 1915, he expresses his solidarity with formation of a state which reunites the territories taken from Russia and annexed to Austrian Galitia, thus creating a state structure which is to be integrated in the Habsburgic monarchy. At first, Bulgaria is also considered as being outside *Mitteleurope* territory: "Everything surrounding the Balkans' line is connected to Hamburg-Suez axis which is of utmost importance for us and nobody should prevent us from using it. What would Bagdad's line or the Anatolian's line mean to us if we cannot reach it without the English' permission? [13]

In 1914 geopolitics meets politics when discussing the German war's objectives, Naumann further debating on stating that *Mitteleurope* goes beyond *Real politik* [14] since it is allotted a profound historical connotation even though geopolitics entered the German academic circles after 1945.

In his work *Austrian Identity. Between the German Unification and Central Europe* [15], Anton Palinka synthesises the current significances underlying the notion of *Mitteleurope*, considering that in some people's view this Central Europe bears any meaning as long as Germany is its pillar. Those nostalgics longing for the former Habsburgs take *Mitteleurope* for the ex- Austro-Hungary while the communist dissidents of 1989 consider it the expression of that political utopia as directly opposed to the existent socialist regimes and according to several politicians, this *Mitteleurope* is "a geopolitical treasure loaded with historic significances which can become the foundations of a pragmatic platform for the research on the cooperations in solving the issues in some important sectors (environment, transport, telecommunication, mass-media) [16].

In his work *Zentraleuropa, a Living Organism* [17], Victor Bauer promotes the Mitteleuropean view in Austria, as it is echoed in the former states of Habsburg monarchy due to the fact that it promotes the formation of "The Democratic Union of Central Europe" launched by representatives from the Czech Republic, Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania and Yugoslavia [18].

Jacques Rupnik points out the fact that "the Hungarians as well as the Czechs have the tendency to consider the territory of the former Austro-Hungary as the historical core of Central Europe which they prefer to call "the Danubian space". The Poles include the territory stretching from Germany to Russia in the other Europe, excluding Germany but including Ukraine, the Baltic countries, the oriental extremity of the Polish influence, some cities like Vilnius and Lvov being considered vital historical elements of the Polish culture." Le Rider depicts the French perspective on Central Europe as it fears the German domination in Osmittleurope and therefore the public opinion is solidary with the Austrian desire to affirm their national identity.

As for France, the 18 century marked the beginning of the fear of the Habsburgic monarchy against which it struggles obstinately. Sadova highlights the moment when the French diplomacy starts dealing with Austria. There is a clear pro-Czech and a slavophile orientation to which a group of French historians oppose since they believe that Austro-Hungary poses a real obstacle against the German imperialism. On the brink of the First World War, most of the French intellectuals show their opposition to the Habsburgic monarchy and become austrophiles. The bloom of the Austrian cultural identity can be taken as a consolation for the economic and political difficulties following the stipulations from Saint Germain pact and this tendency of supporting the peculiarity of the Austrian culture stems from the interest in the French Realpolitik [19]. Central Europe was a territory of compromises well as tensions and Central-Europe was a twilight world only to the extent to which "the classic values promoted by post-romantic sensitivity were attacked by purely destructive principles like that of gregarious collectivities." [20]

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Notes

- [1] Le Rider, Jacques, *Mittleurope*, Polirom, Iași, 1997, p.15.
- [2] Rutscky, Michael, „Mitteleuropa, eine Kurzfristige” in *Mercury*, No.515, March 1992, p.183-199.
- [3] Le Rider, Jacques, op. cit., p.15.
- [4] *Ibidem*, p.16.
- [5] *Apud* Le Rider, Jacques, *Mittleurope*, Polirom, Iași, 1997, p.17.
- [6] *Apud* Le Rider, Jacques, *Mittleurope*, Polirom, Iași, 1997, p.21.
- [7] Le Rider, Jacques, *Mittleurope*, Polirom, Iași, 1997, p.20.
- [8] *Ibidem*, p.21.
- [9] *Apud* Le Rider, Jacques, *Mittleurope*, Polirom, Iași, 1997, p.20.
- [10] *Ibidem*, p. 25.
- [11] *Ibidem*, p.130.
- [12] *Apud* Ungureanu, C., *Central Europe. Neuroses, Dilemmas, Utopias* , Polirom, Iași, 1997.
- [13] Le Rider, Jacques, op. cit., p. 135.
- [14] *Apud* Ungureanu, C., *Central Europe. Neuroses, Dilemmas, Utopias* , Polirom, Iasi, p 147.
- [15] Le Rider, J., op. cit, p. 138.
- [16] *Ibidem*, p. 146.
- [17] Ungureanu, C., *Central Europe. Neuroses, Dilemmas, Utopias* , Polirom, Iași, 1997, p.135.
- [18] *Ibidem*, p.93.
- [19] *Apud* Ungureanu, C., *Central Europe. Neuroses, Dilemmas, Utopias*, Polirom, Iași, 1997, p.49.
- [20] Ungureanu, Cornel, op. cit., p. 23.

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