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Culture as Basis of Peripheral or Grow-Pole Status? Cultural Dimension of Central-Eastern Europe's relations with Western Europe

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Debate on Modernization and Culture as the second wave of overcoming of the Communist Heritage in the CEE.

- 1st Stage: Mechanical rejection of the Communist Heritage.
Idea of imitative development.
- 2nd Stage: Rediscovery of the Self in CEE.
Idea of adaptive, contextualized development.
Rediscovery of culture

Political context: Growing self-confidence due to:

- Economic growth
- Economic and political integration of the continent (EU, NATO etc.)
- Slow exhaustion of the imitate model of development.
- Much better knowledge of the West.
- Much better knowledge of CEE in the West.
- More sophisticated view of the Communist heritage due to less emotional attitude to the Communist past.
- Political disappointment with the first generation of the post-Communist elites.

1st Stage: Rejection of Communism and Imitation of the West

- Rejection of everything related to Communist heritage.
- Idealization of Western Culture and Civilization.
- Belief in simple solutions and universal mechanism of development.
- Rejection of critical (often Marxist) tools of analysis.
- Deep complex of inferiority leading to devaluation of historical heritage and identities.
- Simplistic imitative mode of development.
- “Returning to Europe” as a race of CEE countries and regions.

Centre – Periphery Approach in the 1st Stage of Transition.

- Notion of “periphery” often considered as politically incorrect.
- Fear of “self-peripherization”.
- Post-Communist trauma: fear of being perceived as inferior
- Fear of being perceived as anti-Western
- Results: avoidance of concepts implying notions of domination, inequality, hegemony etc.
- Official Program of “Joining the Core/Centre”.
- From Communist Myth of Equality to Post-Communist Myth of Equality.

Rediscovery of the Centre-Periphery Model:

- Regained self-confidence allows for analysis of own weaknesses and strengths.
- Rediscovery of the critical (including Marxists) thought.
- Realization of the complexity of dependencies:
- Most countries and regions can be seen in at least dual perspective:
 - They play peripheral roles in some context.
 - They play central roles in other contexts.
- Rediscovery of Post-Colonialism and Orientalism as useful sources of inspiration for analysis of CEE.

Rediscovery of the West

- Rediscovery of the Complexity the West:
- Rediscovery of the US-Western European Difference
- Rediscovery of the Ambiguous attitude towards Enlightenment
- Rediscovery of Differentiation in Perception of Russia and CEE.
- Rediscovery of the Games of Interests and Historical Alliances in the West.
- Rediscovery of the Ignorance of the West on CEE.

Rediscovery of the historical past as a resource:

Culture not seen any longer as:

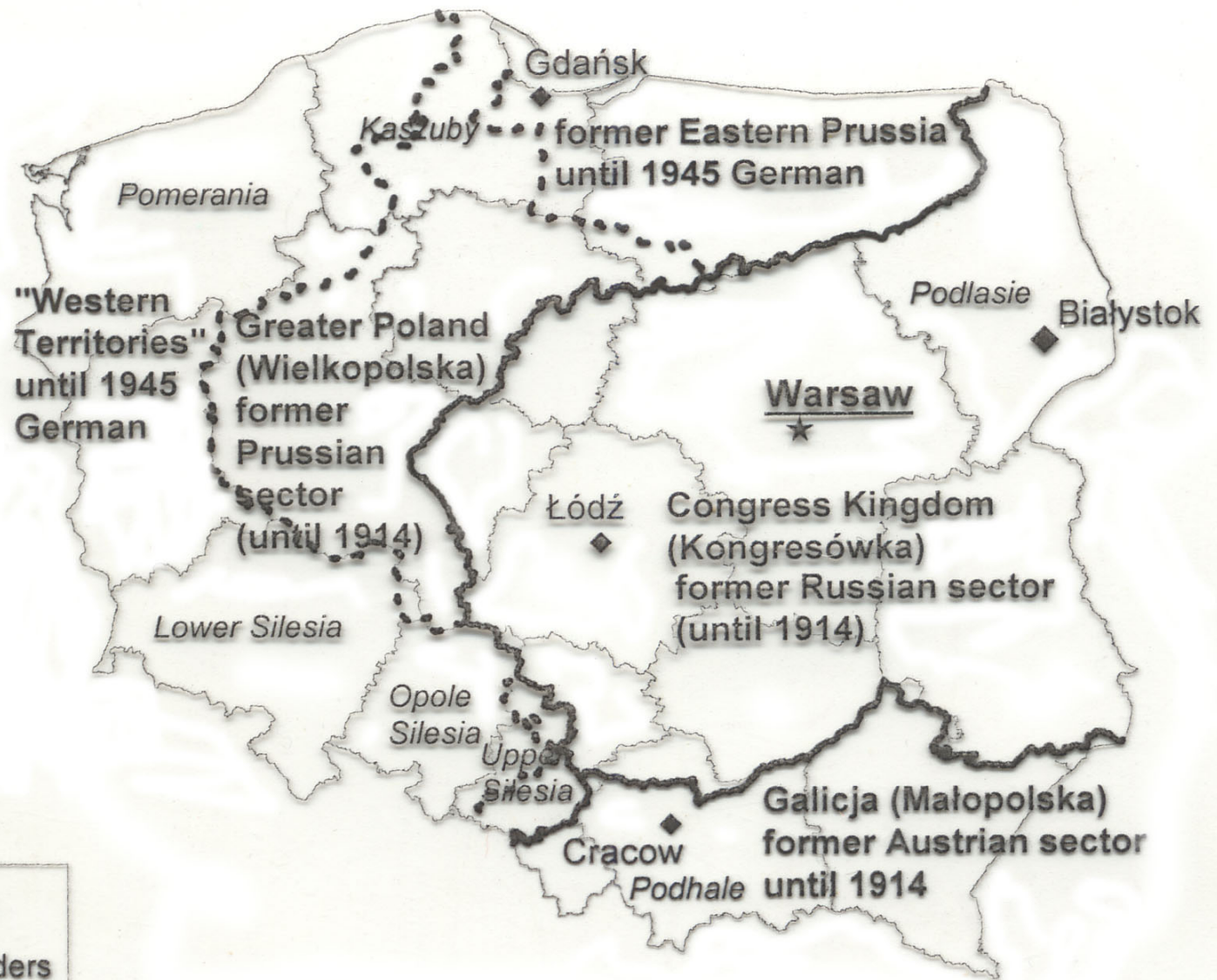
- Source of backwardness
 - Non-fully European character of societies.
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- “Easternness” not entirely negative
 - Victimization (feeling of being victims of oppression) seen in ambiguous light.
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- Rediscovery of the “historical politics” and its ambiguities.

Rediscovery of the historical uniqueness of the countries and regions of CEE:

- Example of Poland: specific, ambiguous attitudes to Enlightenment
 - Lack of revolutionary heritage
 - Heritage of the Noble Republic (Rzeczpospolita Szlachecka).
 - Ambiguous attitudes to centralization and homogenization
 - Ambiguous attitudes to the modern nation state idea.
 - Importance of the religiosity and religious values.
 - Similarities with the United States.
 - Unique and ambiguous role of the intelligentsia (not to be confused with middle class or intellectuals).

Rediscovery of the regional diversity and heritage:

- Rediscovery of the importance of the regional identities.
- Realization of Ambiguity of Regional Heritages.
- Example of Poland (the 19 century partition heritage):
 - The former Austrian Zone of Poland (Małopolska/Galicja)
 - The former Prussian Zone (Wielkopolska/Greater Poland)
 - The former Russian Zone (Kongresówka)
 - The Western and Northern Territories (former “Re-Gained Lands”)
- Ambiguous role of: Communist heritage, migrations, religion and Catholic Church, intelligentsia, regional identity etc.



Historical borders

- XIX century borders
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