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## Editing "Central Europe": From Svědectví to Lettre Internationale, 1968-1989

This project investigates how the concept of "Central Europe" was edited, translated, and semantically reconfigured within transnational exile networks between 1968 and 1989. The revival of "Central Europe" in the 1980s is understood as a structurally distinct historical moment shaped by exile, translation and mediation, foregrounding the specific conditions of knowledge production and circulation in the context of Cold War. It argues that "Central Europe" did not circulate as a stable category but functioned as a historically contingent construct, reshaped through specific editorial and translational practices as it moved from Czech domestic discourse into exile and from exile into the French intellectual field.

This project focuses on two key journals: the exile journal Svědectví and the Paris edition of Lettre internationale. Literární noviny will serve as a limited reference point for the pre-1968 configuration of the concept. Differing from a longue durée genealogy of Mitteleuropa, it examines dossier composition, textual sequencing, paratextual framing, translation choices, and editorial positioning. In general, this project will reconstruct the material processes through which "Střední Evropa" was re-coded into "Europe centrale" and inserted into French intellectual debates. Although Czech exile intellectuals based in France, most prominently Milan Kundera, Antonín Liehm and Petr Král, played a big role in this debate, the personal archives and editorial networks surrounding these exile intellectuals remain underexplored as sites in which the concept of "Central Europe" was negotiated, reframed, and circulated within the French intellectual field. The French case, where the term remained semantically unsettled, serves as a revealing lens through which to observe how intellectual fields shape the stabilization—or instability—of transnational concepts.

The project combines cultural transfer theory and the sociology of translation to conceptualize circulation as a process of selection, mediation, and reconstruction rather than linear diffusion. Also, it situates editorial mediation

within Cold War power relations and intellectual hierarchies. Conceptual history method will be used in a light sense to map semantic shifts within a delimited corpus, but not a full *longue durée* Begriffsgeschichte.

Czechoslovak exiles did not merely relocate geographically; they became mediators within transnational circuits of cultural exchange. It is within this configuration that this dissertation situates the Czech and French exile journals. Published in Paris within a transnational editorial network, the journal sought to bridge Western and Eastern European intellectual fields by translating and reframing concepts across linguistic and political divides. By situating the Cold War debate on “Central Europe” within the French intellectual field, this project illuminates the historical construction of Europe’s internal symbolic boundaries—boundaries that continue to shape political and cultural debates in the post-enlargement European Union.

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