

Tomas Hellén

Shaking Hands with the Past

Origins of the Political Right in Central Europe

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1

Introduction

Who but archive rats would fail
to realise that parties and leaders
must be tested by their deeds primarily
and not simply by their declarations?

— *Joseph Stalin*

This study deals with political transition, continuity and change. More specifically, it scrutinises politics and society in three Central European countries—Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary—which in 1989, that ‘year of the avalanche’, abandoned political systems based on communist party hegemony and planned economic activity for liberal pluralism and market-mode transfer.

Many scholars and decision-makers opine that historical precedents combined with current economic statistics give more than enough reason to regard the prospects for democracy in Central Europe as very bleak indeed. Conditions for making Eastern Europe safe for democracy have been called no better after the fall of communism than they were at the end of the First World War—as one observer put it: ‘if economic prosperity, presumably assured by a market economy, is essential for democracy, the prospects are grim.’¹ Whether one agrees with that or not, it appears clear that the nature and strength of anti-democratic dispositions in the area is an enticing and important research topic.

This book is in some respects part of the flourishing ‘transitology’ industry, which deals with the modalities of the collapse of Real Existing Socialism and with the problems of creating new mechanisms. But it also goes beyond that. Despite the enormous efforts and resources devoted to the study of communism and the Socialist Bloc, few Western observers had anticipated what eventually happened in 1989–90. Adam Przeworski has asserted that the collapse of communism indeed signifies a ‘dismal failure of political science.’² Neither was the nature of Eastern European communism fully understood, nor the fact taken in that ‘[t]he conflicts that preceded communism have not been abolished during the four decades of state socialism. On the contrary, they continued to exist underneath the bogus veneer of Marxist-Leninist propaganda.’³ And if the communist take-over did not mean a clean break with the past, what does that imply about post-communism?

The introduction of communism nevertheless constituted a major challenge to the semi- or underdeveloped societies of Eastern Europe, which until 1945 had been characterised by

¹ Fischer-Galati (1992), 15.

² This debate was initiated by Lucian W. Pye’s March 1990 article on ‘Political Science and the Crisis of Authoritarianism’. Theodore Draper, in but one further indictment of the profession of social science claimed (in *The New York Review of Books*, June 11, 1992) that not a single American Sovietologist did predict the collapse of the Soviet Union. Berglund and Dellenbrant (1994b), 12, however, mention Richard Pipes, Andrei Amalrik, Francois Fejtö and Ewa Kulesza-Mietkowski among the handful of authors who foresaw the breakdown of the Soviet empire.

³ Tismaneanu (1993), 2.

hierarchical authoritarian modes of government, charismatic leaders, and state-centred political and economic systems tending towards stagnation. Communism, through its modernising ambitions, blocked some aspects of the pre-1945 political cultures, but reinforced others. The new power élite was as authoritarian in its attitudes as the former ruling strata, believed in étatism—i.e. the primacy of the state in political, social and economic development—and understood redistribution by the state in a bureaucratic manner without reference to society.⁴

This study is one more of political continuity than one of political change. Two problems in particular need to be clarified. One is the legacy of the political and cultural past and its influence on the present, the tentative assumption being that political-cultural patterns, once established, possess considerable autonomy and influence over the development of attitudes and institutions. The second concerns empirical findings about Central European political cultures in the post-communist period, and contrasting them with features of earlier periods. We are thus concerned with 'political culture': admittedly a ticklish concept—not a theory in itself, but only referring to a set of variables which can be applied in the construction of theories.⁵

The hypothesis underlying this book is indeed one of an 'augmented' or 'grand continuity'. In the first place, this refers to the 'accident-proneness' of the Central and Eastern European countries throughout the 20th century. Political life in the area has been characterised by unstable institutions, foreign intervention, centrifugality and wild swings between the extremes of the ideological spectrum, and by a general lack of moderation.

The hypothesis of a grand continuity has a sub-plot concerning the communist rulers: the assumption that they, in the final analysis, were less revolutionary than they themselves—and certainly many outside observers, too—would have liked to think. This study aims to display the extent to which they adapted their policies and ideologies to the social order they were faced with. *Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue*: the communist world view was a less than consistent mix of Marxist social science, revolutionary radicalism, economic utopianism, authoritarianism, nationalism and Soviet intervention. It was also—and this should not be forgotten—to some extent a product of and designed to create mass-level support.

On the other hand, all was not continuity. The violent processes of social engineering—or, more bluntly: genocide and ethnic cleansing—during the 1940's changed the ethnic composition in the region almost beyond recognition. During the following decades, the socio-economic structure was irreversibly altered as the communists vigorously pushed through their modernisation project. The policies of class war, crash industrialisation, collectivisation of agriculture, urbanisation and mass enrolment in education did make the Eastern and Central European societies more modern, creating sociostructural features that made them more susceptible to liberalist ideas of secularism, tolerance and participatory pluralism. The great paradox appears to be that the communist régimes in some respects became victims of their own successes, and in realising this gradually turned away from modernisation towards traditionalism. This process reinforced continuity in sociopolitical structures, by gradually bringing elements of the communist *nomenklatura* closer and even into the right-wing tradition or political culture.

* * *

This being fundamentally a comparative study, the analysis of the countries in the chosen set will be made in parallel, both thematically and chronologically. With the relationship be-

⁴ Schöpflin (1993b), 19.

⁵ Cf. Almond (1980), 26.

tween continuity and change being the main point of interest, it is only logical that the study basically is organised according to a chronological principle. Each epoch is discussed with reference to its contribution to the understanding of the transition from communism.

Traditional qualitative social science methodology dominates in this book, but is supplemented and reinforced by the use of quantitative data. The sources for both qualitative and quantitative data are mostly secondary, with the effect that much attention must be devoted to systematic criticism of sources. In fact, criticism of the sources is itself part of the method.

One important primary source of quantitative data are the 1972 and 1983 editions and supplementing databases of the *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators*. These supply information on, i.a., political stability, social structure and economic developments during the era of communist hegemony. Another principal source of primary quantitative data is the set of East/West surveys conducted in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary in 1990–91 under the auspices of the Times Mirror Centre for the People & the Press⁶, which is complemented by some country-specific survey data. These survey data track both wider attitudes and party-political affiliations at approximately the time of the founding elections of 1989–91. The results are then analysed with a comparative method and contrasted with action on the élite level.

Chapter 2 is devoted to a discussion of theoretical issues. The choice of country sample, which indeed encompasses only some former members of the defunct Socialist Bloc, will be elucidated. We will also look into the history, content and nature of the ideologies of the radical left and right from the late 19th century onwards, and attempt to find a 'radical nexus' uniting the extremes of the political spectrum. More specifically, we will look for the roots of the post-communist right not only in the pre-war semi-fascist and fascist movements, but also in the communist régimes and their attitudes towards the national and religious heritage. This approach comes close to the one frequently used in studies of Russia, where the embryo of the post-communist radical right is often seen in the nationalist wing of the CPSU. Consequently, the definition here of the 'political right' is broader than the one usually applied in a conventional Western context.

The analysis of the pre-communist and communist eras will mainly take place on the élite and the macro level. The reason is mainly practical: the absence of reliable and comprehensive survey-type data and of valid ecological electoral data. The chapters dealing with these periods will thus combine a largely chronological narrative with content analysis and examinations of socio-economic and demographic data. This method, while the only one available, has its obvious shortcomings. Yet in societies ruled by authoritarian means by a fairly narrow political and technocratic élite, intra-élite conflicts are both highly relevant from a power-politics perspective, and can be assumed to provide reliable indications of mass-level attitudes.

The history and theory of nationalism and xenophobia within the conservative, radical-right and communist framework is deliberated at length throughout the book. It is almost trite to note that Central Europe was a hotbed of inter-communal strife during the first half of the 20th century. Our hypothesis, however, goes beyond that. We will argue that nationalism played a major political role also during the era of communist domination: occasionally taking the form of anti-régime or anti-Soviet outbursts, at other times being exploited by the communists themselves in order to enhance popularity and legitimacy.

The focal point of the macro-structural analysis in this book is the general topic of modernisation, state-building and nation-building. One of our presumptions is that not only state-building in Central Europe, but nation-building as well was incomplete at the time of

⁶ Data from the surveys have been provided by kind courtesy of Professor Russell Dalton, Politics and Society Dept., University of California, Irvine, CA.

the communist ascent to power. The communists' promise to speed up state- and nation-building was an important source of popular support. Socialism and membership in the powerful Socialist Bloc was also portrayed as vital for the defence against revanchism, propagated with powerful anti-Western and anti-cosmopolitan allusions. The attempts at accelerated nation-building also served as legitimisation for the repression of national and ethnic minorities and provided the thinnest of disguises for the xenophobic campaigns that the régimes or factions within them repeatedly orchestrated. Yet even if the communist governments fanned nationalism from above, they suppressed similar expressions from below, branding them as counter-revolutionary, bourgeois or even fascist.⁷

Chapter 3 deals with the period up until the end of the Second World War, and encompasses a fairly detailed comparative political history of Central Europe during the 1920's and 1930's. Obviously, the main question posed in the chapter is why democracy in inter-war Eastern and Central Europe collapsed, giving way to authoritarianism. The inter-war crisis of democracy will be analysed using a range of macro-oriented structural theories, with the hypothesis that weak democratic institutions fell prey to a combination of internal and external pressures.

The following two chapters, 4 and 5, cover the period of established communist hegemony. Chapter 4 recounts the communist take-over and the formative years until the death of Stalin, while Chapter 5 runs up until the break-down phase of 1989–90. This apportion is not founded on, nor should it indicate, an assumption of discontinuity. It need, however, hardly be pointed out that the communist ascent to power was a watershed in the political history of Eastern Europe, while Stalin's passing away led to huge political commotion in Eastern and Central Europe, causing a decrease in direct Soviet control and the gradual and reluctant acceptance in Moscow of the theory of national roads to socialism. In Chapter 5, particular attention is devoted to the major crises that shook communist Central Europe as a result of the dismantling of Stalinism in 1953–56, during the Prague Spring of 1968, and in conjunction with the Polish 'long summer of discontent' in 1980–81. Both chapters will also deal with the economic and social transformation processes instigated by the communists and their structural effects.

The final part of this book focuses on the evolution and programmatic approaches of the post-transition political forces, and correlates them with the attitude profiles of their supporters and the public at large. These findings will in turn be compared with the pre-transition and pre-communist socio-political structures, in order to find indications of continuity and change. It should hardly come as a surprise that the political parties emerging onto the scene as communism went down the drain were at a loss for ideological points of reference. Some chose to attach themselves to ready-made Western models, others to the parties of the pre-communist era; a few even rejected traditional concepts of politics altogether, striving for some sort of anti-political 'Third Way' between—or above—communism and full-blown capitalism. In any case, the voters of the founding elections of 1990–91 were faced with almost blind choices between largely unproven entities. The discussion of post-transition politics starts already in Chapter 5 with an inquiry into the anti-systemic opposition during the periods of crisis. This theme is then developed in Chapter 6. The discussion initially moves on the élite level, discussing the electoral themes and results; analysing the major radical and conservative parties; and scrutinising the potential for popular support in generic radicalism and traditionalism. The results are then related to the meso- and mass-levels by reference to the survey data sources mentioned above.

⁷ Hockenos (1993), 15.

2

The Framework for Analysis

A good war makes
sacred every cause
— Nietzsche

A Note on 'Central Europe'

'Central Europe' is an ambiguous term. In fact, even defining the term, excluding some and including other countries and nations, amounts to something of a verdict; at least a Western audience would probably regard it as a value statement with relatively favourable connotations, whereas 'Eastern Europe' mostly carries negative ones. 'Central Europe' certainly appears to be a club that most formerly communist-ruled countries would like to join. For one, just as many regionalist movements in the traditional West champion the cause of European integration, Central European trans-regional co-operation is often a way of compensating for flawed relationships with more immediate neighbours; the archetypal case is the ancient strife between Czechs and Slovaks. And, although possibly so to a lesser extent than in the 1970's and 1980's, many champions of Central Europe mix their arrogance towards 'Asiatic' Russia with resentment against the '*nouveau-riche*', uncultured, amoral West.

Not surprisingly, the intrinsically problematic concepts of 'Central Europe' and—even more so—*Mittleuropa* have inspired a whole industry of hand-wringing essay-writing. Common to famed authors such as Czeslaw Milosz, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, György Konrád, Timothy Garton Ash and Milan Kundera—to name but a few—is an air of time-warped *Angst*.

For three decades after 1945, nobody spoke of Central Europe in the present sense: the thing was one with Nineveh and Tyre. In German-speaking lands, the very word *Mittleuropa* seemed to have died with Adolf Hitler, surviving only as a ghostly *Mitropa* on the dining cars of the Deutsche Reichsbahn. [...] In Prague and Budapest, the idea of a Central Europe continued to be cherished between consenting adults in private, but from the public sphere it vanished as completely as it had in 'the West'. The post-Yalta order dictated a strict and single dichotomy by subsuming under the label Eastern Europe all those parts of historic Central, East Central and South-eastern Europe that after 1945 came under Soviet domination.¹

Cartographers claim that the geographical centre of Europe is situated somewhere north of Vilnius in the Lithuanian countryside. This is not of much help to the historian or political scientist: Central Europe can surely not be defined as an area within a given radius, say 1,000

¹ Garton Ash (1989), 161.

or 1,500 kilometres, from this particular point. Neither is Central Europe a topographically distinct mass of land, such as the Balkan, Iberian or Scandinavian peninsulas, the British Isles, or the Black or Baltic Sea littorals.

'Central Europe' is rather a statement of culture, history, economy and politics. In its largest extent, late twentieth-century 'Central Europe' could thus, for a start, be defined as the area between the traditional market-economies of the West and Russia proper; that is, as a negation: 'the East of the West or the West of the East'.² Thus defined, Central Europe encompasses an area between the Baltic, Black, Aegean and Adriatic seas; the odd dozen states from Estonia (or maybe Finland) in the North; Poland or the former GDR in the West; Bulgaria in the South; and the Ukraine or possibly some or all of the Caucasian statelets in the East. Even Austria and possibly Turkey could arguably be included.

Yet it is, in particular, the Soviet domination and Leninist ideology shared by the rulers of all these countries for decades after the Second World War that has encouraged treating the area as a composite whole. What had previously been the 'successor states' of the Austrian, German, Russian and Ottoman Empires, were now—with some exceptions—the states that 'went communist' under Moscow's guidance.³ Czeslaw Milosz is (or at least was) a vocal proponent of this view:

There is probably a basic division between the two halves of Europe in the difference between memory and lack of memory. For Western Europeans, the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact is no more than a vague recollection of a misty past. For us—I say us, for I myself experienced the consequences of the agreement between the superpowers—that division of Europe has been a palpable reality, as it has been for all those who were born after the war. Therefore I would risk a very simple definition. I would define Central Europe as all the countries that in August 1939 were the real or hypothetical objects of a trade between the Soviet Union and Germany.⁴

In common usage, however, the countries which fall under that definition do not add up to 'Central', but to 'Eastern' Europe.

Some exclusions and clarifications are obviously necessary. First, one may exclude the states that have earlier been included in the Soviet Union. The justification is that they, by and large, have had a socio-political development that differs in qualitative terms from the independent states of the Soviet Bloc. This would remove the Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, and even the Baltic republics, from the sample. Though Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (like Western Ukraine and Moldova) were part of the USSR only from 1940/1944, the Soviet system of government was rigorously implemented after annexation, and these territories retained no or almost no traces of the pre-war system of government.⁵

Similarly, Austria and Finland can be excluded, on the grounds that they (at least after the mid 1950's) were not subject to anything like total Soviet dominance. The same, albeit with a slightly different justification, goes for the former Yugoslavia and for Albania. The German Democratic Republic is a special case too. The East German population does indeed share many experiences with fellow post-socialist neighbours to the East and South, but the GDR was always a case of its own: a state with weak legitimacy due to its suspected temporary nature. Even more importantly, the GDR no longer even exists as a sovereign state, submerged as it now is into the FRG body politic.

This leaves six countries: Poland, Hungary, both halves of the defunct Czechoslovak federation, Bulgaria and Romania. The two latter may now be excluded on the grounds that

² Rupnik (1989), 4.

³ Swain and Swain (1993), 2-3.

⁴ Milosz (1989), 28.

⁵ Cf. Berglund and Dellenbrant (1994), 238 pp.

their political and economic development has differed quantitatively—and one may also say qualitatively—from the anterior quartet.

In *The Uses of Adversity*, Timothy Garton Ash combines Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and the GDR to an 'East Central Europe', a term which 'combines the criteria of post-1945 Eastern Europe and pre-1914 Central Europe'.⁶ Post-1945 'Eastern Europe' would consist of the non-Soviet member states of the Warsaw Pact (and Comecon). He admits that the term 'Central Europe' (here in its pre-1914 version) is 'problematic', but may be taken as to mean 'those countries that, while subsumed in one of the three great multinational empires (Austro-Hungarian, Prussian-German, or Russian), nonetheless preserved major elements of Western traditions: for example Western Christianity, the rule of law, some separation of powers, a measure of constitutional government, and something that could be called civil society.' This admittedly *ex post* definition would exclude the three Baltic republics, the Western Ukraine and Belarus by the first criteria and Bulgaria by the second. Garton Ash calls Romania a borderline case, but 'at present' (i.e., in 1989) too 'eccentric'. The judgement remains reasonable.

Vladimir Tismaneanu has also pointed to the fact that institutions in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland since the nineteenth century were 'founded upon a Western concept of law and individual rights', whereas in south-eastern Europe 'civil society was underdeveloped and extremely fragile'. He also stresses the cleavage that erupted in the region in 1989, between countries where democracy was more of an ideal than a procedural reality and communist parties survived the first revolutionary shock, and the ones—i.e. the 'East Central European' ones—where democratic reconstruction held sway.⁷ Judy Batt has argued that 'even before Soviet control over Eastern Europe ended in 1989, it was clear that Eastern Europe as a concept was no longer adequate to describe events in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria', and in her study *East Central Europe from Reform to Transformation* consequently chooses to deal only with Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, 'which have much in common as a result of their geographical location, level of socio-economic development and recent political history.' This is not a post-communist era observation, but one made already in the 1950's. In 1981, Karl Deutsch noted that Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the GDR profoundly belong to the Western tradition, whereas the Balkan states—those which went communist as well as Greece which did not—have been marked by centuries of Turkish rule and their resistance to it.⁸

Batt further, quite properly, defends her sample with the fact that it 'to this extent makes sense to treat them together, and it makes possible fruitful comparisons that serve to highlight not only the similarities but also the important differences in the pattern of their politics and economics in their transition from Soviet-style socialism. The other countries of Eastern Europe, Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia, share to some extent the problems of the three "Northern Tier" countries [...] but they also have many historical, cultural and other peculiarities which warrant separate treatment'. She predicts that future historians of Eastern Europe are bound to be concerned with how Central Europe and the Balkans 'emerged from the years of Soviet control in a very different shape and with very different prospects for the new era of political pluralism.'⁹ This study is, as the Introduction made clear, an attempt precisely at that.

Thus, 'Central Europe' would then include the former European socialist states that were neither part of the Soviet Union nor situated in the Balkans. The qualifying prefix 'East' is by and large superfluous in this context. As someone has pointed out, the Second World War did

⁶ Garton Ash (1989), 225.

⁷ Tismaneanu (1993, 2-3).

⁸ Deutsch (1981), 58.

⁹ Batt (1991), Introduction.

not only result in the East advancing to the Elbe—so did the West. At least for now, Germany and rump Austria, which once together formed the core of Imperial-age 'Central Europe', are definitely Western, not Central European.

This sample left is a practical one, differing from the programmatic exhortations of a common *Mitteleuropean* cause that often hark back to the *schmaltzy* romancing of the common Habsburg-era heritage. That far-flung empire, it should also be noted, stretched from present-day Austria and northern Italy—neither of which area did experience the Leninist version of socialism—to Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and parts of present-day Serbia, Romania and the Ukraine. At the same time, the Habsburgian definition of *Mitteleuropa* excludes the large tracts of Poland that were gobbled by Prussia-Germany or Russia in the partitions of the eighteenth century. Moreover, in the Double Monarchy Slovenia, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and Galicia were 'Cisleithanian' and ruled from Vienna, while Slovakia, Croatia, Slavonia and Transylvania belonged to the Hungarian or 'Transleithanian' part of the twin-state empire.¹⁰

In any case, the 'Central Europe' of 1914, or even of 1939, obviously no longer exists in political, cultural or even ethnic terms. The multinational empires gave way to Wilsonian nation-states after the First World War, and during and after the Second they were routinely cleansed of many, if not all, of their ethnic minorities: the Jewish communities were severely decimated throughout the region; most German-speakers expelled from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia; and Poland's borders redrawn in a fashion that left most of the substantial Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Lithuanian minorities on Soviet territory. A case in point is Bratislava (Pressburg in German, Pozsony in Hungarian), the population of which at the turn of the century was fairly evenly divided between Germans, Hungarians, Jews and Slovaks, but today is almost exclusively Slovak. Between 1919 and 1948, the traditional *Mitteleuropean* mix of peoples and ideas was separated into its constituent parts, and for some 40 years after the end of the Second World War severe restrictions on travel even within the borders of each given country prohibited a resurgence of the Central European melting pot.

One may point out that in pre-1914 Central Europe, social cleavages also, to a large extent, tended to follow ethnic lines; the aristocracy and bourgeoisie in Austria-Hungary was almost exclusively recruited from the 'historic nations', i.e. Germans, Hungarians, Bohemians and to some extent Poles, while the 'subaltern nationalities', Slovaks, Slovenes, Romanians, Ukrainians, Croats, Serbs, were relegated to lower social strata, the peasantry and later the proletariat.¹¹ Obviously, the imperial era carries different connotations in, say, rural Slovakia than in metropolitan Budapest.

The concept, and the dream of a resurrection, of *Mitteleuropa* indeed carries some thoroughly anti-modern connotations. Garton Ash writes:

There can be a 'return to Central Europe' in a negative as well as in a positive sense. The dream of emancipatory modernisation, by no means only the property of communists in 1945, may yet end in a reality, all too familiar from Central European history, of growing relative backwardness *vis-à-vis* Western, modern, Europe. It may end in a new version of Giselher Wirsing's *Zwischeneuropa* or the intermediate zone identified by Hungarian writers and historians, its economies exporting tin saucepans, bottled fruit, cheap shoes, and cheap labour, importing German tourists and Japanese

¹⁰ The river Leitha served as the border between Austria and Hungary.

¹¹ Schöpflin (1993), Ch. 1; also Hammarlund (1994).

capital. A zone, that is, of weak states, national prejudice, inequality, poverty and *Schlamassel*.¹²

This view has gained ground in the post-communist societies, and the ideological concept of 'Central Europe' may now well be seen as somewhat *passé*. It was an element of the coy emancipatory strategy of the opposition during the communist era, a substitute for advocating a truly Western model of market economy, pluralism and rule of law; post-transition, public demand for this concept of 'West Light' is limited.

Finally, at least in Poland, the concept of Central Europe—not to mention 'Eastern Europe'—has never really been in fashion, to say the least. Most Polish intellectuals have always preferred to consider their nation and culture as part and parcel simply of 'Europe', and consider *Mitteleuropa* as smacking of German or Germanic hegemony and pomposity (formerly Austrian Galicia is a marked exception; many cafés in Cracow still brandish portraits of Emperor Franz Josef). Much the same goes for Hungary, where the concept of 'Europe' carries emotional overtones inspired by tales depicting how heroic Magyars saved the West for Christianity by beating back invaders from the eastern steppes. Indeed, historic Hungary and historic Poland bordered on the Ottoman and Muscovite lands, and saw themselves (and were seen by others) as the bulwark of Western Christianity, the *Antemurale Christianitatis*. To this day, most Poles consider the *puszcza* borderland east of the city of Białystok as the *przedmurze*—bastion—of the Catholic world and thus of the West.

The four countries remaining after this process of gradual elimination admittedly do not constitute a perfect or even very harmonious sample. Even the 'Northern Tier' has, throughout history, been divided between different zones of socio-economic development. Since the middle ages Bohemia has been on the fringes of, and periodically even within, the wealthy European city-belt stretching from the Low Countries along the Rhine valley to northern Italy. States within this belt were (and are) characterised by strong commercial city networks and weak political centres, as opposed to the surrounding empire states characterised by strong political centres and weak commercial city networks. (Bohemia was, of course, very much in the imperial centre in the years when the Emperor resided in Prague).

Hungary including Slovakia, and Poland, on the other hand, have at best been part of the semi-periphery, and their eastern regions have by and large been relegated to the outright periphery of the European economic system. Although the distance to the core narrowed after these territories became part of Christian European civilisation in the 10th century, it again began to widen in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Proto-industrialisation then took off in the core while the periphery in East Central Europe retained its agrarian character. It has indeed been argued that the social and economic division of the European continent into advanced and backward areas has its roots in the different modes of adaptation to the commercial revolution of the early modern era. This, Wallerstein claims, caused 'the slight edge of the fifteenth century to become the great disparity of the seventeenth and the monumental difference of the nineteenth'.¹³

Indeed, well into the 20th century, Polish and Hungarian peasants retained their traditional ethos and conservative outlook and remained the dominant social group in numerical terms. As the peasantry refused to turn *en masse* into capitalist farmers, it was almost impossible to create a modern, capitalist society based on exchange and the rational division of labour. Modernisation has thus been the major recurrent theme in Eastern and Central European politics, especially as the region has been characterised by institutional developments that have preceded socio-economic realities: 'advanced forms of political

¹² Garton Ash (1989), 271.

¹³ Wallerstein (1974), 99.

organisation appeared or operated in conditions that were not always ripe for them'.¹⁴ Communism may in fact be interpreted as yet another attempt to come to terms with that dichotomy.

An additional feature of the 'Northern Tier', as opposed to the Balkan region, may be found in the pattern of transition after the collapse of communism. Political power was swiftly grabbed by unambiguous opposition forces, which rapidly annihilated their communist competitors in the first free or semi-free elections. Bulgaria and Romania, in contrast, discarded communism only after it had been made clear that Moscow would pursue a hands-off policy, and the former ruling parties and establishments in those two countries were able to maintain a firm grip on power; in the Romanian case it is doubtful whether the transition meant much more than the discarding of Ceausescu, his entourage and the most blatant elements of the _tivist-nationalist ideology.

This is one reason why the Northern Tier is also a region where prospects for pluralistic democracy to many observers seem markedly better than in the Balkans, or, for that matter, in the three Baltic republics. There are others. Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia all at least experimented with parliamentary democracy in the inter-war period, and during the era of communist party domination, they continued to show some degree of political pluralism, e.g. manifested by the existence of so-called 'allied parties' in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Moreover, these countries are undoubtedly in a more advanced stage of nation-building than other post-communist European states, save Russia proper. Except for a lingering irredentism in Hungary, territorial questions are not at present high on the political agenda, and they also lack most of the marked minority, ethnic and even legitimacy problems of the majority of the Balkan nations, the Baltic republics and, in particular, the other successor states of the USSR.

Slovakia admittedly stands out as something of an odd man in the 'Northern Tier' sample. On historical, political and socio-economic grounds it would be entirely justifiable, in this context, to treat Slovakia as much as a Balkan as a Central European nation. Nevertheless, the inclusion here of Slovakia may be defended by reference to its more than 70 years of political union with the Czech lands. Indeed, understanding Slovak, as well as Czech, politics is hardly possible without taking into account the history of both halves of the erstwhile federation. In any case, Slovakia is an interesting comparative reference to what is now the Czech republic, and vice versa.

Last but not least, one may point to the fact that the governments of Poland, the Czech and Slovak republics, and Hungary perceive their countries as forming a group. After the events of 1989–90, they were quick to set up a co-operation forum, the 'Visegrád Group', which soon developed into the Central European Free Trade Agreement.¹⁵ While the relations between some Visegrád countries have been frosty at times—the Czechs living up to their traditions of trying to distance themselves from the Poles, and Hungarian–Slovak relations occasionally at sub-zero temperatures—the Visegrád co-operation still manifests a sense of common interests and an effort to differentiate from the Balkan relatives.

¹⁴ Wandycz (1992), 5–7.

¹⁵ In December 1992, the economics ministers of the four countries met in Cracow to sign an agreement that provided for the reduction of customs duties over a three-stage, eight-year period beginning 1 March 1993.

The Role of Legacy and Political Culture

Almond and Powell have defined 'political culture' as 'the set of attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about politics current in a nation at a given time.'¹⁶ The notion is, however, not unproblematic. It does provide a valuable theoretical framework for analysing survey-type and other empirical data, making it possible to derive from recorded political attitudes central elements in a polity's political culture, but the concept has also been criticised as being a 'catch-all term' or a 'blurred conception'.¹⁷ Almond has himself explicitly warned that 'political culture is not a theory; it refers to a set of variables which may be used in the construction of theories.'¹⁸

It was argued early on that the political transition to pluralism is more challenging in Eastern Europe than it earlier was in Southern Europe. One important reason for this would be the lack of experience of formalised political competition and pluralist democracy—'adversarial but loyal'—at the time of the collapse of communist hegemony. It has been maintained that this problem goes beyond weak institutional and legal structures to the very social structure and, indeed, to political culture. This goes to the very nature of a democratic society:

Because democracy is not only a means to intermediate diversity but also depends on it, certain prerequisites must first be met: it can be observed that modern democracy only exists in conjunction with civil society, i.e. a sphere of autonomy, situated between the citizens and the state and comprised of a range of associations, organisations, parties, movements, and the like. Self-constitution and self-modernisation are essential and generating elements.¹⁹

The observation is certainly valid, although it may mislead one to assume that a 'civil society' exists when democracy is established, and that it does not exist (at least to a sufficient extent) where democracy fails to emerge. To end up with that conclusion would obviously constitute a tautological fallacy. And in Popperian terms, of course, a 'civil society' is an element of true democracy itself.²⁰

In the following pages, 'civil society' will primarily refer to the scope of autonomous spheres of social power to interact and debate, and, in a wider sense, to the level of political maturity among citizens. The more civil society develops, the theory goes, the more 'rational' will be the electoral and other choices made by the masses, enabling alliances to emerge between groups of citizens and organised political actors. The development of a civil society, in turn, is furthered by higher levels of education, increased urbanisation and division of labour, more political participation; all of which are supposed to weaken more archaic political structures and affiliations based on feudalism, kinship and clientilism. The strength of civil society, thus defined, is easily tracked by quantitative indicators, such as the degree of literacy or urbanisation, the volume and sophistication of industry, the extension of the telecommunications network, mail volume, the number of private cars, newspaper, television and radio penetration, or the number of students, libraries and voluntary associations.

Yet these same indicators are difficult to connect causally to political developments. One difficulty lies in aggregation. While it is often argued, and rightly so, that a well-educated

¹⁶ Almond and Powell (1978).

¹⁷ Dittmer (1977).

¹⁸ Almond (1980), 26.

¹⁹ Cf. Wessels and Klingemann (1994), 2; Beyme (1992), 271.

²⁰ Popper (1966).

citizenry as a whole is more likely to support democratic structures and processes than a less educated one, it is doubtful whether that is the case for individuals or for particular strata.

Another problem is making the civil society–democracy relationship operational. What level of civil society is needed for democratic institutions to be viable? How is that measured? And is democracy automatically introduced and sustained once the necessary level is reached? Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan are currently as wealthy and in many aspects more modern societies than Great Britain, yet their democratic institutions are clearly much weaker. In fact, England developed much of her parliamentary institutions and processes, and established the principle of rule of law, while still a pre-capitalist, feudal society. Wilhelmine Germany and the Habsburg Dual Monarchy in its final years are examples of law-based states with very sophisticated networks of autonomous social organisation, yet they cannot by any stretch of the imagination be defined as pluralist democracies. India has after independence entertained a political system where the principles of parliamentarism and the rule of law have generally been respected, despite strong features of clientilistic or even feudal modes of social organisation. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, two of the highest per capita income economies in the world, are still ruled as family concerns with only the faintest elements of broad popular representation.

If ‘political culture’ is an important determining factor for the political system—as intuitively is the case—it indeed appears to be more a question of traditions than of tangible indicators of modernity.

Nevertheless, modernisation theory provides a sound structural clarification of democratic transformation. Its central argument is, to put it briefly, that prospects for the introduction of democracy increase as elements of the Western or modern ‘world culture’ (i.e. advanced modes of societal organisation and communication) begin to replace more archaic national cultures.²¹ The question is thus not so much one of material wealth—although that has an indirect effect—as of ‘mentality’. The result of the last phases of the industrial-era modernisation process, if the core of Western Europe is taken as the norm, would be:

- (1) State consolidation and stabilisation of national conflicts;
- (2) The development of a capitalist market economy and industrial society;
- (3) Democratisation and secularisation;
- (4) The building of the welfare state; and
- (5) The initiation of a transition to supranational integration and to a post-industrial society²²

One school within modernisation theory indeed postulates the gradual convergence of all developed industrial societies towards ‘secularisation’. It has three central features: democratic political institutions; a free market economy; and liberal religious, social and sexual norms.²³ Social modernisation (which, it should be pointed out, goes far beyond economic modernisation), would thus almost automatically contribute to the acceptance of democratic values and thus consolidate the democratic order.²⁴

For the formerly communist-ruled societies this seems to hold out rather bleak prospects. The development of a bourgeois political culture took decades or even centuries in Western Europe, and it is a tall task for the post-communist societies to ‘catch up’ within any short period of time. Ralf Dahrendorf, for one, has observed that whereas a *Rechtsstaat* may be introduced in six months, and a market economy and its institutions can be built in six years,

²¹ Cf. Pye (1990).

²² Cf. Márkus (1993), 1167.

²³ Fuchs and Roller (1994), 1.

²⁴ Cf. Fuchs and Roller (1994), 1-3.

the emergence of a civil political culture is likely to take sixty years.²⁵ It is thus conceivable that some post-communist countries manage a rather swift transformation of their economies to a more advanced and 'modern', market-mode type, while their political systems and societal value structures do not develop to liberalism and secularism at anything like an equivalent pace. During the past decades, some countries in South-East Asia certainly have exemplified this type of partial modernisation.

Indeed, the task of simultaneously democratising the polity and marketising the economy may simply be overwhelming. One possible intermediate-term outcome is the establishment of a sustained and stable pluralist and democratic system; another the introduction of a non-democratic authoritarian régime (though not likely one of the already tried-out state-socialist sort); a third an 'anarchisation' where institutions lose most of their binding powers on society's members.²⁶ 1920's and 1930's Germany and Italy are often pointed at as examples of non-sustained democratic systems collapsing under the combined pressures of political and economic transformation, as are, of course, the countries in Eastern and Central Europe themselves between the World Wars.²⁷

The argument that modernisation almost automatically generates democracy boils down to the hypothesis that an advanced and diverse social and economic structure generates liberal, secularised values, i.e. a 'liberal political culture'. This postulates that the values of liberal democracy justify the structures of liberal democracy, and that the emergence of a normative order of democratic values is reinforced by the institutionalisation of these values. Members of a community would feel bound by the structurally relevant values which are implicit or codified in the constitution. Ultimately, respect for the democratic process and the democratic structure would transcend all issue-oriented conflicts. No relevant political forces contemplate resorting to resolve conflicts in their favour outside the broadly defined democratic framework, even if they in theory would have the means to do so.

According to this line of thinking, 'the political culture of a democracy thus consists of implemented and institutionalised values',²⁸ and the consolidation of democracy only constitutes the institutionalisation of an already prevalent normative order. Consequently, if democratic values are not sufficiently dominant within the polity, the imposition of democratic structures from above is bound to fail. Moreover, the success of a process of democratic consolidation depends on the performance of the democratic structures—in the final analysis, whether the democratic system can generate outcomes which strengthen the confidence and support for it among the members of the polity. This is intuitively true, but also seems a rather pedestrian observation built on a dangerously circular argumentation.

It appears necessary to move to a somewhat lower level of abstraction. In that case, the identification of which attributes of the political culture are conducive to democratic development in Central Europe emerges as a core problem. The communist period clearly brought along structures which make the transition processes qualitatively different from previous ones in, say, Southern Europe or Latin America; not least the extremely limited extent of private ownership and entrepreneurship, and the lack of a capitalist superstructure.

²⁵ Márkus (1993), 1167.

²⁶ Ekiert (1991), 297-8.

²⁷ There appears to be a rather strong correlation between short-term economic performance and political pluralism: crises of legitimacy for weakly rooted democratic régimes are much more likely to erupt during economic stagnation and hardship. Przeworski points out that in South America between 1946 and 1988, a régime, democratic or authoritarian, that experienced positive growth rates in a given year had a 91.6 per cent chance of surviving in power through the next 12 months. After a year of negative growth the survival rate was 81.8 per cent, and after two consecutive years barely 67 per cent. Przeworski (1991), 24; 32.

²⁸ Cf. Fuchs and Roller (1994).

An even more important difference lies in the socio-economic structure. The Latin American and Southern European dictatorships were societies with wide income disparities, and to a large extent instituted exactly to preserve a pre- or proto-capitalist class structure. Communism, on the other hand, aimed to modernise society—not in order to further democratic prospects, but to strengthen its own class base of support—and the régimes were without doubt successful in this. They may not have created workers' paradises, but certainly societies with large industrial working classes.

In fact, while Marx assumed that capitalism precedes socialism, the experience of the twentieth century is rather that administrative centralism in the form of *nomenklatura* socialism has been a, or *the*, preferred mode of late modernisation, from Russia to China to Africa. This was, of course, a result of post-1917 Leninist pragmatism culminating in the Soviet collectivisation campaigns, in Mao's Great Leap Forward or in the gigantomaniac projects implemented throughout Eastern Europe. Dahrendorf has in fact challenged Marx's logic and argued that market-oriented economies and incentives rather than planning and force represent an advanced stage of modern development. As for Central Europe, he has even argued that socialism came at too late a stage of social development to produce any take-off effect; rather, being a result of the Soviet Union's hegemonic aspirations, 'stunting the hopeful saplings of the process of modernisation'²⁹—that is, social modernisation and secularisation.

In any case, the low degree of differentiation and social complexity of the communist societies—particularly the absence of a strong and stable middle class and the often dominant role of the state as employer—complicates the creation of both pluralistic interest structures and coalitions between social groups and political parties. The rapid economic transition processes after the collapse of communism also increase social mobility, both upwards and downwards, which reduces not only party loyalty but societal stability in general. All in all, the flattened class structure generated by the communist systems appears to be a major obstacle for the transition to pluralist democracy. Voting and attitudes may thus, at least in the first stage of transformation, be determined not by interests, but by cultural politics.³⁰

The Nature of Authoritarianism

'Authoritarianism' can be described as a negation of democracy, so before discussing authoritarianism it may be useful to determine what constitutes democracy.

Democracy can take a range of institutional forms: Athens at 400 B.C. or eighteenth-century United States were a very different political systems, and both in turn shared few characteristics with twentieth-century Switzerland. Yet all three are frequently and reasonably characterised as democracies.

Karl Popper equated democracy with an 'open society', which encompasses not only free elections and other democratic procedures, but also a 'civic society': free interaction and debate between autonomous spheres in society, such as interest organisations, trade unions, a diverse media, universities, and individuals.³¹ More narrowly, Robert Dahl has qualified democracy with the existence of contestation open to participation. The two central dimensions—public contestation (liberalisation), and the right to participate (inclusiveness)—creates four different types of political system. There are closed hegemonies, with neither an institutionalised multi-party system nor free elections; and inclusive hegemonies with multi-party systems but no free elections (the emphasis here lies on the word

²⁹ Dahrendorf (1990).

³⁰ Cf. Wessels and Klingemann (1994), 12 pp.

³¹ Popper (1966).

‘free’). The third alternative is competitive oligarchy, which allows free elections but permits only one party to compete; and the fourth polyarchy, which permits both free elections and institutionalised multi-party systems.

Figure 2.1: Dahl’s Liberalisation–Contestation Matrix³²

		Liberalisation	
		One-Party System	Multi-Party System
Free contestation	Against Free Elections	Closed Hegemony	Inclusive Hegemony
	For Free Elections	Competitive Oligarchy	Polyarchy

‘Polyarchy’, the term Dahl uses as synonymous with ‘liberal democracy’, has additional characteristics: (1) pluralism, meaning that several political and social strata co-exist to alleviate conflicts of interest; (2) the existence of several organised political parties which compete and (can) alternate in power; and (3) the rule of law within a *Rechtsstaat* that guarantees fundamental individual and social rights within the social and political arenas.³³ One may note that of these criteria, the communist systems did not, by definition, fulfil the first two, and the third only in a limited sense.

Democracy implies a permanent division of power: ‘a system of processing conflicts in which outcomes depend on what participants do but no single force controls what occurs.’³⁴ It requires constant competition between parties, interests, opinions and values, organised by rules—which may be changed according to rules—and which washes out periodic winners and losers. Conflicts of interest are only temporarily suspended, rather than resolved definitely; losers always have a chance of overturning outcomes in the future. In functional terms, democracy is ‘a system in which parties lose elections’, government *pro tempore*.

In an authoritarian system, on the other hand, some force has the power to prevent any outcome from happening, not only *ex ante*, but even *ex post*. In a somewhat bizarre example of this, Stalin, when enraged at what he saw as interference by Lenin’s widow Krupskaya, threatened to instate a new widow—something he certainly would have been capable of. Whether actions of this type occur in a legal or extra-legal framework is irrelevant. In a dictatorial system there is no clear-cut distinction between policy and law. This principle is a very cornerstone of orthodox Marxist-Leninist theory, going under the label of the primacy of politics and by definition ruling out the rule of law. Right-wing ideologies, too—what may loosely be called generic fascism—often stress the importance of an institution, normally the supreme leader, with the power to singularly make and overturn any decision.

Just as democracies are not alike, there is a wide range of styles of dictatorship or hegemony, as indicated already by the Dahl matrix. Juan Linz’s typology essentially lists three dimensions in authoritarian rule:

- (1) the level of ideologisation
- (2) the degree of political mobilisation

³² Dahl (1975).
³³ The theory of polyarchy is elaborated in Dahl (1971).
³⁴ Przeworski (1990), 10-12; readers are referred to this excellent scholarly work (especially the first two chapters) for a thorough walk trough the theoretical landscape of democracy.

(3) the type of political power structure³⁵

These three dimensions are continuous. Mobilisation may range from low to high levels. Ideologisation can vary between the end-points of ideology and secularity. The power structure can be anything between monism or political pluralism, i.e. stretch from one-man or one-party rule in the one end to a system incorporating organised political interests with autonomy in the other. An authoritarian system may be characterised by a high or a low degree of ideologisation, and by a high or low degree of mobilisation. The type of power structure, however, cannot be pluralistic in any genuine sense of the word; the system is by definition either monist or characterised by controlled pluralism.

A number of permutations can thus be envisaged. Examples of systems with extreme degrees of ideologisation and mobilisation combined with a highly centralised power structure are, i.a., Nazi Germany, Stalinist USSR, China during the Cultural Revolution, or North Korea for as long as that state has been in existence. A country such as Tanzania was, until the late 1970's, highly ideologised, yet the ruling régime did not carry mobilisation to any extreme. Iraq during the 1980's was much more mobilised than ideologised; the same to some extent goes for that country's then adversary Iran. As examples of non-ideological and non-mobilising authoritarian régimes, one may point to most (but not all) Latin American military dictatorships, which ruled with reference to a loosely defined 'national interest'. Much the same could probably be said about the governments in Poland and Hungary before the Second World War; this will be investigated in detail in Chapter 3.

Totalitarianism is a variant of authoritarianism. The difference is largely a quantitative one: while totalitarian régimes attempt to control all facets of social life, authoritarian ones allow some conflicts and accommodate and co-opt conflicting interests in order to preserve the power, authority and prestige of the ruling elite.³⁶ Common to totalitarian régimes is the use of a single state ideology for extreme mobilisation. They also tend to be monist: dependent on extremely centralised decision-making, normally in the form of a single leader in whom the power is vested to conclusively interpret the ideology.

The communist societies of Eastern Europe were, at face value, almost until the very end characterised by a high degree of both ideologisation and mobilisation. The political power structure was either monist or tightly controlled pluralist (e.g. with fronts and allied parties, formally independent but in fact subordinated to the ruling party). Jan-Åke Dellenbrant, however, points out that 'when analysing communist and post-communist societies, one encounters the problem that the official ideology has been downgraded to an official rhetoric, while political decisions in practice have been based on pragmatic values, such as the national interest or the interests of the ruling party.'³⁷

Neither was the monism-pluralism dimension all that clear-cut. Until August 1991, the USSR was formally a one-party state where any organised political dissent was prohibited; this followed from the sanctified dogmas of (1) the primacy of the Communist Party, and of (2) democratic centralism. Yet in practice, conflicts—ideological, programmatic and personal—ragged within the Communist Party. Literature, both legal and underground, provided a forum for oblique but often harsh critique of government policies; either truly anti-systemic or generated by dissenting factions within the establishment. The observation is even more true for non-Soviet Eastern Europe. Apart from intra-party debate and the influence of

³⁵ Linz (1975), 175-411.

³⁶ This distinction is made by Linz (1975) and by Friedrich and Brzezinski (1956).

³⁷ Dellenbrant (1991), 74 The hypocrisy, double standards and cynicism of public discourse in communist societies, 'The Big Lie', has been a long-running theme in dissident and Western literature. Recent good reads on the subject are, i.a., Brzezinski (1989), Garton Ash (1989) and (1990), particularly p. 131-156, Narkiewicz (1990), and Kapuscinski (1993), the latter particularly strong on anecdotal evidence of the national confusion within the USSR.

technocratic sector interests one has to take into account the real, if often marginal, non- or anti-systemic opposition provided for many years by forces as diverse as the Catholic and Evangelical Churches, the human-rights movements, students and intellectuals, proto-unions, not to mention spontaneous demonstrations and strikes.

It has actually been contended that the totalitarian model of communism was more ideological than the societies it depicted.³⁸ Already in the 1950's, this argument goes, ideology lost its role as the main cement holding together the communist-ruled societies, having been replaced by the exploitation of nationalism, promises of material welfare, the securing of social order, status and hierarchy, or other more or less *petite bourgeois* values. Nevertheless, many Western observers at the time underestimated the possibility of conflict within socialist societies because they, by and large, continued to be seen as based on strict dogma, repression and utopian goals.

Even so, it is beyond dispute that the communists attempted to rule society by authoritarian means. Although the formal state ideology exhorted the democratic character of government—as demonstrated by the fact the republics were customarily prefixed 'Democratic', 'People's Democratic', or 'People's Democratic Socialist'—participation was restricted and democracy was projected into the future. In the present, the communists identified threats to the true classless post-capitalist democracy they envisaged to be building, and saw that as a justification for the temporary use of authoritarian means; the dictatorship of the proletariat, as Lenin dubbed it. Obviously, the intensity and vigour of authoritarianism varied strongly over time and between countries, but there was never any question that the communist ideology would not legitimise use of repression to secure the position of communist dominance.

Theories of Transition

When political systems change, three factors interplay: (1) a crisis of legitimacy in the old system; (2) the attractiveness of the alternative system; and (3) a catalytic event.³⁹ There is an element of randomness: political systems are often rejected without the new alternative even having been formulated. The Swedish political scientist Herbert Tingsten noted that it was not the obvious superiority of constitutional democracy that led to the overthrow of monarchies in Europe; more important was he notorious incompetence of kings such as George VI or Louis XVI.⁴⁰ There is indeed no consensus among scholars on what factors are dominant in setting a democratic transition in motion, apart from them all being manifestations of a crisis in the system of authoritarian rule. Still, one can observe a few distinct types.

The classic recipe is an internal upheaval, a revolution or *coup d'état* that results in the establishment of the first elements of liberal democracy; the United States and France in the late eighteenth century, and Russia in February 1917 are examples of this. Another possibility is that an invasion, intervention, conquest or military defeat leads a foreign power to introduce or restore democracy. This was the case in some Western and Southern European countries and in Japan after the Second World War, and has later been repeated in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean and Central America, usually as a result of actions of some European power or the United States. It need hardly be mentioned that wars lost to democracies do not necessarily lead to the establishment of a democratic system.

³⁸ Przeworski (1990), introduction.

³⁹ Langby (1984), 158.

⁴⁰ Tingsten (1945).

Democracy can also be introduced incrementally over a longer period of time as a result of a severe crisis within an authoritarian political system. This crisis may be one of legitimacy or succession, of a decline in the repressive potential or in economic performance. Usually, it seems, a combination of many factors is at work, yet breakdown through internal crisis seems to follow a certain pattern: first the ruling régime is split into hard-liners and reformers—factions stressing, respectively, increased repression or temporary slack as a means to overcome the crisis. This struggle may end in many ways: in a full restoration of autocracy as in Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968 or in Poland in 1981 (or even lead to the establishment of a fundamentally new dictatorship, as in Iran in 1979 or in some of the former Soviet republics after 1991); in a temporary or permanent softening of the dictatorship; or in reformers at some point emerging as turncoat radicals ready to overthrow the authoritarian system they previously supported.

This incremental pattern of democratic transition seems to have dominated when Latin American and Southern European countries started discarding authoritarianism in the 1950's. The transitions in Eastern Europe are also often held as examples of this scenario, although externalities in the form of a breakdown in Soviet aspirations and capabilities clearly played an important, even decisive role at the beginning of the process.⁴¹

The modes of transition from authoritarian rule to democracy has been the subject of vast amounts of research ever since the 1950's. The empirical studies were initially focused on Latin America and Southern Europe, i.e. on regions where the prospects for the establishment of democratic rule seemed most encouraging—as indeed proved to be the case in countries such as Greece, Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile. The political transitions in the defeated nations of Germany, Italy and Japan obviously also have been the subjects of much scholarly interest.

The same cannot be said about Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Before the mid-1980's, few analysts, even those who personally held strongly anti-communist views, seriously thought that European communism was reversible within a foreseeable future. Even less attention was devoted to the modalities of a possible transition process. Almost everyone believed that an upheaval of this magnitude, if at all possible, had to be more violent and protracted than actually turned out to be the case.

For this reason, the theoretical work available for systematic analysis of the modalities of transition from communism still heavily relies on experiences from Southern Europe and Latin America. Consequently, a salient feature of classic theories of transition is that they deal exclusively with capitalist societies with highly different social structure. Nevertheless, Dellenbrant argues that the standard theories of democratic transition can be applied to the communist case. He also concludes that these theories 'show a large degree of similarity among scholars, with the possible exception of the explanation of causes.'⁴²

The standard work on transitions to democracy remains the four-volume *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule; Prospects for Democracy*.⁴³ Its key conclusions are that there seems to be little, if any, correlation between socio-economic development and political structure; i.e., a certain socio-economic structure may generate and coexist with a multitude of political

⁴¹ Of course, some would argue that the political upheavals in the USSR totally determined the transformations in Eastern Europe, if one assumes that those countries were 'colonies', subordinated to the USSR. For many reasons this author does not subscribe to that rather simplistic view, as it does not explain at all what comes after communism and Soviet domination, nor does acknowledge the fact that the Eastern European countries, at least after the 1950's, clearly enjoyed a largish degree of autonomy in fields not directly linked with Soviet vital security and economic interests.

⁴² Dellenbrant (1994), 73 pp, 75.

⁴³ Edited by O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (1986/1987).

systems: there is an element of randomness. Another deduction is that autocracy rarely is substituted with democratic rule in a 'Big Bang' pattern. Instead one tends to find 'transition processes', a period in time during which autocracy is crumbling, but democratic rule is not fully in place.

After an authoritarian breakdown, several outcomes are possible.⁴⁴

(1) The structure of conflicts of interest in society may be of such a nature—for example, concerning race, religion or language—that no democratic institutions can resolve them. Political forces end up fighting for a new dictatorship;

(2) The structure of conflicts is such that democratic institutions cannot last, but political forces support democracy as a transitional solution, well knowing that they will attempt to overthrow it at some later date;

(3) The structure of conflicts is such that at least some democratic institutions, once adopted, can last, but important political forces disagree on particular institutional frameworks—for example concerning federalism vs. unitarianism, or with parts of a state or federation attempting to secede altogether. A temporary solution to these problems may evolve into a convention, but can also end in open conflict leading to civil war or a new dictatorship;

(4) Conflicting political forces agree on a democratic framework that cannot last, even though the structure of conflicts *per se* would permit the establishment of durable democratic institutions. For instance, forces behind an authoritarian régime may prefer democracy with guarantees for their interests over a continuation of the dictatorship, but have the force to uphold dictatorship if these guarantees are not given by the democratic opposition. Once democratic institutions are established, however, these may threaten to erode the repressive powers of the military, leading to a reversion to authoritarianism

(5) The structure of conflicts is such that democratic institutions will survive if adopted, and indeed do so.

As modern examples of (1), one may note Iran and Nigeria; of (2), the southern cone Latin American countries where to the urban bourgeoisie cyclically has shifted support between democracy and authoritarianism⁴⁵; and of (3), possibly, Yugoslavia both in the 1920's and after 1989. Przeworski cites Poland in the late 1980's as a paradigmatic example of the seemingly perverse case (4).

Once firmly—and one should stress that word—established, democratic systems are rarely overturned by internal forces. Elisabeth Langby, a Swedish political scientist, in fact argues that only two such cases are known in history: Athens in the 4th to 3rd Century B.C., and Uruguay in the 1960's. In both instances, she argues, the collapse of democracy had the same reason: chronic public over-consumption.⁴⁶

Let it, however, suffice here to note that democracies last when they evoke self-interested spontaneous compliance from all the major political forces. To evoke such compliance, democracy must be 'fair and effective', i.e. simultaneously offer all these forces a chance to compete within the institutional framework and generate substantive outcomes. If some social or interest group or groups consistently emerge as losers, those who can expect to suffer worsening conditions under democratic institutions are likely to turn against them. History shows that when internal or external strains become distended—during wars, insurrections, profound economic transformation—democratic institutions are less likely to be 'fair and effective' enough, which may lead some politically important force to opt for

⁴⁴ Przeworski (1990), 51 pp.

⁴⁵ This analysis is was made by O'Donnell (1978).

⁴⁶ Langby (1984); she mentions one possible third case, Chile in 1973, which also long suffered from chronic over-consumption, but concludes that external factors—i.e. US involvement—played a crucial role in the military take-over.

authoritarianism instead. On the other hand, authoritarianism will give way to democracy only when the institutional framework guarantees that a competitive process does generate outcomes that are not highly unattractive to one or several resourceful interest groups. Institutions that fulfil this prerequisite tend to be the result of negotiations, either within the anti-authoritarian opposition or between this and forces within the régime.⁴⁷ This argumentation, too, unfortunately is disturbingly circular. As relevant variables as hard to quantify and use in analysis, it is easy to end up with the conclusion that structural factors are favourable for democracy where democracy is introduced and sustained, and that, consequently, structural factors are unfavourable in societies where authoritarianism prevails.

In any case, the task of sustaining democratic rule is a tough one—in fact, it would seem more of a surprise that authoritarian systems fail than that democratic ones do: at least in the sceptic's dog-eat-dog world it should be easier to replace consensual rule and tolerance by coercive rule and repression than the other way around. Why would any group accept a decision it has the interest and the force to overrule and overturn? Yet, in many nations in Western Europe and North America, democracy has survived extended periods of economic hardship and aggravated societal conflicts of interest. This fact, counter-intuitive at least to the cynical observer, has forced scholars to introduce purely normative values into the equation. Parties to the political process are presumed to have an irrationally large tolerance of negative outcomes, and agree to restrain their use of power and influence in order to preserve fairness and effectiveness. A counter-argument to that would be that democracy is assumed to in the long run generate better outcomes for society as a whole than authoritarianism, and that this supposedly plays into actors' calculations. At least in Eastern Europe, the relative economic success of their Western neighbours certainly contributed strongly to the appeal of democracy as an alternative to state socialism. Another possible argument is that democratic values—tolerance, social peace, the absence of randomness—are positioned higher on the value hierarchy among members of stable democratic societies than are material issues.

Whether democracies are supported by normative values or by a strategic pursuit of interests is at the moment hardly resolvable by reference to empirical evidence. Yet Robert Axelrod has, in a seminal work, explained how co-operation and social restraint can evolve and consolidate through the interplay of purely self-interested individuals or groups, without any altruism or external rules of the game being introduced.⁴⁸ In order for spontaneous co-operation to evolve, however, the game must be iterated so that rules are sufficiently established through mechanisms of defection and revenge. Democracy thus needs time to prove its worth and to allow for rules of strategic co-operation to evolve. Axelrod thus logically confirms the hypothesis that democratic institutions and a pluralist, tolerant political culture are mutually reinforcing.

Explaining Democratic Survival; A Macro Structural Theory ⁴⁹

In the past few decades, much academic interest has been focused on finding macro-structural factors which may help to explain democratic survival and demise. Modernisation theory was touched upon above and found useful but needing complimentary theoretical tools. On a somewhat lower level of abstraction, explanations generated with the aid of modernisation theory may be supported by theories arguing that the accumulation of crises within a short

⁴⁷ This chain of arguments is from Przeworski (1990), x; also 66 pp.

⁴⁸ Axelrod (1990).

⁴⁹ This sub-chapter draws heavily on the analysis in Aarebrot and Berglund (1995).

time span may in itself negatively affect the chances of survival of a democratic régime.⁵⁰ A well-known and important example of such an 'agglutination' theory is Giovanni Sartori's distinction between moderate and extreme pluralism.

The analysis starts off from the observation that some democracies—e.g. the British, US and Scandinavian—have been stable, while others—i.a. the French Third and Fourth republics and Weimar Germany—have been unstable. The hypothesis is that party system dynamics help explain the different outcomes. In short, under conditions of moderate pluralism, the voter preference curve is bell-shaped and political parties will attempt to position themselves in the middle of the political spectrum. Ideological differences tend to fade as centripetal forces affect the party system. The end result may even be a stable system with only two marginally differentiated parties.

The dynamics of an extreme pluralist political system, on the other hand, is centrifugal. The voter preference curve is flat or even inverted with peaks at the opposite ends of the political spectrum. Parties thus have little incentive to move into the middle ground. Government coalitions are difficult to form and sustain, which in turn leads to weaknesses in the decision-making process. The French Third Republic is often identified as a victim of the immobilism created by extreme pluralism, as is the Weimar Republic, where the average life span of the coalition governments was only eight and a half months and the one that lasted longest, the 1928–30 Grand Coalition, was followed by the virtual suspension of the constitution in favour of extra-parliamentary presidential cabinets.⁵¹

Sartori identifies a number of factors that differentiate the moderate pluralism of stable democracies and the extreme pluralism of unstable democracies⁵²:

First, *the timing of the franchise*, i.e. the extension of the suffrage, and *the timing of proportional representation*, strongly affect the number of parties in the political system. A rapid process of democratisation encourages a large number of political entrepreneurs attempting to gain parliamentary representation. If mandates are distributed according to proportional representation, this lowers the threshold of parliamentary representation and serves as yet another incentive for hopeful entrepreneurs. Thus, the sooner proportional representation is introduced, especially if it is not preceded by a period of majority representation, the more likely is it to contribute to extreme multi-partism. On the other hand, a system of proportional representation can be modified to prevent fragmentation, e.g. by a threshold rule of a German or Swedish type, or by applying proportionality only in multiple-member constituencies, not on all polled votes.

Apart from the electoral system, Sartori also points to *the number of cleavages*, and *the structure of cleavages* as important factors influencing the party structure. Not surprisingly, his observation is that the more conflict dimensions are prevalent in a society, and the more complex they are, the likelier is it that a large number of political parties will be able to find a *niche* for themselves. Last but not least, *the degree of political organisation* influences the party structure: the more poorly organised the political parties are, the more room there

⁵⁰ One example of structural theories of democratic survival is O'Donnell's dissection of Argentinean political life between 1956 and 1976. It demonstrates how the dictatorship-democracy cycle was determined by swings between balance-of-payments crises and the need to expand domestic consumption. In the first case the urban and rural bourgeoisie allied in support of authoritarianism in order to ensure a cut in public consumption; in the second, the urban bourgeoisie combined with the urban working masses to force an overvaluation of the currency, with (populist) democracy as a result. This iterated democracy-dictatorship transition pattern is, however, a special, even unique example. Cf. O'Donnell (1978).

⁵¹ Bullock (1993), 71.

⁵² Sartori (1966) and (1976).

would seem to be for additional political parties. A low level of mass mobilisation serves as a yet another incentive for hopeful political entrepreneurs.

The other way around, a slow process of democratisation makes for moderate multi-partism. A system of majority representation serves as a barrier against extreme multi-partism; and the longer it is retained, the more likely it is that the party system will become moderate. The fewer cleavages there are in a society and the simpler its cleavage structure remains, the less room there is for the extreme kind of multi-party politics. Finally, the better organised the established political parties are, the less room there is for new political entrepreneurs to succeed. A high level of mass mobilisation serves as a deterrent against fragmentation of the party system.

The Sartori framework goes a long way to explain the difficulties for democracy in inter-war Central Europe. As is clear from the above, not only did the constitutions have few safeguards against extreme multi-partism; the structure of social conflicts was unfavourable. National, ethnic and religious antagonism are ones that are relatively difficult to resolve within a democratic framework, and exactly these conflict dimensions were both heated and on top of the political agenda. As regards the level of political organisation, it can at best be described as intermediate to low.

Sartori's analysis creates concern about the 'Weimarisation' of new states in general, and about the survival of democracy in the post-communist states of Europe in particular. This fear, common to much of the European political science community, stands in stark contrast to the Anglo-Saxon developmental optimism expressed, i.a., by Almond and Verba or by Huntington.⁵³

With his seminal conceptual map of Europe, Stein Rokkan attempted to integrate crises in state- and nation-building processes with conditions for democratic survival, such as the extension of citizenship rights and the establishment of stable political cleavages in parliaments and amongst the voting population.⁵⁴ Many commentators on the situation after the break-up of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union tend to juxtapose 'state' and 'nation', but Rokkan's analytical scheme goes beyond this. It points to the fact that in solving crises of state- and nation-building, régimes may break down, but they may also be consolidated. If this were not the case, it would be hard to understand the political contrasts between structurally similar pairs such as Bosnia and Switzerland or the Netherlands and Northern Ireland.

Rokkan's conceptual map is mainly concerned with Western and Central European states⁵⁵, but attempts have been made to expand the analysis beyond the fault-line of the former Iron Curtain. Frank Aarebrot and Sten Berglund have devised a classification of European countries based on two main determining factors; Religious Heritage (in a broad sense) and the influence of 'External Empires' as opposed to 'Western' and 'Eastern Defence' Empires.⁵⁶

The starting-point is Rokkan's conceptual map of Europe, which also identifies two main dimensions:

(1) an East–West axis, based on the strength of city networks and political centre formation; and

(2) a North–South axis, based on the integration of state and church—strong in the Protestant North and weak in the Catholic South.

The core of the East–West dimension is a symmetrical triad of states. The city-belt states, on an axis running from Flanders along the Rhine valley to Venice, are characterised by

⁵³ Cf. Almond and Verba (1980), Almond and Powell (1978), Powell (1982), Huntington (1968).

⁵⁴ Elaborated in Rokkan (1975); Rokkan and Urwin (1983).

⁵⁵ Rokkan (1975), 578–79.

⁵⁶ Aarebrot and Berglund (1995).

strong commercial city networks and weak political centres. The city-belt is bordered on both sides by Eastern and Western empire states, in turn characterised by strong political centres and weak commercial city networks. Western empire states are Britain, France, Spain and Denmark, all examples of strong and early state formations and the masters of vast overseas empires.

Unfortunately, the concept of empire states does not function as elegantly to the east of the city-belt. First, city states and city-belts have played an important role within the Eastern imperial territories—the Hanseatic league, the river trading routes in Russia and along the Danube, and the German trading towns in the Balkans, to mention some examples. Secondly, Aarebrot and Berglund argue that strong political centres were lacking as these territorial units were primarily integrated as early landlocked empires, and that state-building as such was secondary to empire formation. A territorial classification of empires must therefore account for imperial aspirations and confrontation as a primary criterion. Prussia-Germany and Austria-Hungary, on the one hand, were defence empires, built up militarily over the centuries to defend Europe against incursions from the East. The Russian and Ottoman empires, on the other, were basically external with aspirations to expand into Europe.

Rokkan's symmetrical conceptual map has Western and Eastern Periphery states at the rim; these are characterised by weak political centres and late statehood. But in Aarebrot's and Berglund's framework the concept of Eastern periphery states is meaningless, since Europe's Eastern border is represented by the external empires of Russia and Turkey. Instead they employ the term 'devolved states' to the territories that gained statehood when the empires were dismantled between 1878 and 1919. There are two types of Eastern devolved states: those devolved from the defence empire states (Germany and Austria-Hungary), after the First World War, and those devolved from the external historical empires (Russia and Turkey) after the Balkan wars and the First World War.

The North–South axis in Rokkan's framework is determined by the religious status of the European territories as they emerged after the 1648 peace treaties of Westphalia and Osnabrück. Rokkan's three-way classification of countries as Protestant; mixed or secularised Catholic; and counter-reformatory, is, however, too limited for an all-European framework. Orthodox as well as Moslem areas can be included in a revised version, while retaining the crucial distinction—the degree of secularisation of the political system, i.e. integration or lack thereof between state and church. This creates a fourfold classification of countries.

Protestant countries, in particular Lutheran Evangelical, represent total integration and subordination of religious leadership to the state. In the mixed Protestant–Catholic countries, as well as in the substantially secularised Catholic and Orthodox countries, the state's autonomy from religion has given it an upper hand, though church interests remain with a potential for independent influence on the citizens. In the counter-reformation Catholic countries, as well as in the non-secularised Orthodox countries, a potential for dualism remains between religious and secular authority. (It should be noted here that this potential is higher in the counter-reformation countries. In the non-secularised Orthodox countries this potential for direct independent church opposition to the state is weaker, but it is enhanced by traditional ties often of a clientilistic nature.) The last category incorporates the Moslem areas, where secularisation is directly at odds with religion. The possibility of coexistence between secularised political forces and fundamentalist Moslems within the same régime is very much in doubt. Conflicts will tend to have régime consequences.

Common for countries and areas appearing in *italics* in Figure 2.2 is that democratic régimes established there in the early 1920s did not survive the inter-war period intact; in countries and areas appearing in regular, on the other hand, democracy proved resilient. Now an interesting pattern emerges. Moving diagonally from the south-east to the north-west on the conceptual map, chances of democratic survival improve. The structure of the conceptual

map seems to indicate that the two macro dimensions of the framework have an impact on democratic survival.

Figure 2.2: *Democratic Survival: A Conceptual Map*

<i>Religious Heritage</i>	Late, devolved Western Periphery States	Early states formed in the Cores of Western Seaward Empires	City-Belt Europe	States based on core nations of Eastern Defence Empire States	Late, devolved states from Eastern Defence Empire States	Late, devolved states from Eastern External Historical Empires	Eastern Historic Empires
Protestant Countries	Norway	Denmark Britain		Sweden	Finland	<i>Estonia</i> <i>Latvia</i>	
	Prot	Prot		Prot	Prot	Prot	
Mixed or largely secularised countries	(Ulster)	France	Holland Switzerland	<i>Germany</i>	Czechoslovakia (Bohemia, Moravia)	(<i>Ukraine</i>)	<i>Russia</i>
	Prot/Cath	Cath/Sec	Cath/Sec	Prot/Cath	Cath/Sec	Orth/Cat/Sec	
Counter-reformation and non-secularised orthodox countries	Eire	<i>Spain</i> <i>Portugal</i>	(<i>Flanders?</i>)	<i>Austria</i> <i>Hungary</i>	(<i>Slovakia</i>) <i>Italy</i> (<i>Slovenia</i> , <i>Croatia</i>)	<i>Lithuania</i> <i>Poland</i> Cath <i>Romania</i> <i>Bulgaria</i> <i>Yugoslavia</i> (<i>Serbia</i>) <i>Greece</i>	
	Cath	Cath	Cath	Cath	Cath	Orth	
Moslem countries						<i>Albania</i> (<i>Bosnia</i> , <i>Kosovo</i>) (<i>Bulgarian Moslem minority</i>)	<i>Turkey</i>
						Mus/Sec	Mus/Sec

Source: Aarebrot and Berglund (1995)

It is, however, clear that the forms of transition to authoritarianism varied considerably. In order to clarify the pattern of democratic breakdown and survival, Aarebrot and Berglund make a distinction between European states with a historical tradition of state building on the one hand, and states which primarily had remained empires at the outset of the First World War on the other. While Rokkan's original conceptual map almost exclusively included states from the former category, Aarebrot's and Berglund's framework consists of five groupings: (1) the states exposed to state building, including the Western periphery states; (2) the Western empire states; (3) the city belt states; (4) the Eastern defence empire states; and (5) the states devolved from the Eastern defence empire states after 1918. This classification

incidentally is similar to the five time-zones of nation state-building in Europe that Ernest Gellner⁵⁷ has found (see below) but goes beyond his almost purely historical-chronological method.

While it is true that the Eastern defence empire states long retained a strong element of imperial identity, Sweden and Prussia-Germany, and at least the German and Magyar core nationalities of the Habsburg empire, experienced considerable state- and nation-building prior to the First World War. On the other hand, the external Russian and Ottoman historical empires experienced much more limited attempts at state-building efforts on the part of their rulers, and the states that devolved from these empires also lacked state-building traditions. This leads to a further dichotomised the East–West dimension. One category of states, ‘*The Charlemagne Heritage*’, has a shared experience of Roman law, feudalism, state-building and relatively early national revival. The Western empires, the city-belt and the territories of the Eastern defence empires are here lumped into one. The other group of states, ‘*The External Challengers*’, consists of countries that do not share these traditions and have belonged to the Russian or Ottoman empires. They feature various degrees of Byzantine heritage and a lack of a strong feudal tradition which has enabled ancient local authority relationships such as kinship and clientilism to survive better than in the rest of Europe. This tendency is admittedly stronger in the South than in the North.

The North–South dimension may also be dichotomised according to the strength and autonomy of political authority vs. religious leadership, indicating the potential for legitimising counter-movements threatening the régime. The first group includes (a) the Protestant states and (b) the substantially secularised states, the second group (a) the predominantly Catholic states of the counter-reformation, and (b) the non-secularised Orthodox states and the Moslem countries and areas. These two dichotomies create an even clearer and more comprehensive pattern than Rokkan’s original conceptual map:

With the exception of Eire, all countries that were still democratically ruled at the outbreak of the Second World War are found in the top left-hand cell. Common for them is that they share the ‘*Charlemagne Heritage*’ and are characterised either by an integration of church and state or by secularisation, state domination over the church. The only other exception from the elegant scheme is that Germany, though a solidly Protestant/secularised state, had gone fascist. The common factors conducive to democratic survival in the inter-war period seem to be closely associated with state building and state autonomy.

Aarebrot and Berglund nevertheless stress that ‘successful completion of state building and clear autonomy from religious authority were not sufficient to make a state safe for democracy in the inter-war period. The survival of democracy also requires that the élites of all or most relevant cleavages be integrated into governance or into a position of strong influence upon the government.’ The deviations in the two exceptional cases, Germany and Eire, where democracy, respectively, should and should not have survived according to their model are thus explained by a third factor, the integration of cleavages through meso-level co-optation.

In the deviant German case, co-optation failed: the compromise between the major parties of the Weimar coalition (the Social Democrats, the Catholic *Zentrum* and the Democratic Party) excluded significant forces—the communists as well as the nationalist, conservative, rural and Eastern political segment—from the régime compromise, although not from competitive electoral politics.

The Irish Republic in turn demonstrates a case where élite co-optation turned out to strengthen democracy. There a major force, the strongly nationalist *Fianna Fáil* refused to accept the non-secession of Ulster and opposed the Irish state as it was constituted. It was

⁵⁷ Gellner (1993).

excluded in the initial formation of the democratic régime, but eventually came to power within the framework of the constitution. However, the Nationalists benefited from the existence of the Ulster issue, which contrary to the German grievances could not be expected to be resolved by unilateral action. Thus a rather peculiar combination emerged: a ruling party which obtained electoral strength by advocating a *raison d'état* that was definitely not part of the constitutional compromise and an opposition deeply committed to that very compromise.

Figure 2.3: Democratic Survival: A Classification of European Countries in the Inter-War Period (Short-lived and semi-independent state formations parenthesised)

Religious Heritage	The City Belt, Empire States and States devolved from these Empire States 'The Charlemagne Heritage'	External Eastern Historical Empires and States devolved from these Empires 'The External Challengers'
Predominantly Protestant Countries <i>State and Church Integrated</i>	Denmark Sweden Norway Finland Great Britain The Netherlands Switzerland Germany	Estonia Latvia
and		
Secular Catholic or Orthodox Countries <i>Dominant State</i>	France Belgium Czechoslovakia	Russia (USSR) (Ukraine)
Catholic Counter-Reformation Countries, Orthodox and Moslem Countries <i>Continued Dualism between State and Ecclesia</i>	Eire Spain Portugal Austria Hungary Italy (Croatia) (Slovakia)	Lithuania Poland Romania Bulgaria Yugoslavia/Serbia Greece Albania Turkey

Source: Aarebrot and Berglund (1995)

The use of co-optation as an explanation for non-conformity is obviously problematic, and smell of *ad hoc* rationalisation. While religious heritage and former affiliation to Western vs. Eastern state formations are objective macro-level determinants, co-opting depends on diffuse, micro-level élite decisions and action. Élité support or opposition is, however, undoubtedly a very important factor for a beleaguered or not yet firmly instituted democratic

order. What the examples of inter-war Germany and Eire show is that support is not always voluntary (as when the *Fianna Fáil* bowed to political realities and settled for the second-best option knowing that the best—a united Ireland—was unattainable)—and can be well-nigh impossible, given particular grievances or ideologies of relevant political forces. The survival of a democratic system thus depends both on the structure of conflicts as perceived by élites, and on an element of luck, i.e. how these élites see their chances of attaining goals within the particular democratic order that emerges.

Aarebrot and Berglund argue that 'where the state building was weak and the legacy of empire strong, or where secular nation building was still impaired by deeply rooted religious sentiments, or where significant segments representing major cleavages were not co-opted into a constitutional compromise, the chances for democratic survival in inter-war Europe were slim indeed'. For the current situation, their model offers some paradoxical predictions. The best prospects for democratic survival seem to be found where there is a strong tradition of statehood and where society has been secularised. But these very criteria were on top of the agenda set by the communist régimes which emerged after the Second World War.

If that is correct, democratic survival in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union seems to depend upon the extent to which the once ruling communists were actually successful in promoting their self-proclaimed goals. Élite co-optation, the third factor, would be more dependent upon the political cultures that are emerging after the fall of communism. This, too, has paradoxical effects: clientilism, kinship and corruption are hard to reconcile with democracy, but may nevertheless fulfil a purpose in the progression towards a functioning democratic system.

The Agenda of the Central European Right

The standard, colloquial Western political denominations do not fully apply in the post-communist societies. In Western political discourse, 'the left' is normally perceived as constituted of advocates of societal change. In communist and post-communist societies, this would mean the forces sponsoring a diminishing of state economic dominance and increased political and societal pluralism. That in turn implies increased inequality at least in economic terms, which is quite the opposite of what the traditional political left in the West would normally argue. Indeed, survey-type data show that, in early 1991, voter left-right self-placement in the Ukraine and Russia actually was opposite to traditional Western conceptions: 'left' meant reform, free market and democracy, and 'right' meant status quo and communism.⁵⁸

It is almost trite to note that substantial segments both of the electorate and the political élites have made a reappraisal of their relative positions within the political spectrum. Any combinations of conservatism, liberalism and radicalism in the fields of economics, social issues and foreign policy seem possible in Eastern and Central Europe. After 1989, former sympathisers of rigid, étatist communism became a core constituency of extreme right-wing or outright fascist movements in Russia and in Eastern Europe. Indeed, in practically all former communist countries, seemingly odd alliances between red and brown have emerged. This raises interesting questions about continuity and change. As many of the post-communist movements hail back to the pre-communist era, and nevertheless generate the support of former communist activists and supporters, may it indeed be the case that right-wing traditions existed submerged within the communist establishment?

⁵⁸ Wessels and Klingemann (1994), 10-11.

*Table 2.1: Two Strains of Conservatism*⁵⁹

Traditionalism	Modernism
Particularism	Universalism
<i>Gemeinschaft</i>	<i>Gesellschaft</i>
Collectivism	Individualism
Estate Hierarchy	Performance
Culture	Economy
Emotion	Rationality
(Ethnocentric) Solidarity	Competition
Discipline	Autonomy
Clericalism	Secularity
Homogenisation	Pluralisation
State	Market
Central distribution	<i>Laissez-faire</i>

Anti-communist right-wingers and retro-communists are united by their preferences for authoritarian solutions, a strong state, centralised decision-making in the economy, control of the media, and potent internal security structures. Indeed, the chief political fault-line in the post-communist societies runs between sponsors of tolerance, pluralism and free markets, and advocates of more authoritarian rule.

It need be noted that conservatism has a different ideological content in Eastern Europe than in the West. It is important to differentiate between the different traditions of conservatism that are operating, and also to attempt to distinguish these from the radical right wing.

As attempts to create a more dynamic and modern conservatism in Eastern and Central Europe after 1945 were effectively blocked by the communist interlude, the conservatism which re-emerged as a relevant political force in the 1980's tended to hail back to the traditional, authoritarian ethos and policies that were dominant in the inter-war political systems, when conservatives generally dismissed liberal democracy and were deeply suspicious of the modernist core values of today's Western conservative mainstream. Traditional, old-fashioned conservatives worry that market forces would wipe out cherished tradition and social order; a paradoxical notion indeed given the huge social transformation during the decades of state socialism.

In the pluralist democracies of Western Europe and North America, mainstream conservatism has undergone fundamental changes since the late nineteenth century, and particularly since the 1940's. The ideals of individual initiative, free enterprise and limited government have largely replaced the former core values of hierarchy, religion, and national traditions and culture—i.e., in fact incorporated the central tenets of classical liberalism. In Eastern Europe, however, the modernised strain of conservatism has shallow roots. After the end of communist rule, it has proven to be a political force of importance only in a few countries, particularly in the Czech Republic and to some extent in Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria and Estonia.

⁵⁹ Márkus (1993), 1177.

The modernisation of conservatism, essentially the adoption of liberalism, constitutes a radical break with traditionalism. The new core values are in many instances even diametrical to the former.

In addition to the two main strains of conservative thought mentioned above, one may differentiate a third right-wing tradition: the radical or revolutionary. It shares many core values with traditional conservatism, but is at the same time energised by a desire to fundamentally change the existing power structure and social order.

The importance of socio-economic modernisation and secularisation for liberal democracy has been emphasised above. Yet modernisation is a painful process, which tends to generate anti-democratic, anti-liberal backlashes of varying intensity and duration. The critique of modernisation tends to take two major forms. One is the radical leftist variety, with its foundation in anti-capitalist utopian ideas of radically increased egalitarianism and mass participation. In the post-communist societies it has lost much of its appeal due to the failed experiment with revolutionary socialism. The other line of critique, which currently appears more politically viable, is backward-looking and preservative, viewing 'existing political and cultural developments as corrupt, and seek[ing] to revitalise traditional, albeit declining, national traditions and social structures'.⁶⁰ It emphasises:

the prior existence of the good integrated society which once characterised their nation. [...] The past history of each nation becomes the source of the myth of the golden past with which the present may be unfavourably compared. [...] European conservative thought, particularly before World War II, has looked back nostalgically to an image of a highly cohesive, stable, and cultured pre-industrial society characterised by an alliance of the throne and altar, state and church, in which peoples' positions were defined by an interrelated complex of roles, and where the state, church and aristocracy fulfilled the values of *noblesse oblige* and took responsibility for the welfare of the average person. [...] [T]here is a core myth rooted in the shared history of medieval Catholic Europe.⁶¹

Nationalism is thus a core element of traditionalist, backlash conservatism.

Backlashes to 'changes in values, in concepts of rectitude, as well as in the status of different activities and roles' have occurred both in North America and in Western Europe throughout the twentieth century.⁶² Backlash politics 'may be defined as the efforts of groups who sense a diminishing of their importance, influence, and power, or who feel threatened economically or politically, to reverse them or stem the direction of change through political means.' As the reaction of these groups is triggered by a process of decline, backlash politics 'is often extreme in its tactics and policies and has frequently incorporated theories of ongoing conspiracies by alien forces to undermine national traditions and strength.' As a consequence, extremist movements tend to gain support during periods of economic depression or severe social turmoil, when previously established forces come under attack.⁶³

Gino Germani has even proposed that 'the structural tension inherent in all modern society between growing secularisation and the necessity of maintaining a minimal prescriptive central nucleus sufficient for integration, constitutes a general causal factor for all authoritarian trends'.⁶⁴ Conflicts between more and less modern sectors are inimical to all post-agrarian societies undergoing rapid change, particularly on the élite level but also

⁶⁰ Lipset (1981), 451.

⁶¹ Lipset (1981), 453-4.

⁶² Lipset (1981), 451.

⁶³ Lipset (1981), 455.

⁶⁴ Germani (1978), 7, quoted in Lipset (1981), 451.

among lower strata.⁶⁵ A conflict structure of that character was, of course, present already during the communist era and particularly during its period of terminal decline. The ability of the communist systems to force through their social aims—the shift from agrarian to industrial societies—created new and more complicated structures in which the effectiveness of the authoritarian methods previously used diminished. Simultaneously, the increasing inability to deliver material welfare created counteracting pressures to even speed up and intensify the modernisation processes.

In communist-ruled Eastern Europe, the combination of neo-Stalinist repression and ethnocentric chauvinism presented one authoritarian solution to the problem, which was implemented not wholly without success. The revitalisation of archaic ideals and the espousal of national values among factions of the then ruling establishments can indeed be interpreted as attempts to counteract the forces of change brought on by the systems' own successes as well as by their deficiencies.

A particular feature of the post-communist traditionalist backlash is the ambiguity of the social forces and experiences it is reacting against. It is equally opposed to the capitalist ethos and to the communist ideology. At times the two are even equated, seen as different aspects of essentially the same thing: the imposition of 'alien' Western norms by foreign elements: the classic, confused theory of a Jewish, Jesuit, Masonic, plutocratic and Bolshevik conspiracy, linking Wall Street and the Kremlin.

The picture is even more complicated. Although traditionalist conservative forces generally idolise the pre-communist and even the pre-industrial era, they are also attracted by some elements of the social system of the communist period, if not by the ideology that was purported to drive it. The systematisation of the traditionalist-modernist dichotomy above points at elements of underlying affinity between traditionalist conservatism and the form of communism that was practised in the Soviet Bloc. This is particularly true for the dimensions of state-market, homogenisation-pluralisation, distribution, collectivism-individualism and discipline-autonomy.⁶⁶ The Leninist dictum of the primacy of politics is indeed embraced also by traditionalist conservatives, who tend to argue that the emancipation of society, economy and culture should and can only be accomplished through politics. This line of critique of capitalist, cosmopolitan, urban (and implicitly Western and Jewish) values has proven particularly strong in post-transition Russia, where communist rule blocked the development of a civic nationalism at an even earlier stage than in Central and Eastern Europe.⁶⁷

Eastern European traditional conservatism 'calls upon a conservatism with its roots in rural, peasant cultures, traditions that emphasise pre-war traditions of nation, family, religion, and strong national states. It is a conservatism distrustful of modernity and the secular values of post-war Western Europe.'⁶⁸

Yet the visceral wish to return to the pre-communist period is hardly compatible with the enormous, patently irreversible social changes that occurred during the period of communist rule. The communist social revolution 'included the end of rural overpopulation and low rural output; the corresponding rise of urbanisation, the growth of an urban proletariat, and the spread of industrial working methods; the generation of a near-universal demand for modern citizenship and democratic rights; the widespread acceptance of Western consumerist aspirations; and the disappearance of the pre-war élites.'⁶⁹ The socio-economic

⁶⁵ Lipset (1981), 452.

⁶⁶ Márkus (1993), 1168.

⁶⁷ Cf. Parland (1994).

⁶⁸ Hockenos (1993), 10.

⁶⁹ Schöpflin (1991), 66; the direct reference is to Hungarian communism, but the observation is relevant for the entire Socialist Bloc.

changes over the five post-war decades thus severely eroded the natural constituency for traditionalist conservatism. As it tries to ignore the enormous changes in social structure, values and popular attitudes, the conservative-populist right wing is forced to refer to its mission as that of the voice of the nation, and has to analyse society through affective, traditional means rather than modern, rational ones.⁷⁰ This is the main reason why nationalism is the core issue on the traditionalist agenda.

Traditionalist conservatives tend to see the nation not as a civic community, but as a folkish one. In the West, the concept of the nation has tended to be defined according to the traditions of the French Revolution, i.e. that it encompasses a body of citizens living in a territorial state and sharing its sovereignty.⁷¹ The underlying principle of this 'civic' definition is citizenship, regardless of race, religion, language or ethnicity. In contrast, the starting-point for the ethnic definition of the nation is rights and obligations acquired by birth. The ethnic nation is a community bound by history, customs, language and race—not citizenship or territory. For ethnic nationalists, the nation is a social unit with a mythical destiny towards which it progresses along a 'natural path'. The concept of the nation is intertwined with that of the state, the incarnation of national will: all members of the nation should live within the borders of one state and, preferably, all inhabitants of the state should belong to the same ethnic nation.

The fact that the ethnic rather than the civic definition is prevalent among conservatives in Eastern Europe goes a long way to explain the fact that the traditionalist right is suspicious of the free market. First, a free market means less centralisation and a weaker state, and thus impedes the state's ability to protect the nation and further its interests. Second, capitalism and its culture of industrialisation endangers the folkish community which thrives in a rural lifestyle. Only a strong, resourceful and interventionist state is able to shore up family economic security in the name of traditional values. The populist streak of nationalist conservatism is also laden with an egalitarianist streak: the process of wealth-creation should benefit the whole nation, not just a certain strata, and of course much less foreigners and other 'aliens'.⁷²

The Essence of the Radical Right

Right-wing radical movements of the inter-war era shared many of the core values of traditionalist conservatism, and have often been seen as only a more militant incarnation of the same backlash phenomenon. When Hitler was sentenced to prison for his activities during the 1923 Munich *Putsch* attempts, the court explained its lenient sentence by the fact that the insurgents had only 'attempted a revolution against the revolution', i.e. used leftist methods to further what basically were conservative aims. Yet this was a misrepresentation: the National Socialists and other similar groups were certainly motivated by their hate of the organised revolutionary labour movement and the parliamentary order of the Weimar Republic, but they had equal contempt for the hierarchical, aristocratic order of the Imperial age.

The German Nazis, like fascists all over Europe at the time, copied both their organisational matrix and much of the rhetoric style from the radical left. In essence, radicals on the left and on the right advocated the use of similar methods to reach different solutions to same sorts of problems. In some cases, even the proposed solutions were similar (if for

⁷⁰ Schöpflin (1991), 66.

⁷¹ Some Western states, i.a. Germany, still apply the *ius sanguinis* principle, defining the right to citizenship primarily in terms of ethnicity.

⁷² Hockenos (1993), 13.

different reasons), i.a. the destruction of finance capitalism and the establishment of a homogenous society through the eradication of class/race differences.

The radicalisation of traditionalist conservatism was the incarnation of a particularly violent backlash triggered by the new forms of social organisations that emerged in Germany and to its east around the turn of the century. Technical and economical modernisation came later to Central Europe than to Britain, the Low Countries and France, but instead it was much faster and more radical. The middle strata were squeezed between the anonymous capitalist structures and the well-organised industrial proletariat, both of which appeared as incarnations of the same alienating modernity. The emergence of joint stock companies, trusts, department stores, industrial mass production and rationalisation, big business and big labour created enormous economic pressure among urban artisans, shop-keepers and petty officials of the old middle class, as well as among the independent peasantry. The bouts of inflation in the 1920's and 1930's only increased discontent with the perceived failings of parliamentary democracy.

To the east of the Rhine, the modernisation of the modes of production and transaction was not paralleled by a secularisation of corresponding magnitude. Even among the classes which profited from modernisation, the process was widely criticised for destroying ancient social mores, creating a reality without poetic beauty, and leading to the functionalisation of the human being into an unconscious cog in the social machine. The conservative reaction against modernity was motivated not by scepticism, but rather by pessimism, romanticism and nostalgia, and it demonstrated a readiness to violent anti-revolutionary protest.⁷³ Yet many of these same anti-revolutionary, feudalistic old-world power structures intuitively acknowledged the necessity of modernisation. Indeed, the concept of central state planning was first put into full effect in Germany, when the Hindenburg–Ludendorff General Staff—a force in the employ of social reaction if anything—mobilised the entire economy behind the total war effort.⁷⁴ Lenin, for one, saw it as a particularly enticing experiment, which he realised could serve as a model for the organisation of labour in the transition period from capitalism to full-blown, classless communism.

Already during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, a wave of developmental pessimism and anti-civilisationism had swept the continent, engendered by Oswald Spengler and other admonishers of Western decline. The process of decay they identified in Western civilisation was perceived as a direct result of rationality and liberalism.



HUFVUDSTADSBLADET ARCHIVES

Distant Cousins: Hindenburg and Hitler depicted on a 1933 plaque designed by Professor Seeger-Berlin. The legend reads: 'For Unity, Justice and Freedom'

⁷³ Fest (1993), 136.

⁷⁴ Cf. Ludendorff (1919), particularly 258-318.

Knut Hamsun, D. H. Lawrence, Jacob Burckhardt and Vladimir Solovzhov were among the prominent literary figures who voiced scepticism of modernisation and romanticised the past archaic order. *Fin-de-siecle* disillusionment was particularly strong in France and Italy during the 1890's, when a range of influential authors 'with extraordinary clarity made it clear that doctrines of absolute authority, discipline, tradition, contempt for the spirit of freedom, the embracement of the moral rectitude of war and slavery made it possible to take a proud and uncompromising stance, and at the same come much closer to the views of simple people than sentimental liberalism and humanism could.'⁷⁵ As Nietzsche pointed out, the cult of emotions replaced the earlier cult of rationality. It did not take long before the scepticism with modernity inspired radical anti-democratic, social Darwinist and biological-racist thinking—and ultimately created movements demanding that such programmes be put into force.

Just as the First World War energised the working class parties' hyper-modernist programmes, it also radicalised anti-modern sentiments. Particularly in the vanquished states, it led to a shattering of what belief there had existed in continuing progress and prosperity. This developmental pessimism manifested itself in a powerful literary and aesthetic movement espousing truly anachronistic anti-rationality, even irrationality. In Italy, Julius Evola hailed the crucial importance of an aristocratic élite of heroic political fighters, while German philosophers such as Ernst Jünger, Martin Heidegger and Carl Schmitt eloquently dismissed freedom, equality and democracy for unity, leadership, loyalty and hierarchy.

Obviously, it was partly a reaction of the *Frontkämpfer* generation directly against 1919. That year not only proven much of the suffering to have been in vain, but also represented a return to civilian normality which was difficult to bear for many—Adolf Hitler was but one of the de-mobilised soldiers who sorely missed the camaraderie and sense of purpose in the trenches. The fundamental target of the martial estheticians was, however, the whole legacy of 1789. By emphasising struggle, not progress and rationality, as the binding force of society, they attempted to reconnect an increasingly *bourgeoisie* social structure to an archaic, pre-class social order. Evola became the chief ideologue of Italian Fascism, and Heidegger and Schmitt developed into devout Nazis. Jünger notably did not: he dismissed Hitler as a fake and a closet modernist, and even moved on the fringes of the aristocratic circles which in 1944 made an attempt on the *Führer's* life.

One can indeed see Jünger's point. Political fascism may be an expression of the broad critique of rationality, industrialisation and emancipation, but it is also anti-intellectual and plebeian. Inter-war political fascism was even egalitarian, if only within the boundaries it set up along racial, religious or ethnic lines. Despite its critique of the giant anonymous structures which crush ancient social structures and customs, and its praise of rural romanticism and the individual's mythical tie to the soil, political fascism was *de facto* pro-technological and tended to advocate social mobility: 'it gave people modern assignments in the suggestive masquerade of the past'.⁷⁶ Both Hitler and Mussolini were indeed great admirers of technological progress: not only in the form of new wonder weapons, but also of the automobile, highways, the aeroplane and the city as an organism. To this day, the *Duce* is remembered for 'making the trains run on time'; if anything, a praise of his Fordist ambitions and accomplishments.

The question of the nature of fascism has elicited a broad range of responses. Contemporary Marxists generally saw it as 'the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic, most imperialist elements of finance capital',⁷⁷ i.e. as the most advanced, and logically ultimate, stage of capitalism. Non-communist scholars have taken a

⁷⁵ Fest (1993), 139.

⁷⁶ Fest (1993), 149.

⁷⁷ Togliatti, *Lectures on Fascism*, London 1976, 1; quoted in Bosworth (1994), 20-21.

somewhat different approach. For two decades after 1945, fascism and Naziism were treated by mainstream Western political analysis as one incarnation of the broader current of totalitarianism, one further example of which was communism. Among the most influential texts in this vein was Carl Friedrich's and Zbigniew Brzezinski's 1956 treatise *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*.⁷⁸

The model underlying that book was a theory of the features inherent to totalitarian state. They are (1) a pervasive and chiliastic ideology; (2) a mass party dominated by the charisma of one man in turn defended by a coterie of ruthless and passionate true believers; (3) mass 'scientific' terror maximised in its effect by often being arbitrary in its direction; (4) a near monopoly both of mass communication and of any weapons in the army or elsewhere in society, (5) a rigid state control of the economy, indicating their fundamentally anti-capitalist nature; and (6) a 'natural bent' to engage in 'world conquest'.⁷⁹

The authoritative Western texts on totalitarianism from the 1950's were obviously influenced by the political climate dominating in the United States at the time. They are coloured by the atmosphere of the early Cold War, when Americans preferred to see the struggle against the USSR and what was perceived as a homogenous movement of World Communism as a direct continuation of the battle against fascism. Despite this, some conclusions still appear valid and prescient.

Yet even fascism is not a clear-cut, and even less a coherent, ideological mind-set. One of the defining features of right-wing ideologies is indeed that they are internally incoherent, hodgepodes of incongruity. Even the very term 'fascism' is fuzzy, 'a collage of different philosophical and political ideas, a beehive of contradictions'.⁸⁰ The Italian version is a good example: it was republican, yet kept the monarchy in place and established the first ever concordat with the Church; it proposed absolute state control, yet allowed the markets to operate freely; it boasted of bringing about revolutionary change, yet it was financed by the most conservative landowners who expected from it counter-revolution.

Apart from the internal contradictions within the national varieties, fascism has developed into a catch-all designation—in some cases even a pejorative—for a broad family of right-wing radical ideologies, parties and movements: from the strongly Catholic Spanish Falangists and Slovak Hlinka party to the anti-Christian and pagan German National Socialists; from the imperialist Italian Fascists to the separatist Croatian *Ustasha*; from highly organised cadre parties to loose street gangs of skinhead hooligans. Usage of the term has even degenerated to a mantra for the left: during the 1920's and 30's, communists attacked social democrats as 'social fascists', while Stalinists and neo-Stalinists in post-1989 Eastern Europe have been branded as 'Red Fascists'. In fact, even totalitarianism is not a feature common to all fascist movements: Italy, the country where the term originated, is notably omitted from Hannah Arendt's seminal 1951 study *Origins of Totalitarianism*.

Umberto Eco notes that the perception of similarity between fascist movements is often the result of 'illusory transitivity', as illustrated by the following sequence:⁸¹

1	2	3	4
a b c	b c d	c d e	d e f

The first group is illustrated by features a, b, and c; the second by features b, c, and d; and so on. Group two is similar to group one in that it has two features in common, and for the same

⁷⁸ Friedrich and Brzezinski (1956).

⁷⁹ Bosworth (1993), 22.

⁸⁰ Eco (1995).

⁸¹ Eco (1995); the argument is followed at some length below.

reasons group three is similar to group two and to group four. Group three is also somewhat similar to group one; they have feature c in common. Group four shares features with to groups three and two, but has no features in common with group one. Yet owing to the uninterrupted series of decreasing similarities a 'family resemblance' remains between one and four. One may thus, Eco argues, add to or remove from a régime or movement some features, and it will still be recognisably fascist. Despite its fuzziness, the term has a meaning.

To make sense of all the differences in essence and style, he identifies some features of generic 'Eternal Fascism', or, as he calls it, 'Ur-Fascism'. As Eco notes, 'these features cannot be organised into a system; many of them contradict each other, and are also typical of other kinds of despotism or fanaticism. But it is enough that one of them be present to allow fascism to coagulate around it.' This is of course not a systematic argument, but highly illustrative for the present purposes.

The first feature of generic fascism is the *cult of tradition*. This normally materialises in the form of a cult of the nation's distant, heroic past, often as revealed by long-forgotten 'documents' and archaeological 'finds' in conjuncture with elements selectively borrowed from the great thinkers of mankind. This makes fascism syncretistic: it attempts to combine different or even contradictory beliefs or practices. Evola merged the Holy Grail with *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and alchemy with the Holy Roman and Germanic Empire. In a similar vein, Russian ultra-nationalists have argued that the Russians are a mythical race of superhumans with reference to the *Book of Vlas*, a forgery depicting the arrival of the Russian nation as the first Aryan people in Europe, and combined it with that other infamous forgery, *The Protocols*, to 'prove' Russia's eternal holy mission. In line with classic fascist tradition, the Russian ultra-right also has a foible for the occult.⁸²

The cult of tradition obviously implies a rejection of modernism. Although fascists commonly worship technology—something that sets them apart from other traditionalists, who normally see it as the antithesis of spirituality—the praise of modernism takes place only on the surface of an ideology based on *Blut und Boden*. Eco notes: 'The rejection of the modern world was disguised as a rebuttal of capitalistic way of life, but it mainly concerned the rejection of the spirit of 1789 (and of 1776, of course). The Enlightenment, the Age of Reason, is seen as the beginning of modern depravity. In this sense too, Ur-Fascism can be defined as *irrationalism*.'

This irrationalism is also derived from the *cult of action for action's sake*. It in turn promotes a distrust of intellectualism, reflection and critical analysis—and ultimately of science, as scientific progress is based on continuous disagreement. In the fascist world view, disagreement is treason. Disagreement is also a sign of diversity; Ur-Fascism seeks consensus by exploiting the *fear of difference*. For that reason, it is also racist by definition.

Historically fascist movements have appealed to a *frustrated middle class* threatened by economic crisis, politically humiliated or fearful of advancing lower strata. Eco assesses that today's fascist movements will target the old proletariat that has joined and come to dominate the *bourgeois* ranks. The fascist message to groups who feel threatened and fear losing their social identity is that their nationality is their privilege. What defines the nation is foreigners, and particularly foreign enemies. Enemies are created through an *obsession with plots*. The preferred object of xenophobia has been the Jews, as they at the same time are found both on the inside and on the outside. By a continuously shifting rhetorical focus, fascists portray the nation's enemies as simultaneously strong and weak, creating the vision of mortal danger, yet promising ultimate and inevitable victory.

In fascist thinking, *life is permanent warfare* and life acquires its meaning through constant struggle. Everybody is *educated to become a hero* and, if necessary, is asked to redeem

⁸² Cf. Laqueur (1995), 149-154.

him- or herself by dying for the cause. This also implies élitism and *contempt for the weak*. However, as fascist movements aim to generate mass support, the whole people has to be defined as the élite among nations. Élitism and contempt for underlings is transferred to the party itself, which is organised in a pyramidal, strictly hierarchical fashion. In the absence of actual war, *machismo*—the disdain for women and intolerance of non-conformist sexual practices—serves as *ersatz* heroism.

Ur-Fascism is also characterised by a *selective populism*. As the people is construed as an organic entity with a common will, somebody has to interpret that will: the Leader. And because the people have lost all power of delegation, they cannot act expressively as individuals, but are only called to theatrically play the role of the People—be it at public festivities, parades, or speeches from atop the Lenin mausoleum or the balcony of the Reich Chancellery. Mussolini and Gustave LeBon, the father of crowd theory, were mutual admirers and corresponded regularly; The *Duce* re-read LeBon's books every year, while LeBon praised Mussolini's iron will, his traits as a leader, and his understanding of the psyche of the mass.⁸³ From this qualitative populism stems the *contempt for parliamentary institutions and practices*. 'Wherever a politician casts doubts on the legitimacy of a parliament because it no longer represents the Voice of the People, we can smell Ur-Fascism'. Fascism also speaks *Newspeak*, using an elementary syntax and an impoverished vocabulary so as to limit the tools for critical and complex reasoning.

Eco's definition of 'Ur-fascism' is vague, but can hardly be anything else. Indeed, the whole point is that the ideologies of all right-wing radical movements are diffuse amalgamations intending to legitimise the use of limitless power by a determined minority. It borrows some of its social and cultural values from traditionalist conservatism, and others (as well as the methods) from revolutionary Marxism (or from Jacobitism). The fluid nature of right-wing radicalism points to the fact that it synthesises, in a genuinely Hegelian sense, revolution and reaction. It thus completely misses the point to ask whether Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Ante Pavelic or Döme Sztójay—or, for that matter, any latter-day Eastern European populist politician—really were revolutionaries or counter-revolutionaries.

Many of the features mentioned by Eco are indeed common to all dictatorial régimes, and particularly those with totalitarian ambitions. This raises the interesting and controversial question of the possible nexus between fascism and communism. The task of the present study is to find elements of continuity between pre-war right-wing movements and those of the present, with the underlying hypothesis that the legacy has been carried over by the system of Real Existing Socialism. The discussion above presented a set of features prevalent in fascism and in traditional conservatism; the ensuing task should be to examine if any of them can be observed also in communist ideology. Nationalism, the focal point of both the radical and the traditional right, is the logical starting-point for that.

The Roots and Ideology of Nationalism

Nations are, in Benedict Anderson's now famous phrase, 'imagined communities'. They exist in the human mind rather than in some 'objective' external world, and the account they give of their own origins is often largely fictitious. Yet that does not necessarily matter, as the sense of belonging to a distinct cultural tradition or a cultural identity can be subjectively real to the extent that it becomes an objective socio-political fact. A 'nation' is a amorphous and dynamically changing social entity, influenced and in some instances even created by social

⁸³ Cf. Bryson (1993), 260; as yet another indication of the radical nexus, Mussolini was not the only prominent admirer of LeBon: Hitler too had read his *La Psychologie des foules* (Paris 1895), while Lenin is said to have always had that book on his desk. Cf. Pipes (1995), 270.

engineering and myth-making. Thus, 'nationalism' precedes nations—'nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way around'. Massimo d'Azeglio admitted after the creation of the Italian kingdom: 'We have made Italy, now we have to make Italians'.⁸⁴

'Nationalism' means 'primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent'.⁸⁵ A distinction between modern nationalism from other less demanding forms of national or group identification is that the individual's loyalty to the nation supersedes all other loyalties.

Modern nationalism has its intellectual roots in the Heidelberg movement of National Romanticists, which equated the 'people' to a natural living organism that strives to develop its inherent possibilities. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, influential German philosophers such as Herder, Fichte and Hegel⁸⁶ established the idea that shared cultural heritage, traditions and popular mores define the organic unity of the nation, the *Volk*. Herder stressed that each people could emerge from barbarity only through the culture of the native tongue; nation-building is dependent on the consciousness of linguistic and ethnic community, on historical consciousness and on a consciousness of historical mission. Freedom, he concluded, is just as important for a nation as a social group as for the individual. Yet Herder's nationalism was not antagonistic. He stressed that every nation is constituted by an unique set of political and, above all, cultural experiences and traditions, and that all these cultures and nations are equally dear to God.

Indeed, nationalism in the early eighteenth century was almost by definition liberal as well as tolerant: it did not exclude or pre-empt the rights of other nations. Giuseppe Mazzini held nations to be 'God-appointed instruments for the welfare of the human race', and the Act of Brotherhood of Young Europe in 1834 declared that 'Every people has its special mission which will co-operate towards the fulfilment of the general mission of humanity. Nationality is sacred'.⁸⁷

As Eric Hobsbawm has noted, nationalism in the modern sense of the world is 'no older than the eighteenth century, give or take the odd predecessor'.⁸⁸ The equation of linguistic rights with political self-determination is an even more recent invention, in most of Europe dating back only to the second half of the nineteenth century. Since then, however, the nationalities question has arguably been the most powerful driving force in European politics.

One may debate what set the forces of nationalism and nation state-building in motion: the economic transformation caused by capitalist expansion, as Hobsbawm argues; industrialisation and proletarian urbanisation, as Ernest Gellner holds; or perhaps some other factors. In any case it is clear that both nationalism as ideology and the nation state as a mode of social organisation are incarnations of modernity.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Both quotes are from Hobsbawm (1993), 44–45.

⁸⁵ This definition is from Ernest Gellner's seminal *Nations and Nationalism* (1983), 1.

⁸⁶ Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), student of Immanuel Kant at Königsberg, *Sturm und Drang* author and advocate of the liberation of German literature from foreign influence; Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), proponent of the self-contained and corporate Prussian state, author of the *Addresses to the German Nation* (delivered in 1808–09), first Rector of the Berlin University; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), contemporary of Napoleon, author of the *Phenomenology of Mind* (1807) and *The Science of Logic* (1812–16), developed the theory of dialectical movements of opposites in history.

⁸⁷ From Wandycz (1992), 137.

⁸⁸ Hobsbawm (1990), 3, also Ch. 1.

⁸⁹ The theory of nationalism as primarily a function of modernisation appears to have become the paradigm after Karl Deutsch's *Nationalism and Social Communication, An Enquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (1953).

In any case, after the late eighteenth century, the common European drive to centralise power drove states to promote and enforce, even create, official languages for the bureaucracy and high culture. This was a break with the past, when the concepts of 'nation' and 'state' generally had weak, if any, linguistic connotations. There had also rarely been any connection in logical terms between the population inhabiting a territorial state on the one hand, and identification with a larger group on ethnic or linguistic grounds on the other.⁹⁰ Especially in multi-lingual and multi-ethnic empires such as Austria and Russia, this centralisation created counter-reactions, where the urban bourgeoisie and intelligentsia started demanding rights for 'national languages' as avenues to social mobility and emancipation in the imperial peripheries. Their partial success was demonstrated by the elevation of the Magyar nation within the Habsburg empire, codified in the Compromise of 1867, and by the gradually increased rights during 1830–70 of Czechs, Poles, Croats, Slovenes and others to use their vernaculars in office and school. In Russia, nationalism showed in attempts at Russification of non-Russian territories such as the Caucasus, Poland, Finland and the Baltics, and in the vigorous resistance to it.

Although hardly anyone at that time even thought of demanding a national state for the Czechs, Georgians or Finns, or for other subject nationalities in the multi-national European empires (Poland was possibly an exception, but even that state was not at the time defined in linguistic terms), language policy did force states to come to terms with the new principle of nationality. There was a rapid codification of minor tongues, many of which lacked a standardised written idiom even in the mid-19th century. As linguistic emancipation was accepted as an important political objective by ever broader social strata within the minor nationalities—not least as a means for upwards social mobility—the logical conclusion was that it was best, possibly only, attainable within the framework of a state.

[U]nder the circumstances, all nationalism not already identified with a state necessary became *political*. For the state was the machine which had to be manipulated if a 'nationality' was to turn into a 'nation', or even if its existing status was to be safeguarded against historical erosion or assimilation.⁹¹

The observation that nationalism makes states and not vice versa is indeed paramount when discussing the new states that were formed in Europe after the First World War. The Wilsonian principles eloquently granted rights of self-determination to the subject nationalities of the collapsing Habsburg, Ottoman, Russian and German empires, but the concept was less than compatible with realities on the ground, where a multitude of linguistic groups (and the 'nation' was by then defined almost exclusively in linguistic terms) lived side by side, in enclaves and in enclaves within enclaves, from the Baltics to the Aegean. The situation in Central Europe was as complicated as in the Balkans, where some half dozen states, formed largely on the basis of ethnicity, had broken away from the Ottoman empire during the decades preceding the First World War and proceeded to fight each other and internally.

One may even argue that the Wilsonian programme's equation of national rights with the founding of nation states, and of the nation state with linguistic, ethnic and (in some cases) religious homogeneity, reached its logical conclusion the expulsions, population transfers and exchanges, 'ethnic cleansings', and outright genocides in Europe in the mid and late 20th century. The seemingly benevolent ideas of 'one state for every nation' and 'only one state for each nation' found their logical conclusion in the dictum of 'only one nation in a state', something that could only be attained by barbarian means. Accepting the fact that

⁹⁰ Hobsbawm (1990), 19.

⁹¹ Hobsbawm (1993), 94.

most modern European nation states are outcomes of huge projects of social engineering and myth-making, nationalism can be seen as an incarnation of irrationality and collectivism, a 'backward step in the history of mankind' as Lord Acton observed as early as in 1862.⁹²

In a layout largely congruent with Stein Rokkan's seminal conceptual map of Europe⁹³, Ernest Gellner has defined Eastern Central Europe as one of five zones of national states within Europe.⁹⁴ In chronological order, the first and oldest is formed by Britain, the sub-Pyrenean states and the Netherlands. The second centres around France, where a nation state emerged around the time of the 1789 revolution. The third zone encompasses Central Europe, with Germany and Italy as the most important representatives of the new nation states formed in the mid-nineteenth century. Gellner identifies Eastern Central Europe as the fourth, while the fifth and last zone is formed by the former Soviet Union (excluding the three Baltic republics).

The Central European fourth zone encompasses the states formed when the Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian empires were broken up. These new entities were formed and delineated, largely by the victor states of the First World War, around one or several core ethnic groups within the multinational empires. These had been discriminated against by imperial centres with strong ambitions to assimilate subject ethnic and linguistic groups into the dominant cultures. As that in turn meant that political activity within these new political entities previously had been severely restricted, anti-democratic ideologies and movements took strong root immediately after independence, a process exacerbated by the complicated ethnic and linguistic mosaics prevalent throughout the region. Although the new states were formed according to the Wilsonian principles of national self-determination, they nevertheless encompassed significant minorities—in the case of Czechoslovakia, the politically dominant Czechs even constituted a minority. Thus the question of nationality were to be the basis of political action and conflicts. The building of a 'nation' by the 'state' was to form the main project of the nationalist forces, once the opposite had been accomplished. Marshal Józef Piłsudski, the first leader of newly independent, multi-ethnic Poland, paraphrased d'Azeglio and declared that 'it is the state which makes the nation and not the nation the state'.

Most of the Versailles states came under Soviet domination after the Second World War, stopping short the experiment with political democracy. That experience, Gellner argues, has resulted in the national identity becoming a surrogate for a political or class identity. But as few checks and balances are in place, the strengthening of national identity has in itself created new political and social tensions.

Nationalism in moderate, non-chauvinistic forms can and do hold states together and instil in their citizens a sense of tolerance, moderation and altruism. However, its more extreme forms leads to superficial signs of unity but tends to develop, or even depend on, notions of external and internal enemies. Nationalism in all but moderate forms—i.e. when operating in a strong institutional framework promoting and protecting pluralism and tolerance—is thus likely to have a detrimental effect on democracy. First, the prevalence of movements primarily concerned with promoting the 'national interest' is likely to lead to attempts to exclude 'non-national' forces from influence in the political processes of a state, and as a logical consequence to calls for separatism—both of which can lead to severe crises of legitimacy. Moreover, the notion of an organic national unity encourages competing political forces to attempt to monopolise representing this 'national interest'.

⁹² Quoted by Iivonen (1993), 234.

⁹³ Rokkan (1975); Rokkan and Urwin (1983); see above.

⁹⁴ Gellner (1993).

Political forces do not see themselves as parties representing particular interests and projects. Since the nation is one body with one will, each of the political forces aspires to become the one and only representative of the nation, to cloak itself in the mantle of *el movimiento nacional*. And since there are no conflicts to be resolved by competition under rules, democracy serves only as an opportunity to struggle for a monopoly representing the national interest.⁹⁵

It should be noted in this context that a widely experienced sense of organic unity does not by definition rule out contested elections or even a competitive party system. It may simply lead the oppositional 'national bloc' to refuse any co-operation with 'non-national' parties.

Even in Germany, where both state- and nation-building were completed at the time of their take-over of power, the Nazis claimed to turn the state into a vehicle for the nation, which was interpreted strictly as an organic entity. This is how Reinhard Heydrich, then chief of the Prussian *Gestapo*, put it in 1935:

National Socialism does no longer take the state, but the nation as the starting-point. The *Führer* gave this direction already in *Mein Kampf*. He defined the state as 'a means to an end', as 'an institution for the respective People's Community' to 'protect and further a community of physically and spiritually similar ways of life'. Consequently we National Socialists know only of the enemy of the people. [...] In the enemy of the state National Socialism sees the enemy of the people. All expressions of forces hostile to the state always go back to the People's enemies, are supported and led by them and determined by their actions.⁹⁶

The existence of a unique organic unity can be defined by reference to many a phenomenon: the perceived need to preserve racial homogeneity, an unique community with a holy mission (as prominently argued in Russia), by theocratic arguments (common in Orthodox countries, occasionally also in Poland), or by perceived outside conspiracies (e.g. in Serbia). There is also an abundance of quotes to this effect from Stalin and other prominent communist leaders, then of course wrapped in class analysis. In any case, the notion of organic national unity is clearly incompatible with a political system that allows open-ended, competitive adjudication of social and political conflicts. A whole and indivisible body cannot fight itself; if there is a fever, it is a sign of an invasion by hostile foreign viruses to be expelled or eradicated. Demands on unity and loyalty become total: those who do not agree with the 'national spirit' are by definition elements who do not belong.

The German National Socialists' self-identification as the only true voice of the nation is a case in point. Hitler, writing to Chancellor Heinrich Brüning in December 1931, made it quite clear that his and his party's ascent to power would be final and not reversible by any democratic mechanisms:

Herr Chancellor, the fundamental thesis of democracy runs 'All powers issue from the People.' The constitution lays down the way by which a conception, an idea, and therefore an organisation, must gain from the People the legitimation for the realisation of its aims. But in the last resort it is the People itself which determines its constitution. Herr Chancellor, if the German nation once empowers the National Socialist Movement to introduce a constitution other than that we have today, you

⁹⁵ Przeworski (1990), 92-93, again referring to works of Guillermo O'Donnell.

⁹⁶ In a speech on 'The Fight against Enemies of the State' on 15 April 1935. Quoted in *Berlin 1945, Eine Dokumentation*.

cannot stop it. [...] When a constitution proves itself to be useless for its life, the nation does not die—the constitution is altered.⁹⁷

Germany after the First World War is in fact a prime example of nationalism turned inwards. Before the war, the term 'social imperialism' described the phenomenon of domestic social tensions diverted outwards into an aggressive foreign and military policy. But in the Weimar Republic, 'patriotism' became the rallying cry for those who wanted to overthrow a government identified with the humiliating defeat, instead of, as in the Wilhelmine era, an exhortation to unite in support of the government.⁹⁸ Similar developments racked the inter-war Central European societies. Nationalists attacked the autocratic governments in Hungary and Poland for not being xenophobic enough. Even in Czechoslovakia, the politically dominant cabal of five Czech-dominated political parties in practise refused to admit the national minorities as equal partners into the governing of the state.

After 1989, nationalism and the concept of organic unity have been widely used in Eastern and Central Europe to purge the communist past. Anti-communists of all blends view communism as a totally foreign and alien imposition. The fall of the communist system can thus be interpreted as a triumph for the nation, which supposedly always has fought against foreign rule; the individual's legacy of collaboration is simultaneously transformed into his or her victory as a member of the nation. This notion not only absolves the individual from responsibility for the period of communist hegemony, but also implicitly from future events. Consequently the individual is viewed not primarily as a sovereign actor with the right and obligation to participate in the ruling of state, but as a subject of the state, whose interests become synonymous with the 'will' of the nation, and who is obliged to subject himself to that higher concern.⁹⁹

Yet the claim of nationalist politicians and intellectuals that the nation was the antithesis of communism stands on hollow ground. Not only have many of the most prominent and vocal nationalist-inclined leaders that emerged in Eastern and Central Europe after 1989–90 been members or even high-ranking functionaries in the ruling communist parties. The communist parties themselves frequently resorted to exploiting nationalism to bolster their legitimacy and popular support. This nationalism was, of course, limited to the extent that it could not be overtly anti-Soviet, but could be—and was—directed at national minorities, neighbouring countries or the West, and feed on idiosyncratic myths of a glorious historical past.

Communism and the National Question

Classic Marxist thought strongly emphasises the fundamentally internationalist nature of the class struggle. The founding fathers of Marxism based their internationalism on their economic and class analysis, and rejected any inherent value in national self-determination. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels strongly identified the spread of civilisation and progress with large nations and geared their internationalism towards them. They saw the German nation as particularly advanced and modern, and perceived the spread of German culture as in line with social and economic development, and therefore as part of the progress towards socialism and communism. Hungarians, Poles and Italians as well were seen as 'representatives of the revolution', while the South Slavs allegedly 'represent the counter-revolution', as they argued had been the case for a thousand years.

⁹⁷ Bullock (1993), 171, quoting *Hitlers Auseinandersetzung mit Brüning* (München 1932).

⁹⁸ Bullock (1993), 71.

⁹⁹ Hockenos (1993), 14.



HUFVUDSTADSBLADET ARCHIVES

Proletarians of the World: Karl Marx with daughter Jenny

Not only did Marx and Engels dismiss out of hand as *Kleinstaaterei* the national aspirations of the smaller Central European nations, they even questioned their very right to exist as distinctive cultural-linguistic entities.¹⁰⁰ In his 1852 series of articles in the *New York Daily Tribune*, Marx optimistically wrote that the spread of railroads would destroy 'the granite walls behind which each province had maintained a separate nationality and a limited national existence.' He described the Czechs as a nation that had been 'dying for the last four hundred years', and argued that Bohemia in the future could and should exist only as part of Germany.¹⁰¹ In his 1849 book on the 1848 Revolution, Marx asserted that 'except for the Poles, the Russians, and at best the Slavs in Turkey, no Slavic people has a future, for the simple reason that all Slavs lack the most basic historic, geographic, political and industrial prerequisites for independence and vitality', while Engels confessed that he had 'damned little sympathy for [the small Slavic peoples, and remnants of peoples]'. He was equally contemptuous of 'such miserably powerless so-called nations as the Danes, the Dutch, the Belgians, the Swiss etc.'¹⁰²

It was indeed the failure of the 1848 revolutions, for which especially the smaller nations of the Habsburg empire had shown markedly little enthusiasm, that prompted Marx and Engels to ask 'if their very existence [isn't] already a protest against a great historical

¹⁰⁰ Scepticism, even hostility towards small states was at the time widespread in many other quarters too. John Stuart Mill (1806–73) mentioned 'feasibility' as one prerequisite for the establishment of a nation state, and most nineteenth-century liberals did agree that a state required a sufficient size in order to be economically viable.

¹⁰¹ Quotes from Rupnik (1989), 39–40.

¹⁰² Cf. Conquest (1988), 32, quoting Karl Marx, *The Revolution of 1848*, London (1973), 231; 'Democratic Panslavism', *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, February 1849; and Friedrich Engels, 'Letter to Karl Kautsky', in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, New York (1973), 393.

revolution'. The enraged Engels, who was a much more prolific writer on the national question than Marx, predicted that the Germans and Hungarians would 'wipe out these petty hidebound nations to their very names' and that the next world war would result in the annihilation not only of reactionary classes and dynasties, but of entire 'reactionary peoples'. This, he added, would be 'a step forward'.¹⁰³ Particular venom was directed at the Croats, probably because Croat troops loyal to the Viennese Emperor had been instrumental in putting down the 1848 rebellions. Engels demanded a 'war of annihilation and ruthless terrorism' against the Croats and other 'ahistoric', 'reactionary' and 'counter-revolutionary peoples', and proclaimed that the South Slavs were 'nothing more than the national refuse of a thousand years of immensely confused development'.¹⁰⁴ Yet despite his admiration for large states and peoples, Marx had little sympathy for the Russians, whom he counted among the truly reactionary nations, and even less for the Czarist system, which he saw as the mortal enemy of revolution. During his London period, he counted among of the leading Russophobes of the time.¹⁰⁵

Marx's and Engels's most rabid writings were later actively forgotten within the Marxist movement—Marx's sharpest attacks against Czarist Russia were indeed censored in the USSR until 1987.¹⁰⁶ Yet their conclusions remain highly logical within the context of Marxist revolutionary theory. A stringent Marxist analysis cannot but conclude that national aspirations are subordinate to the general class struggle within mankind, and if some particular ethnic or linguistic group is ahead of the others in socio-economic development, so much the better for the prospects for revolution.

Marxist theoreticians, including Lenin and the entire Bolshevik leadership, had never even contemplated the possibility that the world revolution of the proletariat would start in backward Russia, and even less that it would be confined there for decades. After October 1917, the Bolsheviks took for granted that the Russian Revolution was only the beginning, that the revolutionary wildfire quickly would spread across Europe, engulfing the advanced industrial economies of Germany, Britain and France. Believing in the rapid establishment of an internationalist proletarian world order, Lenin did not hesitate to declare the right of all smaller nations in the empire to secede for the time being. This was certain to create support for the Bolsheviks among Russia's many oppressed nations, which, after going socialist, were in any case expected to voluntarily join the world socialist state-to-be. Almost immediately, Russia started to dissolve at the fringes; along the Baltic coast, in Poland, the Ukraine and the Caucasus.

Yet events turned out disappointingly for Lenin. The Communist and Spartakist rebellions in Kiel, Berlin, Munich, and Hungary were quickly put down, crushing hopes of an immediate pan-European socialist revolution, while the breakaway parts of the Russian empire soon ended up under nationalist or Menshevik control. In Russia proper the civil war escalated with substantial foreign intervention. At that point, faced with the imminent collapse of the Soviet state, the Bolsheviks stood their strategy on its head. With survival being the main objective of the régime, it chose to seek a *modus vivendi*, if not an outright alliance, with Great Russian nationalists in order to strengthen the régime's base of support in the core Russian area. It was a desperate measure prompted by harsh realities: what support the Bolsheviks had had among the industrial proletariat had then by and large evaporated, as demonstrated by the huge strikes that swept the country in early 1918 and after the civil war ended in 1921.

¹⁰³ Almond (1994), 71.

¹⁰⁴ Almond (1994), 71; Cf. Connor (1984).

¹⁰⁵ Laqueur (1995), 98–99.

¹⁰⁶ Laqueur (1995), 98.

This meant throwing overboard a lot of ideological baggage. Instead of upholding the right of the Czar's subject peoples' to self-determination, the Bolsheviks vigorously began promoting the revival of the empire. Bolshevism gradually merged with the traditional Russian concept of the state as an incarnation of the imperial idea.¹⁰⁷ The Bolsheviks exhorted 'Red Patriotism', implying that the Soviet government was not so much fighting a civil war as the external enemies of international capitalism. The Bolshevik state, to a remarkable extent, started recruiting individuals with close ties to ultra-Slavophile organisations into top-level positions in the armed forces, the security apparatus and the bureaucracy.

The formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1922 formalised the reconstruction of the empire, albeit under a pseudo-federal cloak. It reincorporated the Ukraine and the breakaway republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia, Russian was re-established as the Union's *lingua franca*, and power concentrated to Moscow. As a symbol of normalisation the rouble was reintroduced in 1923, in place of the previous coupon currencies. Joseph Stalin, as Commissar for Nationalities and later Secretary-General of the Party, was personally in charge of the centralisation and consolidation drive. It was formally legitimised by the 1924 theory of 'Socialism in one country', which for all practical purposes abandoned the hope of world revolution at least for the immediate future. In fact Stalin's theory was an obvious continuation, in the barest of disguises, of the Slavophile idea of a specific and unique Russian path of development.

It was remarkable that the Bolsheviks managed this turn of coats, given that a large portion of the highest party leadership was either Jewish or otherwise not ethnic Russian—drawn to the Party by frustration over the Czarist system's chauvinist discrimination. There certainly was strong opposition within the party leadership to the new Russocentric National Bolshevik orientation. The internationalist or 'leftist' faction, led by Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev, maintained that it simply was impossible to build anything even reminiscent of true socialism in Russia alone. The proponents of permanent revolution did not champion the right of Ukrainians, Georgians, Latvians, Kazakhs, or any other nationalities to secede from the USSR and form bourgeois states; quite the opposite. They actually demanded an even more vigorously export-oriented revolutionary policy. What they opposed, however, was the early consolidation of the Soviet state, and the government's unholy tactical alliances with various dark forces from the past.

Stalin's ultimately prevailing counter-argument was far from orthodox Marxist, yet highly persuasive. If the Left argued that the revolution in Russia could not survive without a revolution in the West, and no revolution in the West did materialise even if the Soviet government devoted all its resources to promote it, then the Soviet government logically should give up its power.¹⁰⁸ This line of reasoning may not have convinced his many learned opponents in the Central Committee, but it had enormous appeal among the middle and lower ranks of the party and among the common masses. Instead of a permanent state of war with the rest of the world, it raised the prospects of a stabilisation of social life after ten years of war and famine, and promised the opportunity of immediately starting building socialism in Russia, with all its potential rewards.

Considering Stalin's personal biography, his emergence as the standard-bearer of the neo-nationalists was not surprising. In contrast to many other prominent Bolshevik leaders Stalin was no multi-lingual cosmopolitan, having made only a few short trips outside Russia. His longest stay abroad was in January–February 1913, when he spent some two months in

¹⁰⁷ This argumentation closely follows Parland (1993), 54 pp, who in turn relies heavily on Carter (1990), and on Russian scholars in exile, such as Mikhail Agurskii and Valerii Chalidze. Two recent groundbreaking studies of the early days of Bolshevik power are Pipes (1995) and Brovkin (1994). On Soviet and Russian nationalism, Yanov (1978) and (1987) remain indispensable.

¹⁰⁸ Conquest (1991), 122.

Cracow and Vienna finalising his essay on 'The National Question and Social Democracy'. To Lenin's delight (and with the very active collaboration of Bukharin, Troyanovsky and probably Lenin himself—Stalin read no foreign languages)¹⁰⁹, the article dismissed the Austro-Marxist concept of 'natural-cultural autonomy'. This, as formulated by the theoretician Otto Bauer, who—faced with the bewildering mix of nationalities in the Habsburg empire—had abandoned the territorial basis for nationality for a 'personal' principle. Its nucleus was that every citizen, regardless of origin or place of residence, should choose his own national status, and that self-governing bodies for each nation should be the foundation of state authority.¹¹⁰ The Austro-Hungarian Social Democratic Party promptly split into six national chapters. Nevertheless, Bauer's formula implied that the Austro-Hungarian state would be kept intact even after a leftist ascent to power.

Lenin, however, saw fatal flaws in the Austro-Marxist approach. Along traditional Marxist lines, Lenin saw the 'nation' as a category marking the epoch of rising capitalism; as a transitional phenomenon of a bourgeois nature that was to disappear once worker rule was installed on a world scale. International proletarian interests were therefore the central issue ('The worker has no fatherland', as the slogan went). Yet with the national question becoming increasingly volatile in Imperial Russia as well, the Bolsheviks were forced either to exploit it or risk it blocking their grab for power. Pragmatic as always, Lenin concluded that the Bolsheviks, during the revolutionary phase when nations and nationalism still counted as powerful social and political forces, 'require an item on our programme on the rights of nations to self-determination'.¹¹¹ A formula was devised to gratify the national aspirations of minority nations within a future socialist Russia, while not at the same time undermining revolutionary unity.¹¹²

Stalin's essay provided that item. It started off from a rather conventional, even Hegelian definition of the term 'nation'. It is, Stalin wrote, 'a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture'. Incidentally, Jews were not included among the nations, but rather characterised as an 'assimilated group of persons', maintaining only 'a certain communality of national character'. This was of course to change later on, when 'Jewish' became a nationality printed in Soviet internal passports. In the essay Stalin nevertheless settled for a more conventional, non-Zionist definition of Jewry; yet Arkady Vaksberg points to the fact that he nevertheless defined Jews in term of origin and blood—not by religious adherence, as was the basis for official discrimination of Jews (and of pogroms) in Russia at the time.¹¹³

Although acknowledging the right of every nation to determine its fate freely and live as it wishes, Stalin pointed out that it is not for the Social Democrats to guard national rights; their historic task is to organise the working class for class struggle. The Bolsheviks should—for tactical reasons—support the national minorities' right to use and educate in their own languages, but the party itself should be a supra-national, integrated vanguard organisation working solely to promote the working class interest. Ever the tactician, after the outbreak of war in 1914 Lenin became even more favourably disposed towards national self-determination, autonomy and even independence.¹¹⁴ At the Seventh Party Conference in April

¹⁰⁹ Vaksberg (1995), Ch. 1.

¹¹⁰ Stalin's text was first published in the (legal) St. Petersburg Marxist journal *Enlightenment*. The essay was later renamed 'Marxism and the National Question' and is to be found in the collection *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*. Bauer's main work on the topic is *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (1907).

¹¹¹ Conquest (1991), 53.

¹¹² Conquest (1991), 52.

¹¹³ Vaksberg (1995), 4-5.

¹¹⁴ In his *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*.

1917, the Bolsheviks declared as their position that all nations of Russia had the 'right to secede freely'. The Party should, however, retain its unitary, supra-national organisation, and branches in secessionist regions were directed to work vigorously for the preserved territorial integrity of Russia within its imperial borders.

The 1913 article—and his background as being born a Georgian—established Stalin as the Bolsheviks' premier expert on the nationalities issue, and paved the way for his appointment as Commissar for Nationalities in 1917. It was in that capacity that he on 15 November 1917, together with Lenin, signed the Decree on Nationality. It largely followed the principles laid out by the Seventh Party Conference, granting (1) the equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia; (2) the right of free self-determination of the peoples of Russia, including the right to secede; (3) abolition of all privileges and disabilities based on nationality or religion; and (4) free development of national minorities and ethnic groups inhabiting Russian territory. The Party itself and the government it headed, of course, continued to work against secession: the primary objective of the nationalities decree was to rally minority nations behind the newly-established régime and to enhance the Bolsheviks' reputation for the future, in case the Soviet government collapsed.¹¹⁵ The extent to which the nationalities policy was convoluted in equivocation is shown by a declaration Stalin made somewhat later, in May 1918, to some Moslem Bolsheviks in Central Asia:

Autonomy is a form. The whole question is what class control is contained in that form. The Soviet government is for autonomy, but only for an autonomy where all power rests in the hands of workers and peasants, where the bourgeoisie of all nationalities is not only deprived of power, but also of participation in the election of the governing organs.¹¹⁶

It is important to spell out Stalin's personal views on Russia, its role and its mission at some length, as the USSR for some two decades, including the period when the Socialist Bloc was formed in Eastern Europe, was essentially run as a one-man show. The high and rising regard in which Stalin held Russian culture, traditions and historic mission influenced not only his policy of consolidation of the Soviet Union, but also pervaded Soviet foreign policy for decades to come.

The first demonstration was Caucasian policy, which evolved into a major controversy. While Lenin, along with most Georgian Bolsheviks, argued for maximum autonomist concessions in Georgia, Stalin always advocated the use of maximum force. Around the time of the speech in Central Asia mentioned above, Stalin claimed, in a speech published in *Pravda*, that nationalism never had been a real problem among the Russians: 'as a ruling nation the Russian in general, and Russian communists in particular, have never felt any racial oppression and, by and large, have never had to cope with nationalist ambitions in their own environment, apart from some "great power chauvinism"; and thus they have never had to overcome such inclinations.'¹¹⁷ All this could not but contribute to Stalin's growing reputation as a naturalised Russian chauvinist, both among more cosmopolitan Bolsheviks and in his native lands of Georgia; also Lenin accused Stalin of Russian chauvinism, in conjunction with his political testament.¹¹⁸ (Yet it is equally true that even Lenin was not immune to Russocentric thinking: he launched the myopically Russocentric Comintern, which stubbornly advocated a totally unrealistic Russian-style *coup d'état* and civil war strategy for the Western European communist parties.)¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Conquest (1991), 71.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Fainsod (1953), 303.

¹¹⁷ Deutscher (1973), 193.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Conquest (1991), 100-1.

¹¹⁹ Conquest (1994), in an appreciating review of Pipes (1995, original edition 1994).

To overly stress the chauvinist aspect is, however, a fallacy. Stalin used ideology instrumentally to further his own ends: his primary goal was the centralisation of state power into party hands, and of party power into the party secretariat he headed in Moscow.¹²⁰ The Russification of the republican Party organisations initially had this principal aim, even though that policy it later also manifested of Russian chauvinism—from the mid 1930's, the second party secretary in the republics of the USSR was practically always a Russian. Of course, most communists realised that the policy of centralisation helped consolidate the new régime's authority and ability to rule as well as promised great advantages in the fields of the economy, the administration and defence.

Stalin and his allies in the Party supported National Bolshevism—the alliance with the radical Russian nationalists—in order to enhance the legitimacy and broaden the support of the Soviet régime, and to strengthen the power of certain factions within the Party. It would be incorrect to describe Stalin as a convinced National Bolshevik, as Stalinist policies in many instances contradicted traditional Slavophile ideals. In particular the collectivisation drive and crash industrialisation were certain to destroy the traditional Russian village society with its ancient culture.¹²¹ That policy was methodically pursued during the famine-purges wreaked on the Ukraine, the Volga region and the North Caucasus in the early 30's—arguably with the aim of crushing the *obshchinas* (village communes) and thus the base for any future peasant revolt.¹²²

Nevertheless, Stalin gradually took the appearance of a traditional Great Russian chauvinist. Isaac Deutscher has noted the paradox:

Although Stalin later, on more than one occasion, has been accused of Russian nationalism, he was not driven [...] by any of the common feelings or prejudices associated with nationalism. What he represented was only the principle of centralisation, common to all modern revolutions. He gave an exaggerated and brutal expression to that principle. But whichever his motives may have been, the practical effects of his actions were as if he had been driven by Russian chauvinism.¹²³

Of course far from all Russian nationalists came to terms with Bolshevism. Even if its capacity to restore Russia's unity and strength was increasingly acknowledged, the régime's atheism, anti-agrarianism, and fundamentally Western ideology was difficult to accept. Indeed, many émigrés collaborated intimately with the German Nazis to topple the Soviet government—some out of ideological conviction, others motivated by the logic that 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'. Some were eventually employed by the German occupation authorities; there was also a Russian Nazi Party (*ROND*) based in Germany¹²⁴ and other pro- and pseudo-fascist émigré groupings operating out of Manchuria, the United States and Yugoslavia.

These, like other exile organisations of a conservative or monarchist persuasion, appear to have been heavily infiltrated by Soviet agents. After the war, many of the politically active exiles made a reappraisal of Stalin, and some even returned to the Soviet Union. The soldiers of the Vlasov turncoat army, repatriated *en masse* to the USSR in 1945, was another element which brought in right-wing radicalism to Soviet society. Far from all Vlasovites were personally fascists (although practically all of them were sent to labour camps as such), but a great many certainly were motivated by ideology. The actual political aims General Vlasov

¹²⁰ Parland (1993), 58.

¹²¹ Parland (1993), 58 pp, stresses this point.

¹²² The definitive account here is Conquest (1988).

¹²³ Deutscher (1973), 193.

¹²⁴ A Russian émigré by the name of Schwartz-Bostunich even became a high-ranking SS officer and an advisor to Hitler on the Talmud, ritual slaughter and Freemasonry.

are unclear, but the army's political programme was influenced in a major way by the fascistoid and strongly anti-Semitic emigrant movement *NTS*.¹²⁵

The Stalinists' exploitation of Russian chauvinism was paralleled in the tight grip Moscow took on the world communist movement from the mid-1920's on. This total subservience is something of a mystery, given both the intellectual traditions of the leftist revolutionary movement and its traditional German orientation. Many factors seem to have played a part. The Russian Revolution, undoubtedly a world-class historic event, had bestowed upon the Bolsheviks not only enormous authority, prestige and goodwill, but also given them control of the full resources of a large state. As most communist parties in Eastern Europe were illegal, a substantial part of their leadership had to seek refuge in the USSR, where their loyalty to Moscow—self-perceived as internationalism—tended to be strengthened by a wide range of factors, from pure gratitude and identification with the Soviet state to terror-induced fear. When returning from exile after the war, the markedly Russocentric world view many of these Muscovites had acquired often pitted them against the home communists. Whatever reasons the latter had had for staying behind, it was assumed that they were not sufficiently appreciative of the Soviet Union's historic leadership role. This may have been the case in some instances, but it has to be acknowledged that all veteran communists, whatever their personal biographies, tended to see the USSR and its leaders as supreme authorities.

When the USSR was attacked by Nazi Germany, the Soviet leadership opted to fight the war under the explicit banner of patriotism. Stalin entreated the 'brothers and sisters'—not 'comrades'—of the people to defend the 'Fatherland', appealing to common pride in the country's past and in the process even making a truce with the Orthodox Church. The war against Germany was dubbed the Great Patriotic War, a direct allusion to the Napoleonic invasion and Czar Alexander's subsequent victory.¹²⁶ This Russian nationalism, only thinly disguised as Soviet or Red patriotism, was also manifested in the distrust of minority nationalities, some of which were collectively deported to the east. There is no doubt that the Soviet leadership saw nationalism among the minority peoples—particularly the Ukrainians, who, as Stalin regretted to say, were too numerous to deport—as the gravest danger to victory in the war and its hold onto power.

After the war, the atmosphere in the Soviet Union became even more xenophobic. In a widely published toast speech at the 24 May 1945 celebration of the Soviet triumph over Germany, Stalin, using decidedly unMarxist terminology, honoured the Russian people as 'the most outstanding nation of all the nations who belong to the Soviet Union', and which had 'earned the recognition as the leading force of the Soviet Union among all the peoples of the country.' Soon after, the policy of isolationism was stepped up with new regulations prohibiting practically all contact with foreigners. The Zhdanov propaganda machinery condemned everything Western while praising everything Russian. Russian history was rewritten so that the struggle of practically all non-Russian peoples against Czarism was branded as reactionary.¹²⁷ In 1948, the media further intensified its campaign against 'rootless cosmopolitanism', 'anti-patriotic elements', and 'enemies within', resulting in a purge of prominent Jews which also spread to the Soviet-dominated part of Eastern Europe. As Alan Bullock concludes: 'Stalin succumbed to the same anti-Semitism as Hitler, substituting the Jewish world-conspiracy of capitalism and Zionism, with its headquarters in

¹²⁵ Laqueur (1995), 107-123; also Dunlop (1983).

¹²⁶ This was not necessarily totally opportunistic; Djilas (1963, 51) reports that Stalin had portraits of Suvorov and Kutuzov hanging in his study, next to a picture of Lenin.

¹²⁷ Parland (1993), 59, quoting Carter (1990).

New York, for Hitler's world-conspiracy of Bolshevism, with its headquarters in the Kremlin.¹²⁸

Stalin's death put an end to the worst excesses, and during the Khrushchev period, totalitarian National Bolshevik tendencies were by and large suppressed: in the USSR itself this meant a cultural thaw, and in Eastern Europe tolerance or even encouragement of 'national paths to socialism'. Economic and cultural co-operation with the West grew in importance, and a secularised, more or less Westernised urban culture began to emerge—in the case of Eastern Europe, to re-emerge. In Russia, however, the Thaw also created an opening for anti-Western Russian nationalists, who sought an alliance with unreconstructed National Bolsheviks. The late 1960's saw the first open debate between Marxism and Russian nationalism, and it indicated that the nationalists were arguing from a position of strength within the state and party hierarchy.¹²⁹

Although many Russian nationalists had come to appreciate the way the Soviet Union had turned out, some still objected to the still official Marxist-Leninist state ideology, to the repression of the church, and to the refusal to admit that the overthrow of the monarchy had broken the national tradition. The Russian 'Party' which voiced these criticisms was heterogeneous, including advocates of conservative monarchy, the re-establishment of the alliance between nationalism and Stalinism, and a reconciliation between the Church and the state.¹³⁰ This was also the heyday of Fetisov's secret society, openly racist and pro-fascist in its admiration of Stalin and Hitler—the dissident writer Andrei Siniavskii reported an openly anti-Semitic climate in the Gulag labour camp system, where prisoners were equally hateful of Jews and the Soviet government. The dominant issue for the non-establishment nationalists was the defence against Westernisation, including Jewish influence, both of which it feared the régime inadvertently was promoting. Yet by the early 1970's, the perceived encirclement of the USSR by a coalition of the West and China encouraged the seeking of a *modus vivendi* with the régime. The specific Russian mentality was anew proposed 'as a unifying force that could produce harmony, concord and consensus between the rulers and the ruled', and allow Russia to isolate itself from dangerous outside influences.¹³¹



HUFVUDSTADSBLADET ARCHIVES

*Radical Nexus:
Hitler and
Mussolini
reviewing
Italian sailors in
Venice, 15 June
1934. Both were
in a sense
refugees from
leftist Socialism*

¹²⁸ Bullock (1993), 1037; as noted above, others argue that Stalin had been a life-long anti-Semite, whose views were based more on traditional Great Russian chauvinism than on Marxistoid concepts of Jewish influence in world capitalism. Cf. Vaksberg (1995).

¹²⁹ Parland (1993), 59 pp., 95.

¹³⁰ Laqueur (1995), 93-106.

¹³¹ Parland (1993), 63.

It is in this context that the Brezhnev era should be interpreted. It was marked by a domestic and international entrenchment of the régime, aptly called stagnation. There were new attempts by the Kremlin leadership to revive elements of Stalinism: as Khrushchev's indictment of the Stalin era had made the increasingly Westernised and secularised intelligentsia lose interest in socialism as an utopian goal for society, the logical allies in this were the nationalists. Despite internationalist inclinations demonstrated by the détente policy and persecution of nationalists such as Solzhenitsyn, Brezhnev 'attempted throughout his reign to balance National Bolshevism and Marxist-Leninist purism'.¹³² During the early 1970's, the position of the Russian language was elevated even beyond that of a *lingua franca*: e.g., the Ukrainian language, long under attack, ceased altogether to be used in Ukrainian schools, being replaced by Russian. Pan-Slavic rhetoric and anti-Western slogans also began to characterise the attitude towards Eastern Europe. Yet the tone had changed somewhat: Russian nationalists, even within the establishment, increasingly began to see the Socialist Bloc as a dangerous channel for Western influence into the USSR itself, as well as as an economic burden on the Soviet economy.

Figure 2.4: Authoritarianism and Nationalism: Left vs. Right

	Authoritarian Left-wing	Authoritarian Right-wing
Nationalist	Stalinist USSR China, post-1955 Poland, 1967–89 Ceausescu Romania Hoxha Albania North Korea Vietnam FNL <i>Khmers Rouges</i> Shining Path (<i>Sendero</i> <i>Luminoso</i>)	Nazi Germany Hungary 1919–44 Romanian Iron Guard
Non-nationalist	2nd International 3rd International 4th (Trotsky's) International Spartakists, Anarchists, Syndicalists	Pinochet Chile Some Asian 'Tiger Economies'

Leftist nationalism is not unique to Russo-Communism in general and Stalinism in particular. Indeed, revolutionary Marxist parties of many shades in many countries, both in and out of power, have been keen to exploit nationalist sentiments. In fact, a mix of socialism and nationalism has been the driving force behind the vast majority of Third World liberation and independence movements since the 1940's. This nationalism was initially directed against the Western colonial and imperialist powers, but later also served as a tool to counteract Soviet attempts at hegemony: this has been true for Yugoslavia, Albania, and particularly for China. During their four-year rule of Cambodia, the ultra-Maoist *Khmers Rouges* presented the hitherto most eccentric combination of communism and nationalism: attempting to build a pre-feudal communist society, while simultaneously cleansing the

¹³² Dunlop (1983), 265.

country of all non-Khmer elements and trying to recreate the greatness of the ancient Angkor kingdom. In contrast, a number of authoritarian régimes pursuing right-wing economic and social policy aims have not had nationalist issues on the agenda, at least not aggressively.

The Radical Nexus

For Stalin, Hitler's vituperative anti-communism did not constitute an obstacle for forging working relations with Germany. Neither was Hitler averse to set ideology aside when conducting *Realpolitik*. This pragmatism on both sides was crowned by the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact of August 1939. Stalin's surprise move obviously threw the world communist movement into temporary disarray, as Moscow suddenly proclaimed the Nazis a lesser foe than the capitalist governments of the West.

However, the communist alliance with democratic parties against fascism had in fact not been established until the Comintern congress of August 1935, after Stalin had concluded that Hitler's anti-communist and *Drang nach Osten* rhetoric might be serious. The essentially foreign-policy character of that move is demonstrated by the rapid subsequent signing of defence pacts between the USSR, France and Czechoslovakia.¹³³ During the 1920's and early 30's, communist parties had consorted intimately with other anti-democratic groups, including fascist parties, in their attempts to paralyse European parliamentary institutions. The Comintern had made social democracy its main target of attack, on several occasions leading to direct and open fascist–communist collaboration, as during the 1931 Prussian referendum or the 1932 transport strike. The intimate political co-operation between the German and USSR governments, the two post-Versailles outcasts of the international community, is of course also well documented. The 1922 Rapallo treaty established cordial and expanding trade relations between the two pariah states, and enabled the German army was to manufacture and test in the Soviet Union weapons systems prohibited under the peace treaty.

In German conservative circles, including segments of the National Socialist movement, the building of closer ties with the Soviet Union—or, rather, with Russia—was seen as a way for Germany to purge itself of Western influence: 'the fear of an alienation of the German soul by the materialist, ethymologised Western world was, here, stronger than the fear of the threat of Communist world dominance.'¹³⁴ It was a *Drang nach Osten* driven more by sympathy for Russia as a haven for eternal, traditional values than by expansionism. Even during the last year of the Second World War, Goebbels and other prominent Nazi leaders of the radical persuasion advocated a *rapprochement* with the Soviets, calling for a Communist rather than Allied victory so as to at least ensure the destruction of the capitalist order.

Hitler never ceased to point out that the main aim of the Nazi party was, 'to put it briefly: the destruction and eradication of the Marxist world view'. To lower-echelon supporters of Nazi or Communist ideology, the conflict between the two belief systems became absolute and irreversible during the war. Yet many observers have pointed out that Nazi Germany and Stalinist Soviet Union, even though they ended up as mortal enemies, in many respects were ideologically alike and even ideologically linked. Already in the 1930's, Herbert Tingsten, the liberal Swedish political scientist, made the—now almost trivial—observation that the extremes of the political spectrum are closer to each other than to the centre.¹³⁵ Richard Pipes and Robert Conquest are among the recent proponents of that theory of 'Radical Affinity'; it

¹³³ Cf. Kissinger (1995), 335.

¹³⁴ Fest (1993), 142.

¹³⁵ Cf. Tingsten (1945).

also figured prominently in writings of the conservative faction in the 1980's German *Historikerstreit*—particularly as an interpretation of the roots of Nazi methods of mass mobilisation and terror.¹³⁶ As Conquest writes:

Fascism in its original form can [...] be seen as in a sense a sibling of Communism: both are based on a dictatorship supposedly representing a transcendent mass entity, as against the idea of individuals with rights within a civic order.¹³⁷

In spite of the virulent hostility at the overt level between the Hitlerites and the Stalinists, with each claiming to be the only true salvation from the horrors of each other, one can certainly sense an undertone of mutual understanding.¹³⁸

There certainly were substantial fundamental philosophical-ideological differences. While Bolsheviks and other radical 'leftists' tend(ed) to stress rationality, rightists in general and National Socialists in particular would rather refer to 'instinct' or non-rational motives as a basis for political action. But even this dichotomy is not absolute, as indicated by communist references to 'class instinct' or their belief in the proletarian will's ability to accomplish anything, from five-year plans fulfilled in four years to growing corn in the Arctic. As mentioned earlier, fascists have tended to mix mysticism, the occult and *Blut und Boden* with a fascination with technology.

One evident analogy lies in the function of ideology. Writing of Italian Syndicalists and nationalists at the turn of the century, Robert Paxton points to ideological parallels which can be applied to the broader spectrum of European left and right radicalism.

[B]oth rejected the materialism which underpinned progressive reform efforts, socialist as well as bourgeois; both hated democratic individualism as the dissolvent of any kind of community *élan*; both dreamed of replacing bourgeois complacency by heroic grandeur; both admired producers and entrepreneurs while condemning financiers and speculators. They could even find common ground in a commitment to 'revolution' once some dissident syndicalists were ready to alter the revolution's goals from the redistribution of wealth and power to the redemption of human moral power.¹³⁹

A similar observation was made already by Georges Sorel, the early 20th century radical syndicalist who admired and was read by both Mussolini and Lenin. Sorel developed the concept of a 'social myth', which he saw neither as a 'calculated plan of action, nor a scientific prediction, nor as a Utopian blueprint [...] but as a vision which could inspire and galvanise the masses into action'. For totalitarian ideologies, concepts such as 'race', 'nation', 'class', 'proletariat', 'Volk', 'the bourgeoisie', 'kulaks' or 'the Jew' are not sociological categories, but mythical symbols which the masses can either identify with or reject.¹⁴⁰

In a time of upheaval (collectivization in Russia) or anxiety (the renewal of crisis in Germany with the depression) these were methods of great potency, particularly in providing a focus for fears and hatreds. Hitler and Stalin alike depicted history as a struggle, the first as a struggle between races, with 'the Jew' doubling in the roles of

¹³⁶ Analyses and bibliographies of the *Historikerstreit* are available in, i.a., Evans (1987) and (1989); Kershaw (1989); Maier (1988); and Bosworth (1994).

¹³⁷ Conquest (1994).

¹³⁸ Conquest (1991), 176.

¹³⁹ Paxton (1994), in a review of Zeev Sternhell, Mario Szjneider and Maia Asheri, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology; From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*, (Princeton 1994).

¹⁴⁰ Bullock (1993), 438; Pipes (1995), 245, however, argues that the influence of Sorel over Mussolini was 'small and transient'.

both capitalist and Communist, the second as a struggle between classes, or between 'the Revolution' and 'the enemies of Soviet power', 'agents of foreign powers', 'imperialists' who sought to overthrow its achievements and restore the old order.¹⁴¹

It is debatable whether fascists were inspired directly by the Bolsheviks to use mass terror as a political instrument, but the methods and their ideological legitimisation by broad categorisations certainly turned out very similar. Consider the following statement by Martin Ivanovich Latsis, a Latvian-born chieftain in the early Soviet Cheka, who emphasised that not guilt or innocence, but social background determined punishment: 'We are not waging war against individuals. We are exterminating the *bourgeoisie* as a class. You do not have to prove that somebody has acted against the interests of Soviet power. The first thing you should ask a prisoner is: to what class does he belong, what is his origin, how has he been brought up and educated, what is his profession? These questions ought to determine the fate of the accused. That is the significance and essence of the Red Terror.'¹⁴² Exchange class for race, and it would fit well into the mouth of a Streicher, Eichmann or Himmler.

Yet the main common denominator of Stalinist communism and fascism was not the brutal methods both were prepared to use, but the challenging of the liberal order and *status quo*. This was the very legitimisation for their exercise of power. Indeed, the central theme in both ideologies was all-encompassing radicalism, assuming and aiming for the total destruction of not only the present political and social order, but of all its moral, social and religious principles. Moral nihilism, the rejection of traditional morality as such, was, as Hugh Seton-Watson has observed, 'not only the central feature of National Socialism, but also the common factor between it and Bolshevism'.¹⁴³ That element also qualitatively sets fascism apart from traditional conservatism, which is by nature moralistic.

*Tacky Heroism:
Comrade Stalin
assuming
Biblical
Proportions.
Official Soviet
and Nazi taste in
art was almost
identical*



HUFVUDSTADSBLADET ARCHIVES

Both Stalinism and fascism proudly espoused complete contempt for contemporary bourgeois values—be they reformist, liberal or conservative. Instead they opted for visions of anti- or hyper-modern models of societal organisation, which due to the common radicalism

¹⁴¹ Bullock (1993), 439.

¹⁴² Fest (1993), 132; also Andrew and Gordievski (1990), 24.

¹⁴³ Cf. Conquest (1991), 175.

in practice led to very similar results. In aiming for Utopia, human suffering and sacrifice was seen as largely irrelevant or, in the case of Nazi ideology, even as a prerequisite for surviving in a Darwinian universe. Nihilism also requires a continuous mobilisation, and demands the subordination of the individual to a higher, almost mythical force, be it the *Volk* or a future socialist paradise.

The parallel world views are also clearly demonstrated in art: favourite themes in both Nazi German and Stalinist propaganda were muscular, strong-jawed males breaking their chains; defiant activists ready to put their life at risk; or smiling workers unselfishly toiling in the fields for a higher, common good. Nazis preferred straight-laced art, and unsophisticated middle-brow taste also prevailed in the USSR after the heady experimentation of the 20's. Hyper-realism or tacky romanticism was the norm, while any forms of avant-gardism were strongly condemned, if with different motivations; by Stalinists on the grounds that these techniques lacked socialist, proletarian zeal, and by Nazi authorities for its cosmopolitanism nature and national indifference. Stalinist and Nazi architecture display particularly strong similarities: *nouveau baroque* styles with a preference for the inhumanely monumental, even the grotesque.¹⁴⁴

Behind the demagoguery, and notwithstanding the obvious competition between communism and Naziism, one may indeed discern both sympathy and large-scale individual mobility between the two camps. Hitler was robustly anti-Bolshevik and regarded the German communist leadership as traitors or stooges of a foreign conspiracy, but was appreciative of that party's street-fighting rank and file, whom he considered easy to convert and excellent raw material for the brown brigades; 'sturdy fellows' only misled by Judeo-Marxists, as he repeatedly said even in later days. He strongly criticised Franco for not exploiting the potential of the defeated leftists:

Later on, the Reds we had beaten up became our best supporters. When the Falange imprisons its opponents, it's committing the gravest of faults. Wasn't my party, at the time of which I'm speaking, composed 90 per cent of left-wing elements? I needed men who could fight. I had no use for the sort of timid doctrinaires who whisper subversive plans in your ear.¹⁴⁵

Indeed, Hitler divided his enemies into supporters of the bourgeois régime on the one hand, and the communists—'enemies of the system'—on the other. The one were to be crushed, the other were to be converted. On countless occasions, Hitler spoke of the basic affinity between communists and National Socialists:

In our movement the two extremes come together: the Communists from the left and the officers and students from the right. These two have always been the most active elements, and it was the greatest crime that they used to oppose each other in street fights. The Communists were the idealists of socialism.¹⁴⁶

This was possibly even more true of non-German fascism. Indeed, it 'is remarkable how many communist leaders in France and Italy later became Fascist.'¹⁴⁷ Mussolini had, of course, been a socialist activist before reaching the conclusion that the nation was more important than class and giving up pacifism for militarism. He was far from the only socialist, nor the first, to take this path: Pilsudski—although by no means never a fascist in a conventional sense—spoke for many a turn-of-the-century leftist when he declared that he got

¹⁴⁴ Soviet Marxist and Russian Nationalist views on art are explored in depth by Parland (1993), 143-159.

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Conquest (1991), 174.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Conquest (1991), 174.

¹⁴⁷ Conquest (1994).

off the train of socialism at the station called the Nation. If the Polish leader's change of heart was motivated by practical reasons, many prominent Italian Syndicalists had adopted militarism and nationalism, 'finding in nationalist war the transforming myth necessary to regenerate their people's heroism'.¹⁴⁸ Mussolini could well have become an Italian Lenin: 'until November 1914, and in some respects until early 1920, his ideas on the nature of the working class, the structure and function of the party, and the strategy of the socialist revolution were remarkably like Lenin's'.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, during the 20's both Lenin and Trotsky expressed support and admiration for Mussolini, whom they considered a truly revolutionary leader. Antonio Gramsci, the famed communist theoretician, was of course at a time a close comrade of the *Duce*. Among the many other prominent European fascists renegades from socialism or outright Bolshevism one may note Pierre Laval (one of the few anti-war French Leninists in 1914–18), Jacques Doriot, Marcel Déat, Oswald Mosley or the Czech fascist leader Jirí Strábrny. Erich Koch, the brutal *Gauleiter* in the Ukraine, was but one of the leading German Nazis who had earlier fought in the communist ranks.¹⁵⁰

The French conservative historian René Rémond has stated unequivocally that fascism 'came from the left'.¹⁵¹ This is not to say that communism necessarily 'caused' fascism and Naziism, but right-wing anti-democratic forces in Germany, Italy and elsewhere certainly found a ready model to follow in the Soviet experiment. As Richard Pipes argues: 'All the attributes of totalitarianism had antecedents in Lenin's Russia [. . .]. Since the institutions and procedures were in place in the Soviet Union in the early 1920's when Mussolini founded his régime and Hitler his party, the burden of proving there was no connection between "Fascism" and Communism rests on those who hold this opinion'.¹⁵²

It is thus not surprising that the programmes of 1920's fascist or other right-radical parties borrowed heavily from socialist thought and shared many short-term political aims, i.e. the abolition of joint-stock companies, the nationalisation of banks, the suppression of large department stores and expropriation of war profits. Social and economic radicalism was a defining feature of German fascism until the 'Night of the Long Knives' in 1934, when Hitler disposed of rivals in the party—Gregor Strasser, Ernst Röhm and others—who had advocated starting a 'second revolution' to put the remainders of capitalist society to death (indeed a startling parallel with the terminology used by the Stalinists in their attacks on the peasantry and industrialisation drive). Hitler, however, rejected (or postponed) the second revolution on the grounds that it would endanger his premier priority, Germany's preparations for war. But then again, he did not have a past in the socialist movement, even if he did emerge from the vaguely radical *fin-de-siècle* 'Café intellectual' milieu¹⁵³, and had been an admirer of Karl Lueger, the demagogic leader of the sham socialist Christian Socialist Party in pre-war Vienna. As photographs from the event show, refuting Nazi hush-ups, in 1919 he even attended the funeral of Kurt Eisner, the assassinated (Jewish) Bavarian radical socialist leader.

German right-radicals borrowed less from the left than did their counterparts in Italy or France. Nevertheless, some of them expressed sympathy for the Russian Bolsheviks until they took in White Russian propaganda that the October revolution was a Jewish invention and phenomenon: the Nazi Party was virulently anti-Semitic from its foundation in 1919 but became obsessed with Russian Bolshevism only in 1920–21—Hitler himself only turned

¹⁴⁸ Paxton (1994).

¹⁴⁹ Pipes (1995), 246.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Rothschild (1974), 96, 98; Conquest (1991), 174 pp.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Bosworth (1993), Ch 5.

¹⁵² Pipes (1995), 245.

¹⁵³ Conquest (1994).

anti-communist after he had read *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.¹⁵⁴ This brings up a further distinction: the rabid anti-Semitism that was such an overriding feature in Nazi ideology. But even this observation is blurred.

A considerable part of the early Fascist leadership in Italy was in fact Jewish (according to Mussolini, four of the seven founders of the Fascist Party were Jewish)¹⁵⁵, and anti-Semitism was not a dominant feature of Italian Fascism until after the capitulation and German occupation in 1943. Even Hitler acknowledged that Jews were among the early financial supporters of the Nazi movement.¹⁵⁶ At the same time, the early Bolsheviks were indifferent to specifically Jewish aspirations, subordinating them to internationalism and the class struggle, and condoning pogroms when it served their interests—even participating in such, as during Budenny's retreat from Poland in 1920. The rabbi of Moscow sardonically commented that 'it was the Trotskys who made the revolutions and the Bronsteins who paid the bills'.¹⁵⁷ The Soviet system became strongly and openly anti-Semitic by the mid-1940's, and in the early 1950's a wholesale deportation of Soviet Jews to the Far East appears to have been forestalled only by Stalin's death. Low-intensity anti-Semitism remained official policy until the very collapse of the USSR, demonstrated i.a. by the policy of keeping Jews out the security police and the highest echelons of the foreign service, restrictions on the practice of Jewish religious rites, or by thinly disguised campaigns against 'profiteers' and 'unpatriotic cosmopolitan elements'.¹⁵⁸

Officially sponsored anti-Semitism was also, as will be amply demonstrated in the following chapters, a recurring feature of communist rule in Eastern and Central Europe. One might thus even argue that anti-Semitism actually seems to have been highly prevalent in, if not inherent to, all European societies ruled by highly mobilising totalitarian ideologies. As A. J. P. Taylor, for one, has noted, anti-Semitism is 'stock-in-trade of every nationalistic movement' and 'the socialism of fools'.¹⁵⁹

Modern Central European anti-Semites invoke their hatred of Jews in new ethnographic and cultural circumstances: it is, in Paul Lendvai's now classic phrase, 'anti-Semitism without Jews'.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, current Central European anti-Semitism has less to do with actual Jews than with the abstract image of 'the Jew'. As the remaining Jewish communities have only minor or insignificant political and economic influence and power, anti-Semitism tends to fall back on recycled clichés of international Jewish conspiracies and plots of world domination, be they of the pre-war or the communist-era variety. Some are this pessimistic:

One of the chief focuses of today's anti-Semitism is the West, with its secular ideologies and modern values. Anti-Semitism is implicit in ethnic nationalism, and nationalists use 'the Jews' or 'Jewishness' as euphemisms for the 'imported', foreign values that they oppose, from socialism to Western pop music and international law.

¹⁵⁴ Pipes (1995), 258.

¹⁵⁵ Pipes (1995), 113; referring to Sternhell (1994), 5.

¹⁵⁶ Pipes (1995), 113.

¹⁵⁷ Pipes (1995), 113; Trotsky was the *nom-de-guerre* of Leo Bronstein, born into a Jewish family.

¹⁵⁸ There is a wealth of literature on Soviet anti-Semitism, both the official and unofficial variety. Of particular interest is, however, Arkady Vaksberg's recent study (1994), which makes the claim that Stalin personally was a convinced anti-Semite at least since the 1910's. The book, going against the grain of most previous Stalin biographers (who discover genuine anti-Semitic tendencies in Stalin only by the late 1940's, if at all), uses a method of inference and is highly polemic, but still not unconvincing on that particular point. In any case, Vaksberg provides resounding evidence of the degree to which anti-Semitic attitudes and policies permeated the Soviet *apparatus* throughout the Stalin era.

¹⁵⁹ Taylor (1961), 251.

¹⁶⁰ Lendvai (1971).

The receptivity of average people to anti-Semitism constitutes a valid litmus test for a society's propensity to undemocratic right-wing ideologies. The contemporary anti-Semite is also the racist, the homophobe, the conservative Catholic, and the provincial nationalist. 'Whenever the shadow of anti-Semitism arose in public life', notes Adam Michnik, comparing France and Poland, 'it was an unmistakable signal that people with anti-democratic, intolerant views were on the political offensive. Today ... when anti-Semitic opinions are expressed in Poland, Jews are not the issue. The question is whether or not there will be a Polish democracy'.¹⁶¹

That may be overstating the political significance of anti-Semitic agitation, but the observation of the link between anti-Semitism, nationalism and authoritarianism is valid. Many anti-Semites equate Jewish qualities and Jewish individuals with modernity, liberalism and supra-nationalism (cosmopolitanism, as Stalinists preferred to put it), and anti-Semitism thus tends to co-exist with scepticism—to say the least—of the Enlightenment and its values.

In pre-war Eastern Europe, Jews, along with Germans, represented the international, as opposed to the national, and were seen as proponents of foreign values endangering the native, agrarian-oriented nationalism of the day, be it as advocates and symbols of capitalism or of proletarian radicalism and solidarity across the borders. Jews were certainly over-represented among bankers, industrialists and in the professions in 19th and early 20th century Europe, as well as in the upper echelons of the communist party leaderships. Pondering the reasons for this is falls outside the remit of this study. However, one may argue that as Enlightenment brought emancipation to European Jews, they as a group both identified and became identified with it. Then, equality, technological progress, secularisation and internationalism were goals common to liberalism and socialism, the great ideological constructs sprung from the Enlightenment, which many conservatives and the radical right have seen and continue to see as a fatal mistake. The modern anti-Semitic concept of the Jew as an alien thus tends to apply simultaneously to the Jewish capitalist and to the Jewish communist, the two even frequently merging into one.

*Radical Nexus:
Molotov and
Stalin meeting
with the
German
Ambassador to
Moscow von der
Schulenburg
and Foreign
Minister von
Ribbentrop in
August 1939,
agreeing on the
carve-up of
Central and
Eastern Europe*



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¹⁶¹ Hockenos (1993), 271-272.

If mobility between the two radical camps before the Second World War had mainly been from left to right, there was a backlash after the war. A huge number of former supporters and even activists of Eastern European fascist, fascistoid and right-radical movements rallied to and were recruited by the new communist rulers—just as the early-day Bolshevik régime had consistently worked to recruit supporters of Russian ultra-nationalist organisations. The communist message was that the ascent of communism to power itself proved that fascism was defeated once and for all. The pre-war and war-time right-wing authoritarian and nationalist legacies were squarely blamed on fascist cliques, ‘ringleaders’ of the former élites and on German influence, without fundamentally confronting the historical and social-psychological roots of indigenous fascism. ‘One only had to declare oneself a communist to be relieved of responsibility for previous actions. The régimes papered over the truth about collaboration and the resentment that lingered between neighbouring peoples.’¹⁶²

In what was to become the German Democratic Republic, for example, the *National Demokratische Partei Deutschlands* (NDPD)—allied with but subordinated to the Marxist-Leninist *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* or SED—was set up in April 1948, specifically ‘designed as an alternative for those who had sympathised with the wartime national socialist party (in German: the *National-Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) and whom the Soviet military administration wanted to reintegrate into society provided that they had not belonged to the hard core of the party.’¹⁶³ At the same time, the then leader of the communist *Freie Deutsche Jugend* youth organisation, Erich Honecker, welcomed former members of the *Hitler-Jugend*, provided they repented and had made a clean break with the past.¹⁶⁴

In fact, after the purges of 1949–51, the proportion of former Nazi party members in the rolls was higher in the SED than in any party in West Germany: in 1954 106,377 members—at least 8 per cent of the total membership—had earlier carried NSDAP cards, in addition to the 224,209 SED’ers who had previously been enrolled in the Nazi-era youth organisations. Many former officials of the *Hitler-Jugend* were in fact only just released from prison when they were offered employment in the *Volkspolizei*; the then newly established *Stasi* or Office of State Security was constantly on the lookout for people with experience of police and secret service work, which almost by definition meant previous employment in the SS. One cannot but conclude that the continuing policy of the SED was ‘to make offers of reintegration to the lower levels of the mass of former Nazis, as long as they recognised communist leadership.’¹⁶⁵ This was only natural: only a small proportion of Germans had actively resisted Nazism and even fewer had remained active communists or even social democrats throughout the era of brown power, so any swelling at all of the SED ranks was dependent on turning a blind eye on prospective members’ past indiscretions.

The situation may not have been as polarised in other countries that came under Soviet domination, as they had not experienced a German-style *Gleichschaltung*. Nevertheless, all over Eastern and Central Europe massive recruitment drives were directed at former supporters of and collaborators with authoritarian parties, movements and régimes. There were many reasons why this policy was found convenient. First of all, professional expertise was in short supply, and during the period of reconstruction the communists had a substantial incentive to turn a blind eye in order to get the wheels turning again. The former right-radicals were also subject to threats of being charged for collaboration, which provided for loyalty. And, in particular, many of them also had impressive genuine credentials as radicals and believers in authoritarian structures, albeit of a different colour. These individuals

¹⁶² Hockenos (1993), 15–16.

¹⁶³ Berglund (1994), 122.

¹⁶⁴ Rupnik (1989), 118.

¹⁶⁵ Niethammer (1995), 94.

constituted an important ideological transmission belt between the pre-war and post-war polities.

3

The Inter-War Experience in Central Europe

So he says he is a patriot,
but is he a patriot for me?
— *Emperor Franz of Austria*

The Problems of Modernisation and National Self-Determination

For Central and Eastern Europe, the First World War and its outcome represented a cataclysmic event equal to, or even surpassing, the ravages of the Second. The dozen new states created on the ruins of the vanquished Eastern Empires manifested the total collapse of a political order in place since the Napoleonic Era—in some respects even longer. Behind loomed the shadow of the Russian October revolution, which put not only the political but the entire social order into question.

The emerging political order was primarily driven by the concept of national self-determination. But although the nationalities question had been brewing for decades, the changes brought by the peace treaties of Versailles and St. Germain in 1919 and of Trianon in 1920 were unexpectedly impetuous. Indeed, the settlements primarily reflected the strategic considerations and desire for vengeance of the victor powers, spiced with the noble idealism of Woodrow Wilson (incidentally the only political scientist to have served as president of the United States).

At the outbreak of the Great War, the societies in the peripheries of the Eastern Empires can only be described as underdeveloped. Russia essentially remained an agrarian autocracy until the February revolution in 1917. The Austro-Hungarian Empire with its yearning for order was clearly a *Rechtsstaat* by early 20th century standards, but in comparison with the developed capitalist states in the West the complexity of political transaction and the measure of political participation were low. Civic structures were generally weak in relation to the imperial centres. The war accelerated a process of modernisation and mass mobilisation which had already begun, and the revolutionary news from Russia increased national and class consciousness especially among Habsburg Slavs—but when peace came, the countries were still more or less backward.

In 1938, all of East Central Europe—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Albania—accounted for only 8 per cent of the industrial output of Europe excluding the Soviet Union; of that, Czechoslovakia alone accounted for one third. Agriculture, the mainstay of the economies, was lagging far behind the West in terms of productivity, resulting in 'a vicious cycle of rural underdevelopment, underproductivity,

underconsumption, underemployment, overpopulation and pervasive misery.¹ This problem was unrelated to whether agriculture was organised in large estates or small family farms.

Yet Eastern and Central Europe was expected to be transformed overnight into modern states, complete with the rule of law, effective and fair administration, and capabilities and willingness to participate in international interaction along the idealistic rules laid down for Wilson's League of Nations. The task was daunting. The new states were faced with the assignment to create state structures on the basis of very limited political and administrative experience. They also had to secure a minimum of social and ethnic equity in what remained hugely disparate and diverse societies.

The democratically-inclined leaders of the new states obviously saw the problems, even if often through a filter of nationalist self-satisfaction. But at the same time they firmly believed that the introduction of Western-style political systems would almost automatically produce Western-style societies: stable, democratic, prosperous. This was of course the widespread expectation in the West, too. But in Eastern and Central Europe itself, the miscalculation was exacerbated by the confusion of two projects, the creation of nationhood and the creation of statehood. As it was, nations had first been discovered or invented, then states created by and for them. It soon became clear that the nationality concept was not all that clear-cut; particularly because nation and territory rarely were congruous concepts. This was when states were turned into vehicles for nation-building.



The Remnants of Three Empires: Most of present-day Central Europe was earlier part of the Habsburg Monarchy. At the end of the Second World War, Poland was moved several hundred kilometres to the west, while Czechoslovakia lost the province of Carpatho-Ruthenia, also to the Soviet Union. The only territorial revision since has been the break-up of the Czechoslovak federation

¹ Rothschild (1974), 15.

Indeed, if the peace settlements and the establishment of new states was intended to ease communal tension, defuse national conflicts and in general set the successor states on a path towards democracy and prosperity, this failed miserably. National self-determination was a straight-forward concept in theory, but its practical application on Eastern Europe as things stood in 1919 created an abundance of new intra-state and inter-state conflict dimensions. The mosaic of ethnic groupings made it patently impossible to create even remotely homogenous states. In Yugoslavia, no less than fourteen different languages were spoken. In Poland, Catholic Polish-speakers represented only two thirds of the population. In Czechoslovakia, the politically dominant Czechs were even in a minority; where president Benes envisaged an 'Eastern Switzerland', others saw only a mini-replica of the Habsburg concoction—the main difference being that the successor states lacked the Dual Monarchy's supranational ideology which had, at least to some extent, helped national minorities feel included. And for minorities that had not been content with that prospect, the imperial policy of ethnic favouritism had at least been deemed more reversible than that of the successor states build around ethnic majorities.

The policies of ethnic integration had much to do with the absence of autonomous sub-system structures. During the Habsburg era, the cultural and linguistic integration of Jews, Slavs and Romanians into the politically dominant German and Magyar communities was welcomed and encouraged, and imperial Germany and Russia had used similar, but stiffer methods to impose their hegemony over Poland. As this process encouraged both integrators and integratees to see political structures and conflicts in national rather than economic, social or class terms, genuinely autonomous structures were not easily formed. Here again, Bohemia and Moravia proved an exception: already by the turn of the century the Czech-speakers had won the struggle for hegemony in Prague, even though a lively (but largely segregated) German—and Germanophone Jewish—presence remained for decades.²

The ethnic brew was complemented by widespread territorial irredentism. Poland, which almost miraculously re-emerged as a sovereign state after a hundred and score years of partition, had territorial grievances with all its neighbours, some of which were settled successfully by force in a confusing and violent process highly reminiscent of the one which erupted after the break-up of Yugoslavia in 1991. Bulgaria had territorial conflicts with Greece and Romania. In particular, the entire Hungarian polity was shell-shocked by the loss of no less than two thirds of the territory and three fifths of the population ruled from Budapest during the Habsburg era. While rump Hungary was by and large ethnically homogenous, one Magyar in three was left outside the country's borders as territories were transferred to her neighbours by the victors, partly on strategic grounds, partly as a result of the Magyars' bad record on minority rights, partly because Hungary—as opposed to the Slavs in the Dual Monarchy—was considered a defeated aggressor nation. Not surprisingly, revanchist feelings became the determining force in Hungarian politics from the very outset of independence. Czechoslovakia did, however, thanks to successful lobbying among the Western powers, hit a territorial jackpot and walked off with an extravagant settlement. Consequently, that state was alone in Central Europe in being solely on the defensive when it came to territorial conflicts.

The imperfect application of the nationality principle guaranteed that nationalism became the dominant political super-issue in inter-war Central Europe. The widespread irredentism both encouraged states to intervene in their neighbours' affairs to protect minorities of their own nationality, and, as a counter-reaction, caused the host states to attempt forceful integration of their minorities or even deny their very existence. Social policies were strongly influenced by attempts at ethnic assimilation; economic policies

² Cf. Cohen (1981) and Kiaval (1988).

drifted towards economic nationalism and competitive bids for autarky; while attempts at land reform were primarily motivated by the glory of expropriating 'alien' landlords. Moreover, resilient irredentist tension pre-empted the development of regional political and economic co-operation and enabled Germany and the USSR, the revisionist great powers, to exploit the situation for their own benefit.

Table 3.1: The Ethnic Composition of Inter-War Central Europe

Poland	<i>1921 census (Nationality), %</i>	<i>1931 census (Ethnicity), %</i>
Polish	69.2	68.9
Ukrainian and Ruthenian	14.3	13.9
Byelorussian	3.9	3.1
'Local' (<i>tutejsi</i>)	0.2	2.2
Jewish (Hebrew & Yiddish)	7.8	8.6
<i>Mosaic faith</i>	10.5	9.8
German	3.9	2.3
Lithuanian	0.3	0.3
Russian	0.2	0.4
Czech	0.1	0.1
Other	0.1	0.2
TOTAL POPULATION	27,176,717	31,915,779
Czechoslovakia	<i>1921 census (Mother tongue), %</i>	<i>1930 census (Mother tongue), %</i>
Czechoslovak	65.5	66.9
Ruthenian (Ukrainian)	3.4	3.8
German	23.4	22.3
Magyar	5.6	4.8
Polish	0.6	0.6
Jewish (Hebrew–Yiddish)	1.4	1.3
<i>Mosaic faith</i>	2.6	2.4
Other	0.2	0.3
TOTAL POPULATION	13,613,172	14,729,536
Hungary	<i>1920 census (Language), %</i>	<i>1930 census (Language), %</i>
Magyar	89.5	92.1
German	6.9	5.5
Slovak	1.8	1.2
Romanian	0.3	0.2
Croatian	0.5	0.3
Serbian	0.2	0.1
Bunyevki, shokci	0.3	0.2
Other	0.5	0.4
<i>Mosaic faith</i>	5.9	5.1
TOTAL POPULATION	7,990,202	8,688,319

Source: Rothschild (1974)

No significant political party in Weimar Germany accepted the loss of the Polish corridor, and the dismemberment of the Dual Monarchy had created an ethnically almost homogeneously Germanic Austria which was widely considered an untenable political entity. All the new states in Eastern Europe, save Bulgaria and Albania, retained significant German-speaking minorities. Even when it came to the exclusively German-speaking areas in Austria and Bohemia directly bordering on Germany proper, the allies had refused to apply the nationality principle as that would have left the Reich bigger and stronger than before the war. As a result, Germans constituted more than 22 per cent of Czechoslovakia's population, as against some 5.5 per cent of Hungary's, and roughly 2.3 per cent of Poland's.³

The background of the *Diaspora* Germans varied strongly: from the Siebenbürger Saxons settled as peasants in the Northern Carpathians since 12th Century, to Baltic nobles Baltics descended from the medieval German Knights; from Bohemian industrial workers and Silesian miners, to the expatriate Austrians and Germanised Slavs who had handled administration, commerce and the army in the far-flung Dual Monarchy. Some certainly felt like Germanophone, or bilingual, citizens of the new states; others as an ethnic group of their own, as culturally separate from the Reich Germans as from the majorities of the new states. But especially in the lands bordering directly on the Germany, the successor states had great difficulties in attaining the loyalty of the bulk of their German-speaking subjects. This trend was obviously stronger in the previously Prussian-German parts of Poland than in Bohemia-Moravia, which had never been part of the Reich; this is illustrated by the swell of ethnic German emigration from formerly Prussian Poland during the 1920's. But after Hitler's 1933 take-over, support for Naziism and its concept of unified Germanity increased in all boundary areas. Even in Hungary, the bulk of the ethnic German Schwabs were electrified into professing primary loyalty to the Reich.

The Jews were the other ethnic group with a significant presence throughout the region. In inter-war Poland they comprised 9–10 per cent of the population, in Hungary close to 6.5 per cent, and in Czechoslovakia 1.4 to 2.5 per cent depending on the definition used. In Poland, the community did include a wealthy and visible bourgeoisie and a major proportion of Poland's urban professionals and artisans, but nevertheless no less than one third of the Jews lived on charity. Polish Jews were heavily urbanised: four fifths lived in cities as against one fifth of the total population. In 1931, 25.2 per cent of inhabitants of the twelve largest cities were Jewish; in Warsaw 38 per cent of the 1914 population was Jewish, in the booming textile city of Łódź 36 per cent. A large proportion of urban Jewry consisted of immigrant victims of pogroms and deportations from Russia proper, so-called *Litwaki* who often spoke little or no Polish and were essentially Russian in culture.⁴

Hungarian and Bohemian Jewry, on the other hand, was largely assimilated, relatively well off and concentrated to the metropolises: of Budapest's population a quarter was Jewish, of Prague's 6 per cent. During the Habsburg era, the bulk of the Jews had integrated into, allied with and sought the support of the dominant national groups, i.e. the Germans and the Magyars. Particularly Magyar nationalists then tended to view them as junior but reliable allies against the Slavs, needed to keep Hungarian-speakers in a majority. After the collapse of the Dual Monarchy, however, the situation changed radically. The Jews became the largest and most visible minority (in addition to the some 700,000 ethnic German Schwabs), and were increasingly picked out as scapegoats both for the Trianon catastrophe and for the brief 1919 interlude of communist rule. And in Trianon-truncated Hungary, Magyarised Jews were no longer needed as statistical recruits to provide a solid Magyar majority. As in Poland, anti-Semitic legislation was introduced during the 1930's, beginning with Jewish quotas in

³ Rothschild (1974), 36, 89, 92; census figures from, respectively, 1931, 1939 and 1930. See below.

⁴ Rothschild (1974), 35–7, 40; Krzeminski (1993), 39–40.

higher education. Nevertheless, class could overrule ethnicity, and the wealthy Jewish entrepreneurial class was able to cohabit with the Horthy régime despite its declared anti-Semitism.

Bohemian Jewry was even more unfortunate. Relations with the Czech élite were strained, as the Jews were seen by nationalists as pandering to German culture and language. In the 1930's Bohemian Jews had the door slammed in their faces by Czechoslovakia's Germans, too, who had come under the strong influence of Nazi radical anti-Semitism.

The population statistics cited above should be treated with some caution. First, censuses were normally based on the criterion of first language, mother tongue or colloquial language, which is a problematic notion in a region where bi- or multi-lingualism is common. Even the classification of language groups raises questions, such as the amalgamation of Czech and Slovak into one national and language group, or the practice particularly in Polish censuses to fragment the Ukrainian and Byelorussian groups into smaller sub-groupings, such as Ruthenians and 'locals'. Where respondents were asked about their national self-identification, a further reliability issue arises as many respondents were genuinely uncertain about their own nationality or thought it opportune to identify with some other group as self-protection against discrimination.⁵ One may observe that Polish censuses found more adherents of the Orthodox and Uniate rites than it noted ethnic Ukrainians, Ruthenians, Byelorussians and Russians; furthermore, many Byelorussian- and Ukrainian-speakers seem to have identified themselves as Poles due to their Catholic faith.⁶

For Jews, the language (Hebrew-Yiddish) criteria fails to identify the assimilated part of the community, as does, to some extent, censuses based on national self-identification. It is also significant to note that no inter-war census noted the Gypsy population as a national minority or even distinct ethnic group. This reflects both the official policies of denial and discrimination and the absence then of Gypsy national and political awareness. Nevertheless, in 1941 Hungary is estimated to have had a Gypsy population of 100,000 to 120,000.⁷ Given the assessments of the size of the present Gypsy population, that figure seems cautious indeed; in pre-war Slovakia, Gypsies certainly numbered at least one hundred thousand and in Poland several tens of thousand.

The new states invariably chose or were endowed with formally Western-style constitutions. The problem was that these new, modern political systems largely lacked a compatible base of autonomous spheres and power-centres. The nation-builders inevitably had to turn to the state, and paradoxically the state thus came to perform or organise many of the functions of the civil society. These attempts to create a civil society from above were not wholly unsuccessful, but did obviously lead to a high degree of state control of social and political interaction. The process of enforced social modernisation came to form the basis of the étatism often mentioned as a main characteristic of inter-war Eastern and Central Europe. And even when the state did succeed in building structures of the civil society, it then often proved unwilling to relinquish control.

The limited, though by no means non-existent, experience in the successor states of bureaucratic management also had the effect that the administrative and political élites of the imperial era managed to survive almost intact into independence. Particularly the higher echelons of the military and the civil service remained the preserve of the aristocratic land-owning élites (where such existed, i.e. outside the Ottoman Balkans). In both Poland and Hungary, the gentry tradition and ethos continued to dominate over a bourgeois outlook, and constituted ideals to which other ascendant strata aspired. The gentry retained, particularly in Poland and Hungary, strong pre-modern (though not feudal) ideals; this had the

⁵ Cf. Liebich (1992).

⁶ Rothschild (1974), 37, 192-3.

⁷ Barany (1990), 26.

added effect that it kept the emerging financial and industrial élites politically at arm's length. These strata thus remained overwhelmingly Jewish or German, although they were largely assimilated into the dominant languages and cultures.

For obvious reasons, the Polish financial and industrial élite was overwhelmingly based in the more advanced areas of formerly Prussian Poland; in the Eastern parts of the country Jews dominated the urban professional and entrepreneurial class. The administration was, however, almost exclusively recruited in formerly Russian Poland.

In another sense, too, Habsburg traditions of élite politics remained in force. Throughout Eastern Europe in the 1900–1939 era, 'governments did not lose elections'. The exceptions, Hungary in 1905 and Bulgaria in 1932, both resulted from divisions within the élite rather than having anything to do with the popular will. Strong state control of the administrative machinery enabled the élites, when united, to produce the desired election outcomes. But despite the strong element of façade politics, there was an outward and even genuine respect for constitutional probity; sensitivity to international opinion also put a lid on the most outrageous authoritarian ambitions.⁸

Another observation of a general nature, related to the one above, is that common to all the post-independence polities of the successor states was 'the institution of the government party operating in a pseudo-parliamentary system', i.e. that the governing party (or coalition) was an emanation of the bureaucracy and the technocratic and military élites. One typical incarnation of this was the pattern of prime ministers emerging from the administrative élite and proceeding to 'elect' a parliament to serve them. This system was, however, hegemonic, not totalitarian, and parliamentary opposition on both the left and the right—even radical opposition—was tolerated as long as it did not threaten the fundamental stability of the régime in power. Another effect of the marriage between the bureaucratic and administrative élite and the government was the personal, rather than ideological, nature of conflicts and of party loyalties. Informal old-boy networks, sometimes resembling secret societies, marked the clientilistic nature of political loyalties and encouraged opportunistic defections and sudden shifts in coalitions.⁹

Integration, Depression, Intervention

Economic and political backwardness went hand in hand, strengthening each other. At the turn of the century, except for some pockets of modernity, Austria-Hungary and Russia—not to mention Turkey—lagged far behind the West in levels of industrialisation, efficiency in farming, and the general complexity of economic exchange. The aristocratic élite had survived more or less intact (save in the Ottoman lands); by and large, they resisted the entrepreneurial ethos and capitalist economy just as much as the vast majority of the peasantry. Only in Bohemia and Moravia had anything like a native entrepreneurial class emerged, and even there its political position had been weakened by the imperial centre and by rivalry with the local German-speaking community. Bohemia was alone in Central Europe to have a sizeable and politically conscious working class as early as at the turn of the century, and Czechoslovakia remained the most industrially advanced country in the region for decades to come: in 1936 share of industrial workers of the active working population was 44.6 per cent

⁸ Schöpflin (1993), 12.

⁹ Schöpflin (1993), 21–2. Among these influential élite networks transcending party lines and ideology, Schöpflin mentions the Czech legionnaires with their shared experiences in Siberia 1917–19. Pilsudski's Polish Legion is another obvious example.

in Czechoslovakia, as compared to only 21.8 per cent in Hungary and 18.5 per cent in Poland.¹⁰

Table 3.2: The Inter-War Central European States in Comparison: Key Variables

	Poland	Czechoslovakia	Hungary
Stability of Ruling Régime/Élite	Low	Medium	High
Degree of Political Pluralism	Medium	High	Low
Time of Democratic Breakdown	1926	n/m	1919
Nature of Political System	Until 1926 extreme pluralism, then corporatism and 'directed' parliamentarism	Parliamentary; power-sharing system between main Czech parties; strong president	Strong-man authoritarianism; corporatism
Ethnic Homogeneity	Low	Very low	High
Dominant National Issue	Cultural integration of minorities; territorial extent of state	Political integration of minorities; unitarism vs. decentralism	Irredentism, Hungarian Diaspora; integration of minorities
Main Foreign Policy Orientation	Rim states, equidistance to Germany and USSR	France, USSR, League of Nations	Germany
Importance of Urban-Rural Cleavage	Strong	Medium	Strong
Importance of Class Cleavage	Weak	Weak; medium in Bohemia	Weak
Ideological Bases for Party Formation	Ideology, Ethnicity	Ethnicity, Ideology	Conservatism, Radicalism
Degree of Political Clientilism	High	Medium	High
Strength of Communist Party	Very weak, illegal	Medium, legal	Very weak, illegal

¹⁰ Wandycz (1992), 208.

Independence in itself meant an enormous economic upheaval. The integrated free-trade areas of the Russian, German and Habsburg empires (or, to be precise, the Dual Monarchy's Austrian and Hungarian components) were split, new barriers to trade erected and traditional markets and sources of raw materials lost for many producers. Czechoslovakia, with its favourable geographic location and modern industrial stock, had the easiest restructuring task, and that country was also less hit by the great 1930's world depression than Poland or Hungary. But even in Czechoslovakia it took until 1937 for production again to reach 1929 levels.

At the outset of independence Poland was devastated by war. Not only had 400,000 Poles bitten the bullet fighting for three emperors, but the slash and burn tactics of the various armies rolling back and forth over the country had taken a high toll on infrastructure. 60 per cent of industry was inactive, as its machinery had been transported to Germany or Russia. In the formerly Russian part 80 per cent of rolling stock was gone, 60 per cent of railway stations and 50 per cent of bridges in ruins. The problems associated with creating an independent national economy were exacerbated by the need to unite the previously Russian, German and Austrian lands. Even before the war, the difference in levels of development between Prussian Poland and the Eastern provinces was greater than between Germany and Poland today.¹¹ Three legal and administrative systems and three currencies had to be integrated; railways operated with two gauge standards. Only in the Austrian part had the Polish language been used extensively in administration. The loss overnight of the Russian market created an economic dependence on Germany which Berlin mercilessly exploited; a 'Customs War' halting almost all trade raged in 1925–34 before finally being settled as part of the surprise non-aggression pact between the two countries. No wonder John Maynard Keynes called Poland an 'economic impossibility'.

Similar, though less marked problems faced Czechoslovakia. The country had largely escaped fighting on its own territory, but losses at the front had been high. Economically, as well as politically, Bohemia and Moravia had been linked to the Austrian part of the Dual Monarchy, whereas Slovakia had been under the Hungarian crown. As a result, only one railway line connected the Western and Eastern halves of the country. As one measure of the disparity between the different regions, one can mention that the illiteracy rate in Ruthenia in 1921 was 50 per cent and in Slovakia 14.7 per cent, as against less than 3 per cent in Bohemia and Moravia. Employment in Ruthenia and Slovakia was to some 60 per cent in agriculture, double the proportion in the Czech lands; industry employed, respectively, 10, 17 and 40 per cent, and then account has to be taken for the fact that it in the eastern territories was dominated by small-scale handicraft.¹²

Looking to Hungary, the problem was not the co-ordination of economic units previously incorporated into different political entities, but rather the loss of important markets, resources and trade links. As compared with Transleithanian Hungary, the Trianon-truncated Hungary lost 58 per cent of railroad track, 43 per cent of arable land and more than 80 per cent of timber and iron ore resources, to mention but some examples. In terms of industrial capacity, the loss was much smaller due to the imperial policy to concentrate plant to the Budapest area, but simultaneously these factories were cut off from both previous suppliers of raw material and from traditional customers.¹³ Then came the enormous war debts and reparations, which during 1921–24 generated one of the most violent bouts of hyperinflation seen in modern history.

Rural overpopulation and low productivity in agriculture remained the overwhelming economic problem throughout the region. In Poland 60.6 per cent of the population was

¹¹ Krzeminski (1993) 54–5.

¹² Rothschild (1974), 91–2.

¹³ Rothschild (1974), 156.

dependent on agriculture for its livelihood, in Hungary 51.8 per cent, and in Czechoslovakia 34.5 per cent (ranging from 25.6 per cent in Bohemia-Moravia to 58.5 per cent in Slovakia-Ruthenia). The Western European average at this time was 20 to 40 per cent.¹⁴

Backward agriculture meant that a large portion of the peasantry was not only landless and plagued by deep poverty, but remained outside commodity production and the money economy. There was also an oversupply of intellectuals and professionals: universities educated lawyers, doctors and teachers in numbers huge in comparison both with the economies' ability to meaningfully employ them, and with investment levels in primary and secondary education. The threat of pauperisation generated disaffection and radicalism among the members of the academic intelligentsia who could not crack the labour market. As politics and the bureaucracy remained the main potential employer of the academically educated class, political parties concerned more with patronage than with ideology proliferated, and the state machineries became riddled with inefficiency, nepotism and corruption.¹⁵

Industrialisation combined with an intensification of farming was undoubtedly the only way out of the dilemma, but capital accumulation remained an almost insurmountable problem—in fact, only in Bohemia and parts of western Poland did agriculture generate any surplus capital—before the communists introduced their harsh methods to extract it.

The peasantry, being the most numerous class in society, obviously attracted the interest of politicians, and agrarian parties emerged as strong forces throughout the region. These parties were at the same time radical in demanding land reform, and archaic or even anachronistic in supporting traditionalist, anti-modern and anti-industrial values.

The ideological celebrators of peasantism appear to have misread or misrepresented the real views of their claimed constituents. For the peasant's actual attitude towards industrialisation was less one of hostility than one of ambivalence: he was both fascinated and afraid. He realised that it alone held out the promise of salvation from rural poverty and overpopulation. But he also dreaded industrialisation as a threat to his values and traditions. More specifically, he shrewdly suspected that its immediate costs in terms of restricted consumption and increased prices and taxes would be unloaded into his shoulders, or rather squeezed from his belly.¹⁶

The traditionalism and suspicion of modernisation among the peasantry was coupled with a strong dose of radicalism, particularly of the rightist variety. The Great War had created hopes of social change and exposed the urban élites' and populations' dependence on a docile rural work force. As urban society tended to be strongly influenced by 'alien' elements and culture, populism and anti-modern attitudes could easily be merged with right-radical nationalism, xenophobia and appeals to the masses. But however authoritarian some Central European régimes may have been, their agendas were conservative and traditionalist, not radical and dynamic, and their structure élitist or oligarchic, not populist.

Noisiest in the countries with prominent and vulnerable Jewish minorities, the Right-Radical leaders, while themselves usually educated and urbanised, appealed to the supposedly primitive, instinctive, and healthy reaction of the peasant and proletarian 'folk-masses' against the allegedly decadent, 'judaised', secular culture of their bureaucratic exploiters. Indeed, the appeal of and the appeals of Right-Radicalism nicely reflected the contemporary condition of interwar East Central Europe as an agricultural society in a crisis of transition and fragmentation: though not yet

¹⁴ Wandycz (1992), 206-7; 'interwar period', no exact dates.

¹⁵ Rothschild (1974), 19-20.

¹⁶ Rothschild (1974), 17.

sufficiently developed and integrated to have moved beyond this demagoguery, it no longer was adequately stable and integrated to remain immune to it.¹⁷

The gradual radicalisation of the rural population was influenced by many factors. Its background was the turmoil and resilient desire of social change generated by the Great War and its consequences. To the extent that the rural societies were integrated into the greater economy, the effects often proved disastrous: both the world grain glut of the 1920's and the depression of the early 1930's led to a catastrophic fall in agricultural produce prices, particularly in comparison with the cost of industrial goods. The price shocks were exacerbated by the deflationary and fiscally-oriented stances taken by governments as a reaction to the depression, and by the West's withdrawal of capital. The economic despair was a major force triggering radicalisation.

Moreover, what cannot be ignored is the recurrent betrayal by the peasantist parties' leaders of their constituencies' interests. These parties too were characterised by the dominance of their machineries by the bureaucratic political class, which in general proved much more responsive to étatist requirements than to the peasant communities' ambitions and needs.¹⁸

If Central Europe suffered much from the fall in world prices for agricultural produce in the mid 1920's, the world depression of the early 30's hit even harder. In Poland, probably worst affected of the three countries, national income fell by a quarter from 1929 to 1933 while unemployment in industry rose to 43 per cent; in Hungary industrial production fell by 39 per cent during the period while unemployment in industry rose to 36 per cent. The falling standards of living did not only generate political discontent and social tension, but attempts by the governments to solve the crisis inevitably had the knock-on effect of strengthening state powers. Economic planning and intervention directly meant increased state influence over daily life, and indirectly inspired increased reliance on the state to solve social ills.

This trend was strengthened by the successes of the European dictatorships in accelerating and consolidating their economies. The example of Nazi Germany in particular propelled the general concept of authoritarianism onto a new level of attractiveness, especially when contrasted with the apparent impotence of democratic France and Britain to break the circle of economic stagnation. Germany, of course, also pursued a politically efficient foreign trade policy, whereby it purchased foodstuffs, minerals and timber from Eastern and Central Europe in exchange not for convertible currency but for German industrial goods, thus making the region more dependent on German trade than ever before. By setting new standards, Nazi Germany also inspired Central European states to try out increasingly more authoritarian forms of rule, legitimised their territorial revisionism and made ethnic xenophobia and anti-Semitism more respectable.

Poland was the Central European country where interventionist policies were most widely applied, and in contrast to other states where similar measures were attempted (except for, to some extent, Czechoslovakia), financed mainly by internal capital sources. When Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, the prime mover behind the Gdynia deep-sea harbour project, became Minister of Finance in 1935, he introduced an ambitious six-year plan of economic restructuring based on radically increased state economic intervention, economic nationalism and autarky. The state took over large parts of key industries, and a giant Central Industrial Area with modern steel mills, chemical plants and armament factories was set up to the east of Warsaw. Regulation of foreign capital was tightened. The massive injection of state capital in industry certainly showed impressive results: between 1935 and 1939 industrial production

¹⁷ Rothschild (1974), 21.

¹⁸ Cf. Rothschild (1974), 18.

increased 53 per cent, while unemployment fell from 11 per cent in 1936 to 5 per cent in 1938. In 1939, real incomes were also up 43 per cent for the decade.¹⁹ A powerful (but short-lived) boost was given by the annexation in 1938 of the rich Silesian mining and industrial area of Tesin (Cieszyn, Teschen) from Czechoslovakia, which in one stroke doubled Poland's coke production, tripled pig iron output and increased steel capacity by half.²⁰ Even so, by 1939 not even one Pole in five worked in industry. In that respect, the étatist investment policies failed to absorb more than a fraction of the surplus rural population.

The Hungarian government also experimented with Polish-style economic planning and state micro-management, but the so-called Győr armament and investment programme yielded fewer results in terms of an upsurge in industrial production. Industry remained concentrated to the production of armaments, chemicals and consumer commodities, particularly foodstuffs, and the desired increase in investment goods output did not materialise. State ownership of the means of production also remained marginal, trade dependence on Germany was debilitating, and industry was heavily concentrated to the Budapest area. Of the Central European countries, Hungary 'by and large [...] progressed least, comparatively speaking, toward sustained capital accumulation.'²¹

Estimates of the inter-war economic performance are extremely varied. According to one source, Czechoslovakia's production per capita in 1936–40 was 67 per cent of the European average; Hungary's 43 per cent, and Poland's 20 per cent.²² According to another estimate, Czechoslovakia's per capita Gross Domestic Product in 1937 would have been only half of Germany's, and 30 per cent of the US figure. Hungary's GDP per capita would have been less than a quarter of the American, and Poland's about a sixth.²³ Garton Ash points out, however, that particularly the figure for Czechoslovakia seems suspiciously low. On the other hand, the gap between living standards in Slovakia and Bohemia-Moravia actually widened during the inter-war period, so that Slovakia by 1937 had only half the per capita income of the Western provinces.²⁴ Accounting for this, the standard of living in the Czech lands were thus not that far, if at all, below Germany's or Austria's.

Even in the pockets of industrialisation—Bohemia, Warsaw, Łódź, Silesia, parts of Budapest—worker radicalism on issues others than wages and working conditions was dampened by the shallow urban roots of the working class. Nevertheless, the radical-left working class movement was still seen as a huge threat, although opposition to communism was not only, or even dominantly, a class or ideological issue. The new states were founded on the concept of national self-determination, and anti-Sovietism. The Soviet Union, with its claim to represent the interests of the workers regardless of nationality, was perceived as a mortal threat to the new nation-states' very existence.²⁵ The Polish communists were particularly stigmatised as traitors by their support of the Soviet invasion in 1920, which if successful would certainly have meant that Poland would have lost its independence to become yet another republic in the USSR. The same went for Romania and the Baltic states, while attitudes in Czechoslovakia towards the Soviet Union were more relaxed. In Hungary the

¹⁹ Cf. Krzeminski (1993), 75–6.

²⁰ The former Duchy of Teschen had been divided between Poland and Czechoslovakia by the Allies in July 1920.

²¹ Wandycz (1993), 208.

²² Wandycz (1993), 209; no further source.

²³ Estimates made by the Hungarian economist Eva Ehrlich, quoted by Garton Ash (1994), 650; original article in Paul Marer in William E. Griffith (Ed.), *Central and Eastern Europe: The Opening Curtain?*, Boulder, Westview 1989.

²⁴ Rothschild (1974), 120.

²⁵ Tismaneanu (1993), 8.

picture was obviously dominated by the legacy of Béla Kun's short-lived but bloody Soviet Republic of 1919.

In the absence of a substantial and politically conscious working class, the communist parties mainly recruited their supporters among disaffected intellectuals and the national minorities. The radical right-wing and populist movements on the other end of the political spectrum partly had the same hunting grounds, appealing to the *déclassé* petty bourgeoisie and recently urbanised social groups. The peasantry was also targeted by the radical right's critique of the modern and its exploitation of traditional symbols and values. The poorest segment of the peasantry was easy prey to claims that the cities were parasites living off the fruit of peasant labour, especially when mixed with the juxtaposition of urban deceitfulness versus and honesty, the virtuous and authentic life-style of the peasant and urban cosmopolitanism, religion and atheism, etc. But paradoxically, the conservative anti-modernism was later increasingly combined with modernist radicalism, exemplified by demands for land reform, nationalisation of big business and the strengthening of the state's powers.

It should be stressed that out the relative political and economic backwardness was by no means reflected in cultural life. Instead, inter-war Central Europe witnessed an unique cultural flourishing, and Budapest, Prague, Warsaw and Cracow became leading centres of the contemporary avant-garde and modernist movements. This was the period of Kafka, Musil, Capek, Hasek, Konrád, Lucacs, Kodály, Bartók, Koestler, Zeromski, Witkiewicz and Paderewski; a time also marked by an extraordinary synthesis of art, science and politics. As was the case immediately after the collapse of communism, leading writers, scientists and intellectuals were at the forefront of the political and social debate, and considered moral standard-bearers and paragons of different causes.

The Inter-War Political Systems

During the inter-war period, 'the majority of the population [in Central and Eastern Europe] was subjected to political power without having much ability to influence it. It was socialised into hierarchical authoritarian modes, the acceptance of a degree of power. Power itself was thus legitimised partly by reference to nationhood and partly tradition; on occasion, this might be strengthened by the emergence of a charismatic or semi-charismatic leader. The pre-communist system was thus relatively stable, heavily state-centred and tending towards stagnation'. The reliance of myth, coupled with externalisation, frequently made it hard for these political cultures to come to terms with existing realities, such as economic backwardness and political irrelevance.²⁶

Social mobility was low to very low, with the consequences of relative weakness in the structure of the state—analogous to ethno-national segmentation—a higher reliance on coercion or the threat of it than is compatible with political consensus, low levels of legitimacy and thus legitimacy. At this point ethno-national and social cleavages could coincide. It was an obvious choice for these weakly grounded semi-authoritarian or fully dictatorial régimes of the interwar period to seek to build loyalty to the state by the promotion of nationalism. To some extent this was successful, but it raised two problems. In the first place, it left open or exacerbated the issue of the national cleavage. Reliance on the national ideology of one ethno-national community frequently brought that community into conflict with another, as national ideologies tended to be incompatible and concerned with mutually exclusive goals,

²⁶ Schöpflin (1993b), 19.

defined in terms of territory or people. Second, nationalism as a political doctrine provided answers to very few questions of political organisation and the distribution of power. It created strong identities and a sense of belonging to the state for members of the dominant group, but said next to nothing about political structures, the resolution of conflicts of interests, the allocation of resources and values, participation and representation, i.e. the day-to-day problems of political, economic and social life. [...] The comparative vagueness of the nationalist message, together with its emotional intensity, produced a somewhat contradictory result. East European nations in the interwar era reached a fairly high state of national consciousness of their political identities as members of a nation and as those excluded as non-members. At one and the same time the implicit promise of equality and justice, encapsulated in the nationalist message, was left unfulfilled, with inevitable frustration and resentment at the social-political closures enforced against society by its rulers.²⁷

While the political histories of the pre-war Central European countries show some parallels, the dissimilarities still come to the fore. Until its dismemberment in 1938–39 Czechoslovakia was a functioning parliamentary democracy, though guided by a Czech-controlled power-sharing arrangement between the major parties. Poland initially evolved into an extreme multi-partist system, but after a coup in 1926 it became a 'directed' or 'guided democracy' where the left-leaning 'moral renewal movement' attracted support among the military, the conservative nobility, the intelligentsia and defectors from the political parties, including the ethnically-based ones. Hungary became an reactionary, autocratic and authoritarian dictatorship already in 1919, but its political system retained some co-optive features and a semblance of democratic institutions.

The threat from a resurgent, expansionist Germany is often mentioned as a catalyst when explaining the breakdown of the democratic systems in Central Europe. In fact, however, authoritarianism was introduced both in Poland and Hungary well before the Nazis' ascendancy. Equally false is to describe inter-war Hungary, or in particular Poland, as fascist states. Far from being inspired by radical, fascist-style ideas of will-power and sacrifice, the strongman leaders in Central Europe resorted to traditional authoritarian methods to control societies plagued by economic hardship and rural-urban divisions, where institutions were weak and traditional social and religious forces strong. Both in Poland and Hungary the authoritarian systems were rather reactions to the double threat of Bolshevism and outright fascism, to increased centrifugality and instability in the party-political system. Indeed, the only real fascists in Poland were to be found among hard-line opposition to the régime, and the gravest actual threat to the Hungarian Horthy régime came from the radical right. This is a key qualitative difference in comparison with the Balkans experiences.

Czechoslovakia: Running Out of Time

Czechoslovakia was, comparatively speaking, the success story of inter-war Central Europe. Although the political system was characterised both by fragmentation and domination by the largest ethnic group, the Czechs, it nevertheless functioned as a reasonably democratic and pluralist order. The state could fall back on Bohemia's historical traditions of tolerance, restraint, and ideals of social equality, but was nevertheless blighted by the ill-effects of the peace settlement which created permanent grievances among its neighbours and incorporated numerous truculent national minorities. There was further a marked cleavage between the industrial Czech heartland and the backward agrarian Slovakian and Ruthenian territories. Slovakia had a politically disaffected Magyar minority of some 700,000, whereas Carpatho-

²⁷ Schöpflin (1993), 24–5.

Ruthenia was populated by some 600,000 inhabitants of which two thirds were dirt-poor peasants speaking Ukrainian dialects, and the rest divided between Hungarian administrators and Jewish merchants.²⁸ More than three million ethnic Germans lived in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, controlling a large portion of the country's industry and external trade.

Towering over the First Republic was its first president, the moralist and philosopher Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, a strong advocate of moderation and tolerance in political life. Masaryk can without doubt be described as a nationalist, but in his writings he consistently rejected revolutionary violence and stressed the 'European' legacy of introducing social transformations peacefully—as opposed in particular to 'primitive Russia's' violent and destructive tendencies. The presidency's constitutional powers were sufficiently strong—including the right to dissolve parliament, a suspensive veto and the capacity of being head of the administration—to pre-empt the paralysis of the political decision-making functions that plagued many of the successor states.²⁹ The president's enormous personal stature indeed had the effect that the political system immediately evolved into a presidential democracy, where he could dismiss premiers and cabinets at will.

The communists were the only party with significant support among all national groups; it had been formed when the breakaway left wings of the Czech, Slovak and Sudeten socialists amalgamated in October 1921. Otherwise, the party system was organised along ethnic lines with Czechoslovak (in some cases), purely Czech or Slovak, German and Magyar exponents of liberalism, social democracy, Catholicism, nationalism and agrarianism. There was, however, co-operation across ethnic boundaries; the Czech and German social democratic and pro-Rome Catholic parties came to entertain cordial relations.

One effect of the ethnic cleavage was the high degree of multi-partism in parliament. In the 1920 general elections 16 parties of 29 competing gained representation; in 1925, 17; in 1929, 16; and in 1935, 14. Despite some attempts to reform election legislation, the system of proportional representation continued to generate a high degree of fragmentation. It did not, however, lead to debilitating immobilism, as the major Czech-dominated parties managed to work out a system of permanent extra-parliamentary consultation, clearance and collaboration.

With Masaryk and Benes, the long-serving Prime Minister and successor to the presidency after Masaryk's resignation in 1935, acting as arbiters in inter-party strife, the frequent changes of government (sixteen in all during the First Republic's twenty years) were largely cosmetic. Stability was guaranteed by the power-sharing and consensus-building *Petka* or 'Committee of Five' system. This arrangement institutionalised co-operation between the leaders of five Czech-dominated parties—the Agrarians, the Populists, the National Socialists (no relation to its German namesake), the Social Democrats and the National Democrats—which reappeared in one government after another, though not necessarily all at the same time and not excluding other parties. No government was ever overthrown by a parliamentary vote of no confidence; all important decisions were made by the five party leaders, who also distributed the spoils and patronage that went with the system.³⁰

The arrangement successfully dampened the tendencies and effects of extreme multi-partism inherent in both the constitution and the ethnic composition, thus making Czechoslovakia governable, but it certainly included dubious elements. Pressing political conflicts tended to be either shelved indefinitely so as not upset the balance, or be reconciled in the back-rooms instead of in the public arena. The permanent coalition made some parties into chronic government parties and thus insensitive to the moral and political costs of

²⁸ Rothschild (1974), 83.

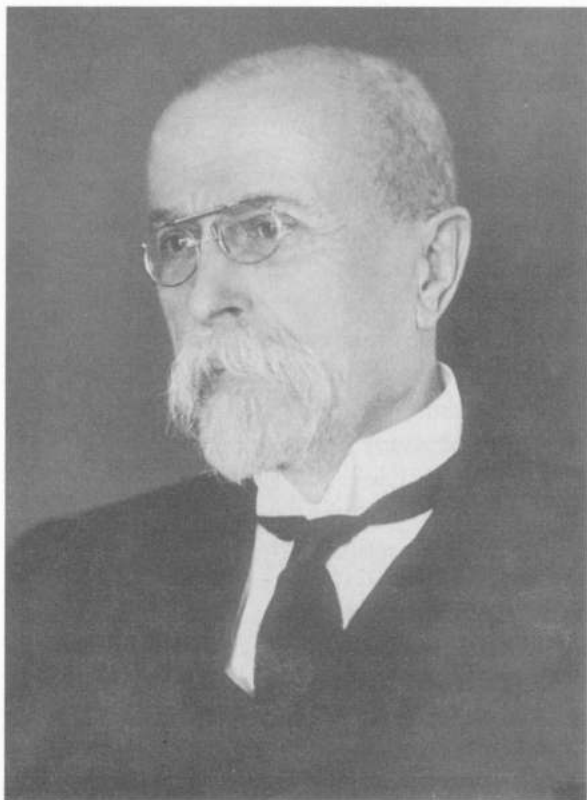
²⁹ Broklová (1995), 20.

³⁰ Bankowicz (1994) 143-6; Rothschild (1974), 95-100.

participation at any price; others, feeling permanently excluded from any say, withdrew into sullen nay-saying and potential subversiveness. Patronage was institutionalised to the extent that certain ministries became the fiefs of certain parties and functionaries, and a high degree of party-political loyalty was demanded of civil servants.³¹

Another result was the cementing of Czech domination of political life at the expense of the other nationalities. There was legal equality for all, but the Czechs had the constitutive core function so that Czechoslovakia remained primarily a Czech state. This was accomplished not only through the *Petka* system, but also by gerrymandering and the introduction of 'Czechoslovakism' with the Slovaks as junior partners. Though the Sudeten German minority represented almost a quarter of the population, their parties did not gain representation in the Constitutional Assembly and were only passingly represented in cabinet.

The leading parties of the minorities had, after initial protests and occasionally violent resistance, grudgingly pledged their allegiance to the Czechoslovak state. That situation changed in the early 30's. The social democrats lost ground among the Germans to secessionist forces, while the dominant political element in Slovakia, the Slovak People's Party, was eventually radicalised into demanding full independence. Slovak disaffection was fuelled by several factors: the persistent refusal of the parliament to grant autonomy; the perceived 'colonial-style' administration of Slovakia from Prague; and the Czech Protestant élite's patronising declarations of the need to modernise, de-Magyarise and secularise staunchly Catholic and rural Slovakia. A common Czech attitude during the period was that there either was no genuine Slovak nation, only a Slovak branch of the Czechoslovak nation; or alternatively that the Slovaks could claim a separate identity, but were not yet mature for self-government due to a millennium of Hungarian misrule.³²



HUFVUDSTADSBLADET ARCHIVES

*Father of the
Republic: Tomáš
Garrigue Masaryk*

³¹ Rothschild (1974), 106.

³² Cf. Rothschild (1974), 19, note.

Faced with these inflammable conflicts Benes had problems filling Masaryk's suit. If he was not the ambitious mediocrity his critics called him, he certainly was not up to continuing Masaryk's 'dictatorship based on respect'.

In addition to this crisis of leadership, by the late 1930's the political strains and influences from abroad had weakened support for democracy among the *Petka* parties and among the ethnically Czech polity at large. The Agrarian Party, the country's largest and present in all political inter-war cabinets, came under increasing control of its conservative flank which advocated more authoritarian solutions to the republic's woes. As a result of diminishing electoral support and a falling-out in the *Petka*, the National Democratic Party moved from a position of conservative nationalism spiced with some chauvinism to outright fascism. The anti-system forces also counted the communist party which consistently polled about 10 per cent of the vote, and fared well not only in industrial Bohemia but also in rural Slovakia and Ruthenia, where they even dominated the left in a typical example of agrarian as opposed to industrial communism.³³

When external forces produced a showdown in 1938, the exclusion of the minorities from the political élite finally resulted in their turning their loyalties elsewhere, and the Czechs found themselves practically alone in defence of the Czechoslovak state.³⁴ The fact that the government possessed frontier defences on par with the Maginot line, a modern armaments industry and a first-rate army proved irrelevant. Of equally little help was the 1935 defence pact with France and Russia, which had not only incurred Hitler's wrath but also prompted strong Polish and Hungarian critique of Czechoslovakia as a Bolshevik aircraft-carrier in Central Europe. (Hungary, of course, had been alienated already by the Little Entente alliance between Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia, which was exclusively directed against it.)

Democracy, the rule of law and—without doubt—respect for minority rights were much stronger in Czechoslovakia than in Poland and Hungary, but not sufficiently strong to make a crucial difference when the First Republic was faced with the external threat of a resurgent Germany. It is, however, doubtful if any internal measures could have defused the conflict over the *Sudetenland*. For Hitler it was never a question of minority rights, but strictly one of territorial expansion. If anything, the Sudeten Germans were guilty of accepting being exploited. But then again, Masaryk had asserted that Czechoslovak democracy needed fifty years to establish itself and win the hearts and minds of the minorities. The republic got only twenty—and Masaryk was probably wrong anyway in his belief that the democratic process in itself could bring all ethnic components together into a political nation of citizens.³⁵

Poland: Competing Designs for the State

With a commitment to parliamentary democracy and a constitution modelled on the German Weimar Republic and the French Third Republic, independent Poland soon became prey to the vicissitudes of extreme multi-partism. By 1926, there were 26 Polish and 33 ethnic minority parties, of which 31 were represented in the legislature.³⁶ Governments were short-lived and fist-fights common in the *Sejm*.

As in Czechoslovakia, the party system was organised in an ideological-ethnic matrix. There were three main groupings—socialists, nationalists and agrarians—but all spawned a bewildering array of regional parties and factions, largely a result of the fact that they had emerged in triplicate during partition. The main political forces were the nationalist

³³ Cf. Allardt (1970) and below.

³⁴ Schöpflin (1993), 23.

³⁵ Rupnik (1988), 16.

³⁶ Rothschild (1974), 31.

Catholic right, called *Endecja*; a centre bloc including some peasant groupings and Christian Democrats; and a left dominated by the socialists and the radical phalanx of the peasantist movement. The peasantist movement was divided into rightist and leftist parties, divided on land reform in the east and the issue of national minorities. The National Democratic right was the strongest force in the first parliamentary assemblies, but not sufficiently strong to provide stable government. On the extreme right were the fascist *Falanga* and National-Radical Camp (*ONR*), and on the extreme left the illegal communist party, all of them marginal forces. The Germans had their own socialist and nationalist parties, while a wide spectrum of Ukrainian and Jewish parties largely reflected the main Polish party structure. Most of the ethnically-based parties united in a parliamentary 'Bloc of Minorities', and all of them initially preferred to co-operate with the left as a result of the right's hegemonic and assimilative ambitions.

The end to the admittedly anarchic period came in May 1926 when the moderate socialist Józef Piłsudski, hero of the independence struggle and the victory over the Soviet invasion in 1920, together with a group of other officers organised a successful *coup d'état*. The slogan used was *Sanacja*, meaning a return to political health. The coup was inspired both by the instability of the parliamentary system itself and by the economic woes: rising unemployment, a collapse of the currency and the tariff war with Germany. Piłsudski reacted against what he saw as the right's intransigence over land reform and other social issues, and also referred to the negative effect parliamentary bickering had on the defence forces' capabilities and unity—in fact, however, a large portion of the officer corps supported the right. The *Sanacja* take-over was totally extra-parliamentary and secured by military units (the coup cost 379 lives in three days of street fighting), but it soon mobilised a 'Non-Partisan Bloc for the Support of the Government', (*BBWR*).³⁷ Incidentally, similar developments occurred also in Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, which in 1919 had started independent life with Polish-style constitutional arrangements.

The *Sanacja* movement was indeed curious as authoritarian régimes go. Its strongman, Marshal Piłsudski, mostly stayed in the background, while parliament, the political opposition and all political parties (except for the then outlawed communist party) continued to function. Instead of monopolising power outright, the régime preferred methods of electoral manipulation, police strong-arm tactics and general harassment of the opposition to 'direct' it to the 'correct' path. Piłsudski's preferences and personal prestige gave the systems some of the characteristics of Gaullism. The *Sanacja* régime did score some successes on the economic front—1926–29 was a period of rapid expansion in the world economy, and the hope of increased stability meant that foreign investment picked up—but this did not generate the desired and expected electoral support. In the March 1928 elections the Bloc parties got only a quarter of the votes. When the triumphant leftist and centrist parties then proceeded to form a coalition 'in defence of the republic and for democracy', the *Sanacja* reacted with arrests, incarcerations and censorship. Poland drifted deeper into a no-man's land between democracy and dictatorship.³⁸

Polish inter-war politics were, however, much more complex than a simplistic juxtaposition of the *Sanacja* and its opponents would indicate. Any analysis must take into account the broad spectrum of conflict dimensions outside the party-political system and of the complicated pattern of antagonisms and affiliations.

The institutions of church, army and intelligentsia played an important political role, but much from the background. Their outlook was far from homogenous. The highest echelons of the church were arch-conservative, while many parish priests were radical. The army was a

³⁷ Grzybowski (1994), 36–8; Davies (1986), 124 pp.

³⁸ Grzybowski (1994), 37–8.

mixture of a gentrified officer class with traditional values, and younger careerist officers with democratic inclinations. It was also split between Pilsudski's Legionnaires and elements from the former German and Austrian armies. The intelligentsia, not surprisingly, included everything from Catholic pietists to anarchists.³⁹ The attitude towards Pilsudski and his policies was also ambivalent: as a card-carrying socialist, he was seen as a beacon of hope for the masses craving reform; as a man of order, the ruling classes hoped he would be able and willing to counteract more radical forces.

One conflict dimension—embodied in the persons of Józef Pilsudski and Roman Dmowski—nevertheless superseded the others: the question of the very nature of the Polish state and nation.⁴⁰ Dmowski did not—partly because of ill health—seek high positions of power in the state after he had lost the struggle for leadership of the independence movement, and hardly took part even in party politics, but his thinking drove the conservative-nationalist opposition during the entire inter-war era.

The Pilsudski-Dmowski conflict was clearly of such a nature as to be very difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile by compromise. Pilsudski and his camp—including the initial *Sanacja* coalition—held that a nation is a product of history and a community of values and experience; there is thus room for many ethnic groups in a state as long as they are loyal to the whole—this position incidentally comes close to Masaryk's. Dmowski and the *Endecja* nationalists had a social Darwinist world view where the nation was defined in almost mythical terms of kinship, blood and land, and 'national egoism' was openly hailed as the norm. Ethnic variations in a nation were not only disapproved of, but considered illogical. The task and duty of statesmen was therefore, if integration proved impossible, to separate the different nations into their own territorial-political entities. Dmowski's thinking was also spiced with theories of judeo-masonic conspiracies and plots, adding to the highly illiberal view that a third of Poland's inhabitants were excluded from political and civil rights simply on the grounds of their ethnic background or even their non-Catholic religious beliefs. By and large, Dmowski advocated active Polonisation of Lithuanians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians in areas where Poles were culturally dominant, but thought assimilation possible and desirable only for individual Jews.⁴¹

The ideological rift also had strong implications on foreign policy. The nationalists desired a smaller but more ethnically homogenous 'Piast' state; the left was inspired by the multi-national 'Jagiellonian' Republic of Poland-Lithuania. While Pilsudski wanted a Poland stretching 'from [the Baltic] sea to [the Black] sea', the nationalist-dominated delegation to the 1921 Riga peace negotiations actually rejected a Soviet offer to cede large additional tracts in the Ukraine and Byelorussia, including Minsk, as that would further have diluted the Polishness of the state. Dmowski was oriented to France, Russia and Czechoslovakia and saw Germany as the overriding menace and danger; Pilsudski's foreign policy was based on equidistance to Germany and Russia (and keeping up the guard against Czechoslovakia), while attempting to forge security ties with the states in the Balkans and on the Baltic rim.

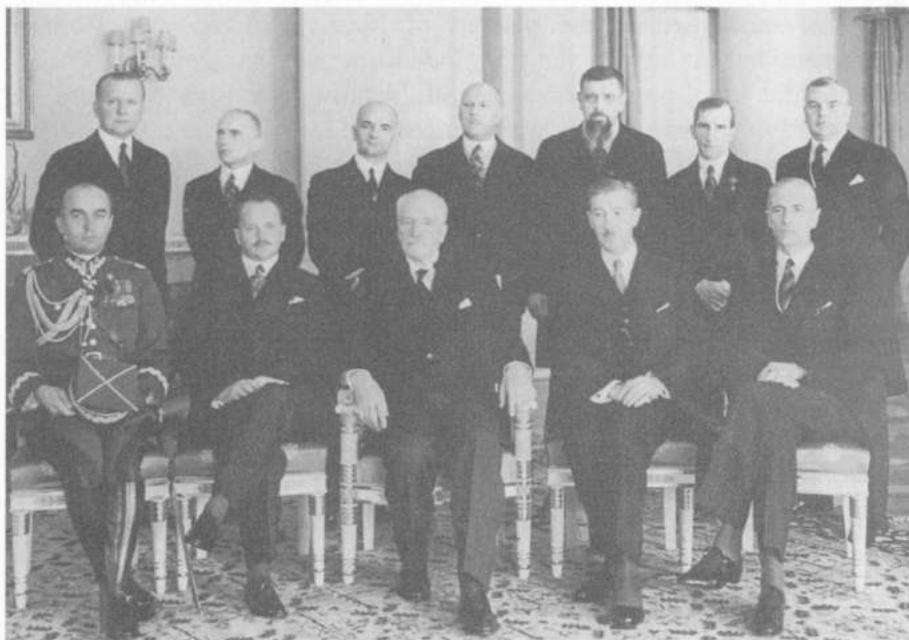
The nationalists around the Dmowski platform could attain a majority among its core constituency, the Catholic Polish-speakers, the left around Pilsudski could equally muster a clear overall plurality with the support of the minorities. The 1926 coup was indeed a clear

³⁹ Davies (1986), 130 pp.

⁴⁰ The long-running Pilsudski-Dmowski ideological and political duel is described in detail in Krzeminski (1993), 35-79 and Davies (1986), 129-148.

⁴¹ In 1939, Poland had a population of 35 million, of which five million were of ethnic Ukrainian and 1.5 million of Byelorussian origin. 744,000 Polish citizens reported German nationality (this figure excludes Danzig) in the 1931 census, after a substantial exodus of hundreds of thousands of Germans during the previous decade. Some 9 per cent of Poles spoke Yiddish as first language.

attempt to pre-empt an upturn of the balance of forces between the two camps. But if the *Sanacja's* intention was to put a lid on parliament in order to stop conflicts emanating there from inflaming society at large, by the early 1930's that strategy had failed. Polarisation and radicalisation continued, and the May coup increasingly began to look as 'an attack by bandits on a lunatic asylum'.⁴²



HUFUDSTADSBLADET ARCHIVES

Miracle Man:
The inauguration of
Kosiński's
1935 cabinet,
with President
Moscicki in
centre. Seated
second from the
right is Finance
Minister
Eugeniusz
Kwiatkowski,
who devised the
Polish six-year
industrialisation
programme



HUFUDSTADSBLADET ARCHIVES

*All the Regent's
Men:* As the
somewhat
operatic Imredy
cabinet
assembled in
November 1938,
the Hungarian
establishment
conservatives
were already
losing ground to
the radical right

⁴² Davies (1986), 125.

The chosen remedy remained continuously increased repression. However, only a month after the authoritarian stance was strengthened anew with the 1935 constitution, the still widely popular and respected Pilsudski died. This signalled a further degeneration of the régime into increased military control, increased inter-communal conflict with stepped-up persecution of the minorities, and stalled land reform—all this topped off by the looming war. After a brief power struggle a 'Government of Colonels' stepped in with Commander-in-Chief Edward Smigly-Rydz as new strongman, and the Bloc was enlarged to the right to widen its base; a strange conglomeration of the two rival forces of Polish left and right at the expense of the ethnic minorities. Renamed the Camp of National Unity (*OBN*), the Bloc became an ideological cocktail of '40 percent nationalism, 30 percent social radicalism, 20 percent agrarianism, and 10 percent anti-Semitism.'⁴³ One may add technocracy, for the modernisation of industry and infrastructure was elevated to the programmatic solution of the state's and régime's problems.⁴⁴

Mending fences with the nationalists meant that many of their pet projects were adopted; i.e. increased economic planning and steering, centralisation of the administration, the introduction of yet more anti-minority measures, and a foreign-policy reorientation towards the Western powers. In fact, it is fair to say that by the start of the war the Dmowski'ite nationalists had largely managed to hijack the authoritarian machinery set up by their erstwhile ideological adversaries.

All this was of little immediate effect. The defeat in 1939 and the new partition of the country by Germany and the USSR represented a total discontinuity in the polity. Though a Government-in-Exile continued to operate from London and the Soviets eventually began sponsoring their own claimants to the throne, for the four years until 1944 Polish political parties and leaders had virtually no say in the governing of the country. At the end of the Second World War, however, an important selection of Dmowski's ideas 'would be adopted by a Communist Party installed in Warsaw by the Soviet Union.'⁴⁵

Hungary: Irredentism Triumphant

If Hungary had been a pillar of the Dual Monarchy, that country initially experienced the most dramatic break with the Old Order of all Central European states. Initially the inclination was reformist: the liberal government of Count Mihály Károlyi embarked on an ambitious programme of land reform, universal suffrage and protection of workers' rights and individual freedoms. But when that government resigned in March 1919, a group of former Hungarian prisoners of war in Russia turned communist took power and established a revolutionary Soviet Republic which lasted for 113 days.

It was an order from the Entente powers to abandon yet more territories to Czechoslovakia and Romania that triggered the resignation of the Károlyi government, and the communists managed to exploit to their advantage the national trauma and outrage created by this loss of additional ethnically Magyar areas. The Soviet Republic was thus established with considerable popular support, but this was generated by national, not class fervour. Although the communist leader Béla Kun projected his régime as National Bolshevik and revisionist, in fact it was internationalist in the sense that its main aim was to hold Hungary for Bolshevism until the then seemingly imminent world revolution.

It did not take long for the Soviet government to squander what mass support it had enjoyed. The peasantry, which had supported the revolution on the expectation that it would bring social justice and land reform, was alienated by the government's nationalisation

⁴³ Wandycz (1992), 226.

⁴⁴ Rothschild (1974), 71-2.

⁴⁵ Davies (1986), 148; also Bromke (1967).

(rather than redistribution) of larger land holdings, its vigorous collectivisation drive, atheism and general contempt for peasants and their values. The middle class turned from the revolution even sooner, as it became clear that the communists had no intention of seriously waging war in order to recover lost territories, only to spread the revolution, and in the meantime occupied itself with the vigorous eradication of signs, symbols and representatives of the old society. The wave of terror and purges unleashed on the country only intensified passive resistance, and the Soviet Republic finally disintegrated on 1–2 August 1919 under the added pressure of interventionist Romanian forces which eventually occupied and looted Budapest itself. The bulk of its leadership fled the country despite previous promises to fight to the last bullet, thus depriving the communist movement of whatever remained of its credibility.

After more political confusion and a wave of white terror came Hungary's aborted inter-war experiment with parliamentary democracy: a government dominated by the social democrats stayed in power for only five days before it was overthrown by a military coup. The platform of the coup was reactionary bordering on regressive; its leader, Admiral Miklós Horthy, was declared Regent pending the election of a royal dynasty. The formal retention of the monarchy was considered necessary for the validity of the revisionist claims, but if Horthy and his allies ever had had any intentions of actually reinstating an actual monarch, this was soon forgotten; repeated attempts by the dethroned Habsburg King Charles to recover the crown of St. Stephen were first dismissed and then put down by force. Other features of the Habsburg political system were, however, reintroduced. Suffrage was restricted to less than 30 per cent of the potential electorate and open ballot was for all practical purposes restored in the countryside. The upper house, composed of hereditary, *ex officio*, corporate and regent-nominated members, re-emerged.⁴⁶

The régime's main political vehicle was the Government Party, initially including of the Smallholders coalition and the rightist-conservative Christian National Union, and permanently allied with the Christian Socialists. It evolved into a basically non- or supra-ideological organisation which embodied the amalgamation of the state apparatus and the political élite. In many respects the political system resembled the one later introduced with less success by the Polish *Sanacja*. Various forms of electoral manipulation and a strong administrative bias for the ruling bloc generated a solid base of electoral support which, in turn, 'produced governments of unparalleled stability in the rest of Western and Central Europe at the time.'⁴⁷ Opposition parties, though not the communists, were tolerated in parliament but not allowed to exert active and decisive influence on policy. In fact, they were not all that disadvantaged, as the Government party's legislators too in practice had little say.

The ideas that motivated the counter-revolution can be described as nationalist, xenophobic, anti-urban and anti-modern. One visible aspect was overt anti-Semitism: Hungary was the first European country in the 20th century to introduce anti-Jewish legislation.⁴⁸ Popular anti-Semitism was fuelled by frustration over the Trianon catastrophe, and un-

⁴⁶ Wandycz (1992), 216.

⁴⁷ Grzybowski (1994b), 171; Rothschild (1974), 161.

⁴⁸ Beck (1993), 4. Nevertheless, Horthy, was not regarded as a practising anti-Semite, and the conservative establishment in general had no qualms striking political deals and establishing a *modus vivendi* with the Jewish *Grande bourgeoisie*. During the war Horthy also long resisted German demands to deport Budapest's Jewish community, but finally accepted that 800,000 Jews would be handed over to the SS for 're-location in the eastern territories'. This may although have been influenced by the fact that Hitler, after he heard of the Hungarian peace overtures to Churchill, had ordered the kidnapping and placing in a concentration camp of the Regent's son. In all, some 600,000 Hungarian Jews perished during the war. The total death toll for the country was one million.

doubtedly also by the Soviet Republic with its high visibility of Jews, including Kun himself, in its leadership—though the majority of Hungarian Jewry certainly did not support the revolution. Nevertheless, during the White Terror which followed the collapse of the Soviet Republic, a majority of the estimated 5,000 that were killed by pogromic lynch mobs were Jewish, as were a substantial part of the 100,000 Hungarians who chose emigration.

In practice, however, both the authoritarianism and the nationalist fervour of the régime were became moderated by economic pragmatism and by the conservative élite's generally anti-populist stance and concepts of gentlemanly behaviour in politics. The urgent need to end international isolation and secure foreign capital only added to the effect. Count István Bethlen, Prime Minister during the whole decade 1921–31, markedly steered a middle course. Some concessions were even made to the moderate left and to the peasantist parties, while the radical nationalists were kept on the sidelines. In fact, the extreme right and fascist-type mass movements, not communism, soon became the most acute threat to the conservative régime's stability. The radical right did undoubtedly share many of the régime's ideals and political goals—not least the recovery of lost territories and anti-Semitism—but their general radicalism, rebellion against Western values and exploitation of the masses was violently at odds with the conservative establishment's world view.

After Bethlen's resignation, however, a turn to the right was made in an attempt to steal the thunder from the radicals. The right-radicals' leader, the retired army Captain Gyula Gömbös, became Prime Minister in 1932, but key posts in his cabinet were nevertheless held by conservative Bethlenites. Gömbös introduced fascist slogans and paraphernalia, and steered closer to Germany and Italy. But despite his ambitions and strong support among students, refugees from the lost territories and the officer corps, Gömbös was eventually forced to put a lid on fascist and racist fervour as a concession to the conservative aristocracy and the wealthy Jewish financiers. With Horthy strongly advocating moderation, plans for increased totalitarianism were put on hold.

In 1935, general elections were held. The Government party won a clear majority, but its back bench was purged to make room for more radical members. Moreover, an independent conservative opposition emerged, as did a phalanx of opposition to the right even of the then right-radicalised and officer-stuffed Government party. When Gömbös died in 1936, the real threat of a revolution from the right no longer came from him and his political allies but from the anti-establishment and Nazi-inspired Arrow Cross movement. Despite unfavourable electoral geometry and the imprisonment in 1937 of its leader Ferenc Szálasi, the Arrow Cross scored a phenomenal success in the elections of 1939, pulling a quarter of the vote.⁴⁹ By then Hungary was firmly anchored in the Axis camp. The German take-over in Austria and Czechoslovakia created an encirclement and a situation of total economic dependency, while the concurrent Hungarian annexation of southern Slovakia and Carpatho-Ruthenia had made it a pariah in the eyes of the West.

Horthy, however, continued to exercise restraint and move rather deftly. While actively fighting with the Germans against the Soviet Union, Hungary took great pains to keep the state of war with the Western powers a mere formality. The Germanophile army and various militias certainly performed outrages in occupied territories, but 'parliamentary life not only survived but was even revitalised, the Centre and Left parties as well as the trade unions remained free, and political journalism was intense and free. [. . .] Civil rights endured'.⁵⁰ In the middle of German-controlled Europe, the Social Democratic Party was represented in the Budapest parliament until 1944. Not even when the Germans, with Horthy's assent, occupied Hungary in March 1944 did the extreme right-radicals manage to push aside the Horthyite

⁴⁹ Wandycz (1993), 223–4; Rothschild (1974), 181.

⁵⁰ Rothschild (1974), 187.

establishment and start their social revolution; the wholesale extermination of Hungary's Jewry was, however, initiated. Only the Regent's desperate decision seven months later to try to switch sides from the Axis to the Allies prompted Berlin to install an Arrow Cross régime, which exercised its powers with extraordinary malignancy under the leadership of the former ambassador to Berlin, Döme Sztójay, and General Géza Lakatos.

The political system of inter-war Hungary was strongly influenced by Horthy's role as supreme arbiter. The Admiral's political philosophy was guided by a truly anachronistic, paternalistic, 'whiggish' conservatism. In contrast to his Balkan counterparts of similar inclination, he was superior in the art of manipulation and co-optation. In fact, Horthy and the Hungarian conservative establishment managed what had eluded Hindenburg, Papen and the German industrial lobby; to defuse right-radicalism by inviting its relatively moderate elements participate in government but not letting them take control. The relative triumph of traditionalist authoritarian conservatism over right-wing radicalism did not, however, sound any sort of victory for liberal, or even 'Western', values. As Misha Glenny observed as late as in 1990, 'Hungary may have a proud history, but its democratic traditions would barely fill a school exercise book.'⁵¹

Right-Wing Radicalism Between the Wars

It is somewhat paradoxical that of the Central European countries, Hungary was to have the most vocal, radical and popular extreme-right movement. Hungary was, after all, the most ethnically homogeneous state in the region, and the governing establishment pursued a policy incorporating many of the aims of the right-radicals. But in contrast to the situation in newly independent Poland and Czechoslovakia, the Magyar polity considered 1919 a national catastrophe and support for radical revisionism was almost universal.

The Trianon settlement contributed to right-wing radicalisation through two mechanisms. As a territorial revision appeared impossible due to Entente policies, frustration was turned inwards in a process very similar to the one in Weimar Germany. Later, as Germany emerged as a motor for comprehensive revision and Magyar society had tied its fate to a German-initiated upheaval, Nazi-style ideologies gained increased respectability and support. In Poland and Czechoslovakia, being objects of German revisionism, this was hardly possible. In Hungary, Germany's image and influence was also strongly enhanced by its provision of a market for otherwise unsaleable agricultural produce.

In addition to dissatisfaction with the Trianon settlement, one may point to several structural factors that contributed to the mass support for radical-right ideologies in Hungary. One was economic: the debilitating hyperinflation of the early 1920's ruined the bulk of the middle class and hit skilled workers extremely hard. The ranks of destitute citizens were further swelled by hundreds of thousands of refugees from the lost territories. In the countryside, the promises of land reform went largely unfulfilled, as agricultural production remained locked in a system of equally unproductive subsistence farms and large estates, and the bulk of the peasantry became increasingly alienated from the slowly emerging capitalist, urban-based modern social system. The disenfranchisement of the rural *Lumpenproletariat* excluded them from any say in the state's affairs and made the peasantry an easy target for populist appeals. The industrial working class was also susceptible to right-wing rather than left-wing radicalism; partly as a result of the disaster with the Soviet republic, partly because of its shallow proletarian roots.

The greatest asset for the right-radical movement was its simple and coherent set of ideological commitments and political expectations. The governing aristocrat-dominated

⁵¹ Glenny (1990), 72.

élite professed its unfailing commitment to revisionism but had nevertheless signed the Trianon treaty and co-operated with the League of Nations, it affirmed monarchism but had evicted the King, it asserted its distaste for Jews but all the same pursued an economic policy based on cohabitation with Jewish business and finance. The right-radicals, on the other hand, could propagate uncompromising territorial revisionism, racial anti-Semitism and nationalism, anti-Capitalism and anti-intellectualism undisturbed by pragmatic considerations. Not least were they able to operate on a platform of 'social radicalism in the service of the organic solidarity of the Magyar race' that the establishment of noblemen and land-owners could not possibly match. These promises of land reform, social amelioration and denunciations of the privileges of the élite classes were powerful tools in attracting the masses that the government at the same time attempted to marginalise.⁵²

Four's A Company: Hungarian nationalists demanding a revision of Trianon under the likenesses of Hitler, Horthy, Mussolini—and Polish president Mosicki



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Irredentism Hungarian Style: A rally in Budapest demanding the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. At the microphone the nationalist author Franz Herczeg, to his right Count Tolvay-Tahach, leader of the Veterans Association



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⁵² Rothschild (1974), 171.



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***Irredentism
Polish Style:** In late 1938, huge crowds all over Poland demonstrated against Czechoslovakia. The picture, taken in Warsaw, shows a map of Polish territorial claims in Upper Silesia and a slogan demanding incorporation*



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***The Teschen Wall:** The border between Czechoslovakia and Poland ran through the center of the city of Tesin-Cieszyn-Teschen. When Germany occupied rump Czechoslovakia, Poland chanced to annex Cieszyn. The Czech barricades were of little hindrance*

The right-radical movement in Hungary had its organisational roots in the numerous secret societies and militias that formed to take revenge for the communist interlude and to fight in the lost territories. These bodies, manned mainly by 'déclassé elements of the lumpen gentry' and at that point enjoying the tacit support of Admiral Horthy, can in many respects be compared with the German *Freikorps*, the strongly anti-democratic war veteran bands used by the government to fight the left and in the East. The Hungarian militias were, however, even more radically anti-systemic and driven by racial xenophobia, as demonstrated by

names such as the 'Hungarian Scientific Race-protecting Society', 'Hungarian Association for National Defence', and 'Association of Awakening Magyars'.⁵³

Another manifestation of social radicalism was the *nepi* literary movement, which juxtaposed exalted peasantist, communal and patriarchal values against 'urban decadence' and 'lumpen elements'—code-words for Jews and Gypsies—as well as against the old aristocratic order. It is indeed interesting to observe that Magyar literature in the inter-war period was very preoccupied with concrete social issues and the 'national spirit and destiny', whereas most Polish and Czech writers and artists withdrew into 'purer' art and aestheticism. One obvious explanation for this is that the Polish and Czech societies had experienced satisfactory outcomes to national aspirations, while the Magyar polity was deeply frustrated by 1919.

The Magyar radical right was from the very outset inspired by and allied with German National Socialism. The movement's leader Gömbös had been in contact with German Nazis as early as in 1921, and even attempted to stage a *coup* synchronised with the Munich beer-hall *Putsch* in 1923. That same year he left the Government Party, in protest against its in his opinion meek and regressive ambitions, to form the tellingly named Race-Protecting Party. The party's ideology and policies were based on racial chauvinism, an affinity to the lower classes which were seen as victims of aristocratic and Jewish exploitation, and a firm belief that totalitarianism was the wave of the future. The social composition and traditions of Hungary caused the radical right to entertain a cult of the peasantry, rural life, anti-capitalism and archaic values to an even greater degree than did the German Nazis.

The right-radical opposition gained no parliamentary representation in the 1922 general elections, but won, respectively, 10 and 11 seats in the 245-member assemblies elected in 1926 and 1931. These figures, however, determined as they are by the heavily biased and to some extent manipulated polling system, grossly underestimate the movement's electoral strength and popular support. Already in the mid 1920's, it could rely on a wide constituency of students, military men, refugees from the lost territories and destitute members of the middle classes and noblesse. The peasantry, while largely disenfranchised, was also in the process of being lifted from its traditional docile apathy by the right-radicals' promises of radical social change.

The inclusion of Gömbös and other right-radicals in the government from 1929 did to some extent defuse the radicalism of the right, though not its appeal. When Gömbös became Prime Minister in 1932, he toned down his anti-Semitic rhetoric and continued the pragmatic Bethlenite *modus vivendi* with Jewish industrial and finance circles. The radical right's anti-capitalist rhetoric, however, remained firmly in place and defusion came at a price: after the 1935 general elections, the Government parliamentary party was largely manned by practising right-radicals. At the same time, the Government faced new, even more radical forces on the extreme right: the Arrow Cross and the National Radicals, who could cash in on the Gömbös faction's alleged selling out.

These two parties directly copied the German Nazi party's ideological programme, and were staunch allies of Germany's larger cause in Europe. Their ascent was to some degree a result of the government's new policy towards the ethnic German Schwab minority. The Schwabs were an ancient minority in Hungary, numbering some 700,000 and prominently represented in the army, administration and Catholic church. The Schwabs had a long tradition of assimilation into and identification with the Magyar community, but by the 1930's a large portion of the community had been energised into radical ethnic activism, directed not so much against the Magyars as against other minorities. In 1933, Gömbös had extracted a promise from Hitler that Germany would not support Schwab separatism, but that policy was reversed after Berlin started to suspect that Gömbös' successor would make a foreign-

⁵³ Rothschild (1974), 153.

policy re-orientation towards the West. Germany started subsidising Schwab separatists, and simultaneously shifted their support to radical-right elements outside the government orbit.⁵⁴

Parenthetically, one may note that the Hungarian governments firmly resisted making significant autonomy concessions to the Schwabs, and in fact continued its policy of enforced Magyarisation. The reaction among the ethnic Germans was a radicalisation and the emergence of openly pro-Nazi and pro-Reich vehicles. The main Schwab organisation, the *Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn*, was, however, largely defused when it was assigned two parliamentary seats in the Government party group. The need to keep Hungary in the Axis camp, and the fact that the Schwabs lived scattered in a sea of Magyars, meant that neither Germany nor the Schwabs themselves could realistically campaign for *Anschluss*, only for autonomy and the dubious right to be enrolled in the *Wehrmacht* and *Waffen-SS*.⁵⁵

The Arrow Cross was the most prominent of the extremist right-radical societies that swiftly became a major force. 'Propagating a nebulous but intransigent creed of absolute anticapitalism, antisocialism, anti-Semitism, Magyar racism, and populist authoritarianism, [it] attracted the fervent support of students, unskilled workers, and agricultural labourers and provoked the apprehensive enmity of all strata with vested interests, including even the "government" Right-Radicals.'⁵⁶ Horthy blocked the attempts, inspired by the not wholly unsuccessful earlier co-optation of Gömbös's crowd, to include the Arrow Cross movement in government. But even outside government, its mere presence meant that it could force the introduction of many of the measures it advocated, including Nuremberg-style racial legislation. The occupation of southern Slovakia and Carpatho-Ruthenia in 1938-9 gave the movement a further boost, as Magyars living there were unattracted by Horthyite 'feudal' conservatism and eager to take revenge for the oppression they felt they had been subjected to by the Slovaks.⁵⁷

In the May 1939 general elections, the Arrow Cross and other Nazi-type parties won 49 seats in the 298-seat parliament. The Arrow Cross alone, however, received a quarter of the vote, being strongest in the countryside and in recently annexed Southern Slovakia and Ruthenia. Support for the extremist right was also ample among unskilled and semi-skilled urban workers. Though it polled behind the Government party in Budapest, it beat the socialist party there by two to one and even had deputies elected from some of the capital's hard-core working-class districts, where the Arrow Cross was tacitly supported by the communist party.⁵⁸

In comparison with Hungary, right-radicalism in Poland was an insignificant force. The national question was a major political issue, but not surrounded by as deep traumas as in Hungary; Poland had come out as a winner from the war, and as far as irredentism went it was on the defensive. The appeal of right-wing radicals was also diminished by the fact that Poland was a main target of German revisionism and Poles the objects of Nazi racial invectives.

What right-radicalism there existed in the Catholic Polish community was not presented by an organised party as a coherent ideology. Rather, some elements common to European right-radicals were taken up by the mainstream parties. Even nationalism did not take racial overtones, but was focused on the forced cultural and linguistic assimilation of the minorities. One exception was the Jewish community, which the National Democrats thought undesirable, though not impossible, to Polishise. After the government became controlled by the right, it tolerated expressions of anti-Semitic violence, but the anti-Semitic legislation it

⁵⁴ Cf. Broszat (1966).

⁵⁵ Rothschild (1974), 194-5.

⁵⁶ Rothschild (1974), 178.

⁵⁷ Rothschild (1974), 171-3.

⁵⁸ Rothschild (1974), 181.

introduced was nevertheless not racial in nature, rather designed to cut the influence of Jews in the economy, the professions and science. The limitation by statute of Jewish entry into the universities was the most visible emanation of this policy, and one may note that students were the one group in society that was to a larger extent attracted to and energised by right-radicalism.

The only truly right-radical parties of any national importance, the *ONR* and its sister organisation the *Falanga* (Phalanx), were offshoots from the National Democratic party, and inspired by Italian or Spanish rather than German fascism. Their ideal was not so much a racially pure, folkish community as authoritarianism in itself as a solution to Poland's problems. The *Falanga* was founded in 1935 by Boleslaw Piasecki, a 21-year-old law student who already had seen the inside of a internment camp as a result of his right-radical activism. The movement soon grew to a strength of some 5,000 members, including a squad of storm troopers modelled on the German *SA*. Its 1937 programme preached the establishment of a 'Catholic State of the Polish Nation, that will lead the peoples of Central Europe against Communism and Pan-Germanism.'⁵⁹ While being as hostile to Germany as to the USSR and to local Jewry, the *Falanga* was infiltrated by the *Gestapo*, which employed the movement's chief propagandist Stanislaw Brochwitz (*alias* von Brauchitsch).⁶⁰

Piasecki's anti-German stance was sufficiently strong to prompt him to set up a guerrilla outfit in the autumn of 1940 to fight the occupants. In 1942 the National Confederation (*Konfederacja Narodowa*) also turned its arms on Soviet partisans operating in Poland, and even during the last stages of the war Piasecki remained true to his vision of a Poland stretching to the Black Sea, distributing leaflets demanding 'the crushing of Russia—whether red or white'.⁶¹ Unbelievable as it seems, even that was not the end of Piasecki, whose further adventures will be recounted in the following chapter.

What genuine right-radicalism there existed in inter-war Poland was rather to be found among the national minorities and particularly the Germans. The treatment of them was, at least by Central European standards, fair, and no obstacles were put up for them to express themselves politically. Yet most ethnic Germans in Poland were still officially considered 'autochtones'—i.e. Germanised Poles—and thus subjected to a vigorous assimilation policy. This was one factor creating disaffection, but the main cause of it was the very incorporation of formerly Prussian-German regions into Poland. Particularly after the National Socialist take-over in Germany, a majority of Poland's remaining ethnic Germans—a group taxed by large-scale emigration—turned to Naziism, although a significant proportion supported socialist and Catholic parties. From an ideological point of view, the Polish German Nazi movement is of limited interest as it for all practical purposes was a subsidiary of the *NSDAP* with secession as its only real aim.

Among other minority nationalities, the radicalisation that took place during the 1930's was not of the right-wing variety. Many Jews turned to Zionism, while some nationalist Ukrainians and Byelorussians, devoid of a national mother state, turned their energies into aimless violence, organised by terrorist groups such as the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists.

In Czechoslovakia, the situation was much the same. In the politically dominant polity, the Czech, right-radicalism was never a major force. At independence, the National Socialists,

⁵⁹ Stehle (1995).

⁶⁰ Piasecki exposed Brochwitz shortly before the break-out of war, informed on him to the Polish secret police which saw to it that he was sentenced to be executed for espionage and treason. Brochwitz was, however, saved from the gallows by the advance of the *Wehrmacht*, donned an *SS* uniform and in December 1940 personally arrested Piasecki. He was, however, soon released after Mussolini had intervened on his behalf.

⁶¹ Stehle (1995).

which despite the connotations of the name was a revisionist Marxist party, contained a faction which can be described as fascistoid. Like their Polish counterparts, the Czech fascists were inspired by the Italian, rather than the German, model. That was only logical given the threatening noises that were heard from across the Western border. Even after they were evicted from the party in the mid 20's, the fascists remained in the National Socialist orbit, though periodically also allied with the increasingly authoritarianism-oriented right wing of the Agrarian party. During the period 1934–37, the fascist movement partially merged with the National Democrats to form the National Union. Nevertheless, 'fascism's intended Czech social clientele remained on the whole immune to its demagogic blandishments.'⁶² In the 1929 general elections, it collected 0.9 per cent of the vote, and even in 1935 only 2.0 per cent.⁶³

Bohemia had been one of the earliest hotbeds of right-wing radicalism in Germanic Europe: a party bearing the ominous name *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* had been formed as early as in 1904 by German-Bohemian workers to protect their interests against cheaper Czech-speaking labour. It was one of the first organised political movements in Europe that overtly combined attempts at mass appeal with biological racism. When Czechoslovakia was formed, the German minority was represented by a plethora of parties which all initially subscribed to self-determination as a minimum demand. The greatest menaces to the Czechoslovak state was the *DNSAP*, the Sudeten affiliate of the Reich Nazi party, and the more conservative German National Party. Both were distinctly negativist and secessionist, but the National Party subscribed to an elitist and corporatist ideology, whereas the *DNSAP* had a folkish outlook; it was organised in 1919 'along the lines of the German and Austrian anti-Semitic movement, adopting the swastika as its symbol. [...] Its program was to foster the interests of the German working people. It condemned unearned income and demanded social safeguards. Its goal was to unite all territories populated by Germans into one great German empire.'⁶⁴ The folkish element of the party's programme, while not negating the overriding loyalty to the Reich, implied a concern with the need to protect the specific characteristics of the *Sudetenland* against mainstream German culture.

By 1933, both the National Party and the *DNSAP* were deactivated as a result of internal strife combined with harassment on the part of the Czechoslovak authorities. In the phase of consolidation that followed, the new *Sudetendeutsche Partei* under the leadership of Konrad Henlein came to gather the entire ethnic German right wing, on a platform indiscernible from that of the Reich *NSDAP*. By 1936 at the latest, the party had become so closely linked to and dependent on Berlin that it ceased to be an independent political agent. German agitation and the economic depression contributed to a landslide victory for the *Sudetendeutsche Partei* in the 1935 general elections. It gathered 15.2 per cent of all votes cast nation-wide—more than any other Czechoslovak party—which translates to a support of some two thirds of the ethnic German vote. This manifested the radicalisation among the Sudeten Germans: in the parliamentary elections of 1920, 1925 and 1929, the *DNSAP* and the German National Party had together won only 5 to 6 per cent of the vote cast nationally. The trend was to continue: in the pre-Munich 1938 municipal elections, the *Sudetendeutsche Partei* won a staggering 91.4 per cent majority in the ethnically German areas.

The autonomist and later secessionist movements and parties in Slovakia were also to a large and growing extent geared towards populism bordering on right-wing radicalism and even outright fascism. Its main expression was the Slovak People's Party, which with a few short exceptions remained outside government, and only in 1928 declared its loyalty to the

⁶² Rothschild (1974), 125, 96.

⁶³ Broklová (1995), 26.

⁶⁴ Broklová (1995), 32.

republic.⁶⁵ Its founding leader, Msgr. Andrej Hlinka, voiced a parochial, anachronistic and clericalist political philosophy, but by the early 1930's the party had in practice been taken over by a generation of more modern and totalitarianism-oriented elements: 'these young "Nastupists" attacked the foreign as well as the domestic policies of the Prague governments, urged Slovak solidarity with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, and eventually insisted on full independence—no longer mere autonomy—from the Czech lands.'⁶⁶ In order to advance their separatist agenda and battle leftist socialism, the Slovak populists increasingly synchronised their policies with the Sudeten Nazis.

Clerico-Fascism: Martin Sokol opens the Slovak National Assembly in January 1939. From the left: ministers Beran and Syrový, Prime Minister Tiso, and ministers Duncansky and Cernak (in Hlinka Guard uniforms)



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Stuck in the Middle: 'One State for Every Nation' becomes 'One nation in Every State'. Jewish refugees from the Sudetenland stuck in no-man's land between Germany and shrinking Czechoslovakia



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⁶⁵ Broklová (1995), 29.

⁶⁶ Rothschild (1974), 121.



HUFVUDSTADSBLADET ARCHIVES

Defending the Corridor: Polish pilots in Gdynia demonstrating against the incorporation of the Free City of Danzig into Germany. A month later the Second World War started



HUFVUDSTADSBLADET ARCHIVES

Brothers in Arms: Polish and Hungarian soldiers embracing in Carpatho-Ruthenia after the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, March 1939

Although the Slovak People's Party never won outright majorities in Slovakia, among ethnic Slovaks it consistently polled half the vote or more. After Munich, the constitution was redrafted to give Slovakia much increased autonomy, but a radical faction among the Slovak populists then stepped up their campaign for full independence. Germany promptly supported them in order to create a crisis within the then renamed Czecho-Slovak federation. Being successful, they invaded Prague and subsequently set up a nominally independent Slovak state. Utterly dependent on Nazi Germany (not least for protection against still revisionist Hungary), the Slovak populists who installed themselves in power introduced

authoritarian rule based on a constitution modelled upon fascist principles, banned some parties, trade unions and social organisations, set up a concentration camp, and established a Ministry of Propaganda.⁶⁷ But once the war was on, 'Slovakia became an example of a more general wartime policy of Nazi Germany—reluctantly sacrificing the more sympathetic but unruly local Radical Rightists for the sake of political stability and economic productivity, which in Slovakia was maintained by a régime of clerico-authoritarian conservatives.'⁶⁸

One may note the strategic blunder Hitler made when he decided to totally subjugate Bohemia and Moravia. Immediately after Munich the political system in the Czech lands had drifted into authoritarianism, and foreign policy was fully subordinated to German wishes. The communist party was banned, and the other parties amalgamated into a so-called Party of National Unity. Though another party, The National Party of Labour, was authorised late in 1938, the significance of the parliament was by then all but nil, having been replaced by government rule by decree. In February 1939, the Unity Party even unveiled a programme aiming at the creation of a 'corporate state of the Italian type'.⁶⁹

* * *

An observation which stands out in the previous exposé of inter-war Central European right-radicalism is its strongly rural base of support. In contrast to the German Nazis and the Italian fascists, with their cult of technology prominent under a thin coat of naturalist mystique, the Eastern and Central European radical right was inspired by archaic ideas of the pre-feudal independent peasant as the repository of true national values.

The radicalisation of the peasantry is largely explained by the adverse economic circumstances, particularly the impoverishment brought on first by the agricultural crisis of the 1920's and by the great depression the following decade. The experience was particularly debilitating as the villages had only just initiated their integration into commodities production and the money economy; the adverse effects were thus largely interpreted as yet one example of urban society's efforts and ability to exploit the peasant. The experiences of the First World War had of course also whetted the appetite of millions of peasants to reap the material fruits of modern society, as well as shown the dependence of the urban societies on rural labour. As their relative deprivation and exclusion from the general progress in Europe was ever more clearly exposed, large parts of the peasantry chose to identify groups outside 'the peasant way of life' as their enemies. This juxtaposition was both class-based—directed against the land-owners, the urban bureaucracies, industrialists and the socialist proletariat—and ethno-racial—directed at 'national outsiders' such as Jews, Gypsies and Magyars. In many instances these identifications coincided, as in the equation of Jews with both finance capitalism and internationalist, godless Bolshevism; or in Slovakia of Magyars with feudalism and cultural imperialism and Czechs with Protestantism and cultural hegemony.

Pressures arising from a rapid and turbulent process of modernisation has been identified as a standard source of popular radicalism in rural, backward and peripheral regions. The most widely held theories on communist support attribute special importance to socio-structural factors and are indeed part and parcel of traditional modernisation theories. The proponents of this view see mass support for communist parties as a periodical phenomenon and as an intermediary stage of development in societies undergoing rapid socio-economic change on the path towards an heavily industrialised and urbanised capitalist society. To vote

⁶⁷ Broklová (1995), 33.

⁶⁸ Rothschild (1989), 36.

⁶⁹ Broklová (1995), 33.

communist 'means that you are displeased with your situation not only materially, but also psychologically: a modern working class votes for social democratic parties'.⁷⁰

In many cases this 'emerging radicalism' has been left-oriented, not only in post-war Eastern Europe but also in Scandinavia where support for communism has traditionally had two separate bases: in the established industrial regions and in the poorest rural, 'backwoods' areas. Support for the rural, emerging variety of left radicalism has been found to correlate with the prevalence of economic and social instability (high unemployment or underemployment, large differences in standard of living, large fluctuations in income and a high level of migration); rapid and widespread socio-economic change; weak socio-political traditions and norms; rootlessness and weak group identification; and expressive and momentary political activity.⁷¹ In contrast to industrial communism, the rural variety of left-wing radicalism tends to emerge where individuals lacking a strong class identification experience deprivation. This deprivation is, however, not, as is the case for the established urban working class, relative and institutionalised. Rather it is 'diffuse', the effect of the modernisation process which breaks down the traditional rural groups of reference and comparison. The rapid entry into modernisation 'opens up vistas which the still isolated individual cannot identify and compare himself with, while simultaneously obscuring his rural roots.'⁷² In general terms, 'isolation and lack of opportunity to participate in social life tend to increase radicalism.'⁷³

This theory neatly fits in with the socio-economic situation in inter-war Hungary and Slovakia, the two Central European countries where radicalism was strongest during the period. The Hungarian conservative establishment pursued a policy of actively excluding the rural masses from real political participation, while Slovakia remained a poor, backward, disadvantaged periphery in the Czechoslovak state, just as it had been in Transleithanian Hungary.

But why did Central European modernisation then give rise to right-wing rather than left-wing radicalism? As noted above, it was only in Slovakia that communism proved successful in gaining substantial support from the deprived, anomic rural masses. One reason was most certainly the strategy of the communist parties, which during the 20's and 30's were cadre-driven, dogmatically proletarian and extremely suspicious of social alliances with older and larger classes. And among the peasantry, communism was moreover strongly identified not only with 'soulless', materialistic industrialism and an urban way of life, but also with 'alien' social and ethnic groups and with a foreign power—the Soviet Union—which was seen as threatening the hard-won and cherished national independence.

The important fact to note, however, is not the form radicalism took, but that that radicalisation occurred in the first place. Right and left radicalism obviously do not share the same value structure, but many of their basic aims are similar or even identical. In the inter-war Central European context, this was particularly true for the issues of land reform and social equality, as well as for the overriding view of the relationship between masses and élites.

⁷⁰ Selle (1990), 266.

⁷¹ Cf. Allardt (1964) and (1970); Zilliacus (1995).

⁷² Zilliacus (1995), 37.

⁷³ Allardt (1964), 55.

The Establishment of Communist Hegemony

It was a laydown Grand Slam for Bond against any defence. Whatever Meyer led, Bond must get in with a trump in his own hand or on the table. Drax's aces and kings would be totally valueless. It was sheer murder.

— Ian Fleming, *'Moonraker'*

The Anatomy of Take-Over: A Comparison

Since the late 1940's, the dominant view among Western scholars has been that Stalin's ambition during the final stages of the war and immediately after it was complete Sovietisation of the countries and territories where the Red Army stood. This theory, as introduced in Hugh Seton-Watson's seminal 1951 book *The East European Revolution*, identifies a clear pattern of an active Soviet quest for domination, with three phases: *genuine coalitions*, *false or façade coalitions*, and ultimately monolithism or *total Soviet control*. The design would have been the following. First, moderately left-wing and agrarian parties compete with the communists;¹ there is some scope for genuine pluralism but only under close supervision by the Soviets and a communist-controlled security apparatus. In the following stage, a coalition is still formally in power, but hardly any real opposition to the communists is accepted. Finally, the communists are in total control; if other parties are allowed, they are no longer capable of any autonomous action.

This theory is indeed supported by much of what is known about actual developments, and provides an accurate description of events as they happened. Yet that does not prove that a master plan for the imposition of Soviet-style rule was in existence at the beginning. It is true that most European countries occupied or liberated by the USSR eventually emerged with rather similar political systems, but those which went communist did clearly not follow the same map for the 'Road to Socialism'. Neither were the same timetables utilised.

The communist parties which came to power in Eastern Europe were structurally varied. The state of the communist cadres was weak almost everywhere, due both to repression at home and to the purges among the exiles then resident in the Soviet Union. Only the Yugoslav and Czechoslovak parties could bolster significant mass support before the war, while in

¹ The ruling Eastern European Marxist-Leninist parties will in the following, for simplicity's sake, be called 'Communist' although they in some cases carried other official names: in Poland the 'United Workers Party'; in Hungary, the 'Workers Party' before 1956 and the 'Socialist Workers Party' thereafter; and in the GDR the 'Socialist Unity Party'. The 'Romanian Workers Party' became communist by name also in 1965, as were the Czechoslovak and Bulgarian ruling parties throughout the period.

Romania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria the communists had been middling-size forces at best; in Poland, Hungary and the Baltic republics the communist parties were sects with memberships of only a few hundred or thousand. However disciplined and determined, they were clearly not capable of carrying out even a Leninist *coup* by themselves.

Common to the communist parties in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary was, however, their eventual rejection of the Yugoslav-inspired idea of a Popular Front 'from below'. This forms a cleavage in relation also to Bulgaria and Romania, 'where communist domination of the post-war coalition governments had been a reality since the end of 1944 and adopting Tito's model of simply involved dropping a pretence introduced under international pressure'.² In Central Europe, the communists (read: Moscow) would not risk putting excess power in the hands of a front that might later turn illoyal, quite apart from the fact that generic support for the communist model of social development was much weaker than in the Balkans.

Thus, if all the Eastern and Central European communist parties were objects or instruments, rather than acting subjects, the degree of autonomy they enjoyed—or, if one may say so: their 'National Flavour' varied. The most autonomous were obviously the Yugoslav and Albanian parties—the latter, though, being totally dependant on the former. The Bulgarian party had needed relatively little overt Soviet military help in becoming the country's dominant political force, and as a consequence it would depend less on it to stay in power; the Bulgarian Communist Party also 'had a long, indigenous history and therefore was not perceived as a foreign imposition'.³

The subordination of the communist parties to Soviet models of thinking and political behaviour was a vital ingredient in the establishment of Soviet hegemony in Central Europe. There was little room for the parties themselves to strengthen mass support by traditional methods, i.e. by fine-tuning policies to the local environment.

Yet it is also true the cataclysmic events of the war-time period had utterly changed the political and sociostructural landscapes. The flocking of new members to the communist parties cannot be accounted for by opportunism, hypocrisy and coercion alone—by early 1948 the Czechoslovak communist party boasted more than two million members in a population of 13 million and its Hungarian and Polish counterparts well over one million each. As Czesław Miłosz described in his 1951 novel *The Captive Mind*, the new members had rather complex motivations. The upheavals of the war and the complete breakdown of the pre-war political order encouraged salvationist, utopian ideologies. Indeed, the communists did not—they did not have to—destroy the 'Old order'; the old feudal-élite societies of Eastern Europe had already been mortally wounded by the radical right-wing movements of the 1930's and the years of war. The desolation increased scepticism in individualism and pluralism, as opposed to the order and at least rudimentary level of security which the communists were in a unique position to supply.

Here supply met demand, more in the promise of radical change itself than in the ideology and societal model the communists were propagating. There was, to be sure, great expectations of a clean break with the past after the war in all European countries, not only in the Eastern ones. As Ralf Dahrendorf has noted of this pan-European 'grand turn to the left': 'One can understand that, faced with the rubble left behind by the Second World War, large numbers of people were prepared to embrace any progress on offer, including *nomenklatura*

² Swain and Swain (1991), 62.

³ Stokes (1993), 50; Sudoplatov et al. (1995), 233, however adds that '[s]ensing the danger that might come from monarchist émigrés, Dimitrov decided [in 1944-45] to eliminate the entire political opposition; he purged and liquidated all key figures in the former parliament and government of czarist Bulgaria. [...] Dimitrov's followers exploited the absence of a political opposition for more than thirty years.'

socialism.⁴ As another observer has noted of the Czechoslovak communist party's success in the first post-war elections in 1946:

The programme of the Czechoslovak Communist Party did not essentially differ from others but was more complete and convincing. Unlike others, Communist policies had not yet been tried out, and the post-war voters wanted a radical solution. The Communists' position of an expanding demagogic party was more advantageous in the existing climate, which suited their purposes, than that of the parties who had been part of the pre-war democratic coalition governments and realised that it was precisely a supra-party character of state bodies which was so important for the survival of democracy.⁵

In the process, the ruthlessness which the communist leaders had internalised during the vicious internecine battles in Moscow was to their great advantage. In 1945, Eastern European communists were not particularly preoccupied with the finer points of Marxist theory, not to mention electoral support, parliamentary etiquette or even fair play and generosity. Power was what counted: not only power for power's sake, but the power to transform society fundamentally. In George Schöpflin's words: 'The authoritarian attitudes [the communists] learned from the Comintern and their years in the Soviet Union, their ideological certainty, their rejection of debate and argument, their hostility to autonomous action, their contempt for views other than their own and their attitude of treating political opponents as political enemies served them in good stead in their march for power and continued to inform them until well after their successful seizure of it.'⁶

The actual establishment of the Popular Democracies was dependent on three conditions: 'the external force of the Soviet Union, which dominated the region at the end of the Second World War; the readiness of a determined minority of communists in each country to coercion, deception and manipulation of their fellow countrymen in order to secure a monopoly of power for the communist party; and the physical exhaustion and political disorientation of the war-ravaged populations.'⁷ It thus closely followed the lines drawn up by Lenin in his famous handbook for proletarian revolution, *What is to be Done?*⁸ In it he points to two main prerequisites for success: the existence of a strong revolutionary party which pursues the 'correct policy' under a determined and disciplined cadre leadership; and a situation of deepening social crisis and tension—possibly, even preferably, brought about by war—conducive to mass mobilisation and a demoralisation of and division among the ruling élites.

The establishment of communist rule in Eastern Europe was not based on the express will of a majority of the populations, and essentially took the forms of *coups* aided by a foreign power. Yet all that is irrelevant—or rather, flattering—from a Marxist-Leninist point of view. Like Hitler, Lenin did not much appreciate the ability of the mass to understand its own best. From that belief sprung the theory of the communist party as the organiser of a 'vanguard of the proletariat' to counter the petty-bourgeois mass.⁹ The very core of Leninist revolutionary philosophy is in fact that communists should take power through a *Putsch*, carried out by an determined minority. It does not matter how small that minority is, as long

⁴ Dahrendorf (1990), 51.

⁵ Broklová (1995), 38-39.

⁶ Schöpflin (1993), 55-6.

⁷ Batt (1991), 3.

⁸ Lenin (1963).

⁹ In a speech at the Tenth Congress of the Russian Bolsheviks in 1921 Lenin unequivocally declared: 'Only the Communist Party is capable of unifying, educating and organising a vanguard of the proletariat and of the whole mass of the working people that alone will be capable of withstanding the inevitable petty-bourgeois vacillations of the mass.' Cf. Bullock (1993), 82.

as it can pursue its ultimate aims in a disciplined fashion and grab the opportunity if one arises.

If that was not the case in Central Europe, revolutionary conditions as defined by Lenin's rationale were, however, present in several European countries when the war ended. Genuinely popular, radical and disciplined communist parties operated in Greece, France and Italy, all societies experiencing very high levels of mass mobilisation and having weak and divided traditional élites.¹⁰ Even so, after a period of turmoil, the non-communist forces in these countries emerged on top, while the very opposite was the case in Eastern and Central Europe. It seems prudent to conclude that the presence of the Soviet Red Army was of decisive importance in determining the outcome. In simple terms: to the east of the Iron Curtain, in the Soviet sphere of influence, communism could prevail; to the west of it, in countries politically dominated by the United States, it could not.

Yet that interpretation is too simplified—even tautological: the Iron Curtain was eventually positioned along the borders of countries where the communists emerged triumphant. It is true that no European country or territory outside the Soviet sphere of military domination did go communist, but neither did all do so where the Red Army stood in May 1945. Being in the Soviet sphere of influence can thus be seen as a necessary condition for a communist victory, but not as a sufficient one.

One particularly interesting deviant case is Finland, which as a defeated associate and 'co-belligerent' of Germany had to cede a great deal of sovereignty to a Soviet-dominated Control Commission, allow the establishment of a Soviet military base within shelling range of the capital, and lost some 15 per cent of her territories to the USSR. The re-legalised communist party, dominating a 'Popular Front' umbrella including left-wing socialists, gained 23.5 per cent of the vote in the first post-war elections, entered government and gained control of the Interior Ministry and political police. Its leadership made noises about the attractiveness of the 'Czechoslovak road' and, according to some accounts, was actively preparing a *Putsch*.¹¹ The pattern was reminiscent of the Central European and Balkan ones, yet parliamentary democracy in Finland survived intact. This is all the more remarkable as Finland had been part of Russia before 1917 and thus was an obvious target for Soviet imperialists—indeed, the Soviet Union had attempted Finland's incorporation along with the three Baltic republics during the 1939–40 Winter War.

Another deviant case is Austria, which like Germany after the war was stripped of its sovereignty and divided into four zones of occupation. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union eventually settled for a full withdrawal in exchange for a treaty of permanent neutralisation, instead of attempting to create a socialist statelet in the eastern zone.

¹⁰ In both France and Italy, the communists were the strongest parties, with memberships rising to, respectively, 900,000 and two million. By 1944–45 they dominated the resistance movements, and had a strong position in the first post-war governments in a situation when new constitutions were being built after the collapse and discrediting of the pre-war and war-time political systems. In Greece, the communists had converted their resistance to the occupation into an armed insurrection against the reconstituted pre-war government, which escalated into a civil war that cost more than 100,000 lives.

¹¹ The veracity of the allegations of a serious communist plan for take-over in Finland has divided historians, but the emergence of new material, presented by Kimmo Rentola (lecture quoted in *Helsingin Sanomat*, 13 January 1995), adds credibility to the view that a coup was indeed being prepared in late 1947 and early 1948, when the radical left was faced with prospects of a resounding defeat in the upcoming elections. The plans seem to have been shelved only when the 'Treaty on Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance', in essence a combined Soviet security guarantee and dormant military alliance, was signed on 6 April 1948. For more sceptical view—though based on older material—see Upton (1973) and Paastela (1991).

A third deviant case is Yugoslavia, where the régime that came to power at the end of the war was communist, but soon developed extremely hostile relations to the USSR. One could also mention Iran, from where the Soviets withdrew in May 1946; during the war Iranian sovereignty had been severely curtailed by Soviet and British occupation to protect lines of communication, and after the war Soviet authorities had helped in setting up autonomous Kurdish and Azeri 'People's Republics' in the north of the country. Though often forgotten, Norway and Denmark were also partly liberated from German occupation by Soviet troops in 1945.¹²

There is a range of explanations for these deviancies. Competent diplomacy allaying Soviet security fears has been mentioned as an important factor in the Finnish case, along with the fiery military resistance Finland had earlier put up to the Soviets while at the same showing restraint towards its German ally. The relatively moderate losses during the war, both in human and material terms, also meant that society as a whole was not as demoralised as in most other European countries. Also, the political and administrative élite remained almost intact and in office after the 1944 armistice.

As regards Austria, Soviet policy there appears to have been determined by the German question, which it until the mid-1950's attempted to resolve by a neutralisation and permanent demilitarisation, even if that would have meant abandoning the German Democratic Republic established in October 1949. Austria also lacked a communist party of any significance. In the case of Iran, strong intervention from the United States was certainly a factor behind Soviet withdrawal. Yet then again Washington showed little interest in interfering in Soviet handling of Finnish affairs, as did Britain, which was even represented (although clearly as junior partner) in the Control Commission. As for Yugoslavia, one may surmise that a split within the communist camp was a non-preferred outcome, and when that became a fact, a military invasion emerged as the only way to topple Tito. That alternative was indeed taken under serious consideration, but finally dropped as being potentially too costly. The fear of over-extension has also been cited as one reason for the limitation of Soviet intervention in Finland and Austria.

Unfortunately, all these explanations of deviance emerge as distinctly *ad hoc*. Equally *ad hoc*, even tautological, seem many of the rationalisations for why the future popular democracies went communist: that the level of political radicalism was higher, that the élites had been thrown into sufficient disarray, that communist strategy was more proficient, that Soviet military-strategic interests were stronger, or that Western responses were less successful, to mention but a few. All these hypotheses may be relevant, but are impossible to verify with reference to quantifiable data.

All over Eastern Europe the communist take-over followed the same vanguardist strategy as earlier in Russia, with the exception that the parties now could rely on strong external support. The fact that the ruling parties started out from a Leninist position, ignoring the absence of a collapsing capitalist society—or, for that matter, of the absence of any sort of capitalist society—meant that they had to perform a revolution in reverse. Revolutionary conditions had to be built after the revolution. Lacking natural class-based support, the new communist rulers were sooner or later forced to accommodate and exploit residual belief systems such as generic radicalism, étatism and nationalism in order to strengthen their bases of mass support.

'Objective factors', to use the term in its original Marxist sense—i.e. the level of capitalist development and the political maturity and awareness of the working classes—appear to have

¹² Finnmark above the Arctic Circle and the Baltic island of Bornholm, respectively. The *fylke* (county) of Finnmark was, by coincidence, a bastion of rural communism; in the first two post-war elections the Norwegian Communist Party made its strongest showing there, winning 21.5 per cent of the vote in 1945 and 16.5 per cent in 1949. Cf. Selle (1990).

been of minor importance for the establishment of communist hegemony in Eastern Europe, just as had been the case in Russia. The last areas of the future Socialist Bloc to come under communist domination was indeed the Central European industrial heartland of Bohemia and Moravia. At the same time, the two countries where local communists took power with genuine popular support and without substantial aid of the Red Army were Yugoslavia and Albania, both ranking among Europe's most backward and least industrialised states. The Yugoslav communist party had, however, managed to take charge of a common national cause with broad popularity outside the traditional bastions of communist class-based support.

Even if some of the factors mentioned by Lenin as necessary for a communist triumph were present in Eastern Europe in 1945, all were certainly not. The particular importance that Lenin attributed to civil war as a catalyst for revolution¹³ does not seem to be wholly borne out by the post-war events. The Second World War encompassed a civil war element in almost every country in Eastern Europe, but it is hard to discern any clear correlation between that and the modes of communist victory. Of course, Yugoslavia, the country where the fiercest internal fighting took place during the war did go communist, while Finland, the only one in the Soviet sphere of interest which saw no civil war-type situations at all, did not. Yet in Greece or Italy, scenes of extremely brutal civil war, the communists did not triumph. The civil war which broke out in Poland in 1943/44 was not a revolutionary catalyst, but rather directed against the communists and the Red Army.

On the other hand, the theory that cumulating upheavals create mass radicalism which can be exploited by a determined minority appears to be consistent with the chronological order of the take-overs: first Poland, then Hungary, and Czechoslovakia last. In relative terms, Poland suffered the biggest losses of life of any belligerent in the Second World War. The Hungarian armed forces had sustained huge casualties on the Eastern Front, the majority of the country's Jews had been deported to German death camps, and finally large tracts of Budapest and other major cities were levelled during the eviction of the Germans. In comparison, Czechoslovakia fared much better. Slovakia's armed forces suffered heavy losses during the alliance with Germany and the country was the site of serious fighting in 1944–45, but throughout the war Bohemia-Moravia remained largely untouched by fighting, carpet-bombing or deportations.

The upheavals did not end with the war, as population transfers on an enormous scale continued for years. The Polish state was moved several hundred miles to the West, with territories lost east of the Nazi–Soviet demarcation line compensated at German expense. In all, an estimated 22 million people were forcibly transferred to, from or within Poland between 1936–56, equalling no less than 70 per cent of the 1939 population.¹⁴ Czechoslovakia faced the loss of Carpatho-Ruthenia to the USSR, but even more drastic was the deportation in 1945–48 of some three million Sudeten Germans and tens of thousands of ethnic Hungarians, i.e. every fifth citizen of the First Republic. In Hungary the number of deported Germans was about a quarter of a million, with an equal number remaining. Hungary's borders were not substantially re-drawn from their pre-war delineation though the war-time nullification of the Trianon settlement was reversed.

All in all, a relatively varied set of background factors emerges in Central Europe, as summarised in Table 4.1.

¹³ Richard Pipes (1994) has demonstrated the importance not only Lenin, but also Bucharin and even Marx, attributed to civil war for fomenting revolutionary change.

¹⁴ Davies (1986), 82; the figure of 22 million does not include the estimated three million transported to German death-camps in Poland.

Table 4.1: The Communist Take-Over in Central Europe: Key Variables

	Poland	Czechoslovakia	Hungary
Status During War	Occupied by and partly annexed to Germany	Partly annexed to Germany and Hungary; Slovakia German puppet state; Bohemia-Moravia German 'Protectorate'	Allied with Germany
Collaboration with Axis Powers	Very low	Low in Czech lands, High in Slovakia	High, strong local fascist movement
Formal Status	Victor	Victor	Vanquished
Soviet Military Presence	Liberator, Permanent presence	Liberator, withdrawn in late 1945	Occupier, Permanent presence
Post-War Settlement	Territorial losses to USSR compensated from Germany	Loss of Carpatho-Ruthenia, Germans deported	Irredentist war gains reversed
Number of War Dead (of 1938 population)	6 million+ (17 per cent)	400,000 (2.7 per cent)	900,000+ (c. 7 per cent)
Post-War Ethnic homogeneity	Very high	Medium, Sudeten Germans deported	Very high
Initial (1945-47) Soviet Strategic Aims	Hegemony	Friendly régime	Friendly régime
Initial Communist Position in Front	Hegemonic	Dominant	Strong
Soviet Military-Strategic Interest	Communication to occupied Germany	Secondary	Communication to occupied Austria
Subsequent (post-1947) Soviet Strategic Aims	Hegemony	Hegemony	Hegemony
Date of First Elections	January 1947	May 1946	November 1945
Reported Communist Share of Votes	80 per cent for 'Democratic Bloc'	38 per cent	17 per cent
Communist Domination of Government	June 1945	February 1948	May 1947
Imposed Merger of the Socialist Parties	December 1948	June 1948	June 1948
Intensity of Communist Party Purges	Very high before war, Low after war	Low before war, High after war	Medium before war, High after war

Poland, first the main battleground for Soviet and German forces, and thereafter situated between the USSR and the its zone of occupation in Germany, was of crucial strategic importance in the wider context of the immediate post-war era. In comparison, Hungary and

Czechoslovakia were clearly secondary, albeit that Hungary as a defeated belligerent was formally occupied, and the Soviet forces thus had legitimate (or at least legal) grounds to interfere in Hungarian politics.

It is also impossible to discount the impression that traditional Russian imperialism inspired Soviet actions. After the partitions of 1773, 1793 and 1795, most of Poland was incorporated into the Czarist empire for more than a century. The fourth partition resulting from the 1939 Molotov–Ribbentrop protocol showed anew the low regard in which the Soviet leadership too held the idea of Polish independence. The attempts during 1939–41 to physically liquidate the existing élite and potential new élites must be interpreted as further evidence of Soviet aspirations to establish as total a hegemony over Poland as possible, aspirations that remained in place in 1945. Raw expansionism was a factor also in Romania.

In Poland and Romania Stalin intervened decisively to ensure the establishment of sympathetic regimes: these, after all, were the countries which had had territorial disputes with the Soviet Union throughout the inter-war period, disputes which Stalin had solved in 1939 and 1940 and whose resolution he sought to make permanent. Here there was no pretence about coalition governments and communists not being interested in power; the communists were to have power and would if necessary be kept in power by the Red Army.¹⁵

Turning to the mass level, it is notably difficult to discern a positive correlation between the strength of the various local communist parties and the modalities of their coming to power. Indeed, Poland and Hungary, with their minuscule pre-war communist movements, went communist before Czechoslovakia, where the party had constituted a politically relevant force for two decades.

A more profitable approach may be found in the evaluation of the level of generic radicalism. Charles Gati has argued that approximately half the voters in both Hungary and Poland in 1945 favoured a revolutionary change of some sort, even though not necessarily a communist one.¹⁶

[I]t is quite clear that this radicalism was not committed to the communists from the outset; on the contrary, it was far less focused than that. The substance of this radicalism should be traced back to the nature of peasant belief systems [. . .] and, at the same time, to the legacy of right-wing radicalism of the interwar period. The salient characteristic of these Central and Eastern European right-radical movements was precisely their radicalism, their determination to destroy the existing structure of power and wealth and to create something fundamentally new in their place. The implication of this situation for the post-war period was that there existed a sizeable section of society which was ready to think in radical categories, for whom the root-and-branch extirpation of the old élite was welcome and who were fully prepared to respond to the language of total transformation used by the communists.¹⁷

Much the same can be said about Slovakia, where the nationalist party won the first elections, but paradoxically not about the Czech lands, despite the communists' excellent showing in the same round of elections. The legacy of the pre-war era provides one explanation for this. Political culture in Bohemia and Moravia was much more strongly geared to moderation than it was in the rest of the region.

¹⁵ Swain and Swain 1993, 33.

¹⁶ Gati (1986), 69.

¹⁷ Schöpflin (1993), 68–9.

Moreover, there is a dichotomy between Poland and Hungary (and Slovakia) on the one hand, where democracy had failed (if most miserably in Hungary), and the Czech lands, where it had collapsed only under external pressure, on the other. In 1945 Czechoslovakia emerged with a government and constitution directly linked to the pre-war era, and which enjoyed a high degree of legitimacy and support at least outside Slovakia. Poland and Hungary had to start from scratch, if partly for different reasons. In both these countries, the pre-war political systems had lost the support of large segments of the population even before 1939. Then the Polish government was pre-empted to return from exile by the Soviets, while practically all lower-level administration had been uprooted by the Germans. Hungary's pre-war régime, warts and all, had been overthrown in 1944 by even more right-wing and unrepresentative forces, which subsequently were replaced by a Soviet occupation administration.

The Cold War and Popular Democracy

If the systems of government that initially were established were not democracies of a Western type, neither were they régimes of the Soviet variety. For years to come, Soviet theoreticians did dare only to describe the new political systems as preliminary stages in the progression towards the highest form of democracy—the Soviet, socialist type. The tempo of progress towards this goal seems to have been unclear both to Soviet and Eastern European communist leaders for quite some time. From the immediate post-war period, Zbigniew Brzezinski¹⁸ has found interesting quotes from Bierut and Dimitrov about, i.a., the importance of safeguarding private property and enterprise, indicating (though not proving) that they did not envisage as quick a transition to total communist dominance in their respective countries as eventually proved to be the case. Indeed, sources recently made available suggest that the Hungarian communists, including the leaders returning from exile in Moscow, initially anticipated a transition period of several decades before the dictatorship of the proletariat could be established,¹⁹ and the 1945–47 economic programmes of the Polish, Czechoslovak and Hungarian governments indicate socialist rather than communist aims. Indeed, 'in retrospect, it is difficult not to interpret the approach towards the non-communist groups with its many and sharp turn-about as part and parcel of a genuine uncertainty about party strategy.'²⁰ It was not until the late 1950's that Soviet theorists came to hold the view that the dictatorship of the proletariat practised in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European systems of popular democracy were *de facto* interchangeable.

In fact, much evidence bears witness to the fact that there was no fixed Soviet blueprint for Eastern Europe until the time of the establishment of Cominform in September 1947. It was only then, at a meeting in Poland, that Andrei Zhdanov launched the 'Two Camps' thesis, which called for all communist parties to 'take the lead in resisting the plans of American imperialist expansion and aggression in all spheres.' However, even the 'Two Camps' speech identified two categories in the 'anti-fascist front' in Eastern Europe. Yugoslavia, Albania, Poland and Czechoslovakia—the latter somewhat surprisingly, as the communist take-over had not yet taken place there—were called 'new democracies', while Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Finland were placed in another category, still without a precise label. The

¹⁸ Brzezinski (1961).

¹⁹ Cf. Dessewffy and Hammer (1995), 11.

²⁰ Berglund and Dellenbrant (1994), 17; they refer, i.a., to the inopportune policy of the East German communists in 1945 to decline an offer from the Social Democrats to merge, only to force through such a solution in the following year, when the Social Democrats had developed second thoughts.

inclusion of Finland in the second category is particularly interesting, as it indicates a possible Soviet fallback position for the Eastern European countries: democratic and national but considerate of Soviet interests and concerns.²¹

The final decision to go for all-out power in Eastern Europe seems to have been motivated largely by Soviet geostrategic considerations. With the introduction of the Truman Declaration of 12 March 1947,²² at the very latest, it became clear that the United States government was determined to stem communist influence in its sphere of influence in Europe, and had 'opted for Western unity instead of East-West negotiations.'²³ The United States' adoption of the formerly British role as guardian of the balance of power in Europe proved a huge setback for the Soviets. While Britain, whose obligations the US took over, had been equally consistent in trying to halt Soviet and communist expansion especially in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Greece,²⁴ it had done so on the basis of level-headed power-politics. The Americans, with their traditions of opposing cynical *Realpolitik* and 'imperialism', had to legitimise their intervention to protect vital interests with the high moral principles of upholding democracy and freedom. As Henry Kissinger puts it: '[B]argaining with the Soviets over reciprocal concessions would be out of the question. Henceforth, the conflict could only be settled by a change in Soviet purposes, by the collapse of the Soviet system, or both.'²⁵

The obvious flip side of this American policy, known as containment, was that it encouraged the Soviet Union to force a similar consolidation within its own sphere—and then it too had to use the principle of ideological consistency to legitimise its hegemony in its sphere of influence. In the final analysis, Europe was divided on American initiative along ideological lines parallel with the spheres of interest delineation.

This process was mutually reinforcing. The exclusion from government of the French and Italian communist parties in early 1947 prompted a radical reassessment among the communists, as it increased the possibility of similar developments particularly in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, which both at the time still were ruled by semi-genuine coalitions. The immediate reaction was that the policy of harassment of non-communist parties in these two countries was turned into a campaign of outright suppression. The Marshall plan, which was to be operational in December that year, encouraged the Soviets to further tighten their political grip, knowing they could not compete with the United States when it came to buying influence.

Pavel Sudoplatov, the then Soviet spy chief, tells of how the news were received in Moscow that the British and American governments wanted to replace reparations from Germany and her allies with international aid, based not on bilateral agreements but on international control:

This was totally unacceptable because it would obstruct our consolidation of control in Eastern Europe. It meant that Communist parties already established in Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary would be deprived of economic

²¹ Kissinger (1995), 443.

²² According to this doctrine, directly provoked by the representation that Britain was unable to uphold its commitments in Greece and Turkey, US policy would be 'helping free people to maintain their free institutions and national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes.'

²³ Kissinger (1995), 445.

²⁴ According to the Churchill–Stalin deal of May 1944, Greece was within the British sphere of influence, while Romania was in the Soviet one.

²⁵ Kissinger (1994), 453.

levers of power. Six months after the Marshall Plan was rejected by the Soviet Union, multiparty rule in Eastern Europe came to an end.²⁶

The decision to unify the administration of the Western zones of occupation in Germany, embodied by the introduction on 20 June 1948 of the Deutsche Mark, was interpreted by the Soviets as the final step of ideological consolidation on the part of the West. But by then, Moscow could already act from a position of increased strength, with reconstruction after the war well under way and having the near certainty of soon being able to match the American atomic bomb.

The widening rift between Moscow and Tito's Yugoslavia was also of importance for the consolidation process. Ever since 1943, Tito had been pushing for a Balkan federation, an idea the Soviets agreed with in principle but would not openly endorse due to fears of upsetting the British. Blatantly disregarding instructions from the Centre, in 1947 Tito stepped up his support to the Greek communist insurgents, in direct contravention of the Anglo-Soviet spheres of interest deal, and simultaneously launched a diplomatic and goodwill offensive in Eastern Europe. Now the Soviets were faced not only with the prospect of worsening relations with the war-time Western allies, but with the equally serious possibility of a rival centre of communist authority. By late 1947, the Popular Fronts in Bulgaria and Romania had in fact been modified according to the Yugoslav model of revolution 'from below', i.e. revamping the Fronts into 'disciplined mass organisations with an elected leadership'.²⁷

By the spring of 1948 the Moscow-Belgrade split was a fact for everybody to see, with the Soviets charging Tito with every deviation in the book, and the Yugoslav leadership accusing the USSR of betraying its commitment to revolution. Indeed, 'Titoism', equated specifically with the concept of revolution 'from below', was to be one of the gravest accusations during the purges after the July 1948 expulsion of the Yugoslav communist party from Cominform. Ironically, the communist leaders of Yugoslavia and Albania remained deeply convinced Stalinists, horrified at the prospect of a break with Moscow. It was only the fear of their ouster on Soviet orders that provoked them to embark on an openly anti-Soviet course—even if that was a highly logical result of their war-time strategy in using patriotism for building mass support.

Ideological consistency was the basis for the hastened streamlining of the Socialist Bloc, manifested by the novel theory of Popular Democracy as only another form of the proletariat of the dictatorship. The policy of extreme condensation within the Bloc was not, however, to survive for long after the death of its architect, Joseph Stalin. Already by the mid-1950's, the Central European group of communist states embarked on a path of social and political diversification. The GDR, Poland, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia, albeit not Romania and Hungary (nor Yugoslavia and Albania), ended up with multi-party systems. Policies of collectivisation and crash industrialisation were also at this point pursued with quite varying degrees of intensity.

Moreover, neither Stalin nor his successors did not choose the maximalist option, i.e. the formal incorporation of Eastern Europe into the USSR. This indeed appears to have been a possibility: Milovan Djilas has recounted how Stalin at a meeting in Moscow in January 1948 proposed setting up a Polish–Czechoslovak, a Hungarian–Romanian, and a Yugoslav–Albanian–Bulgarian federation; and possibly merging them with, respectively, the Byelorussian SSR, the Ukrainian SSR, and the Russian Federation.²⁸

²⁶ Sudoplatov et al. (1995), 232.

²⁷ Swain and Swain (1991), 6. A thorough account of the early days of the Soviet–Yugoslav conflict is found in Vuchinich (1982).

²⁸ Djilas (1963), 137. In this remarkable, illuminating first-hand account, Stalin is also quoted as saying 'The west will make Western Germany their own, and we will shall turn Eastern Ger-

As the forms of the communist take-over greatly came to influence subsequent policy and the arrangement of institutions, it is worthwhile to sketch the developments in some detail. The countries will be treated in the order in which they went definitely communist.

Poland: A Question of Turf

During occupation, political life in Poland all but ceased. The level of collaboration was extremely low, and the Germans did not even try to install any Quisling-type régime. The local Polish resistance, which encompassed political liberals, agrarians, Catholic clericalists and right-wing extremists alike, conducted a low-level civil war against the occupation forces. At the same time, ethnic cleansing was conducted on a massive scale in the eastern provinces of Volhynia and Galicia, where Ukrainian bands, often with the support of the Germans, massacred tens or hundreds of thousands of Catholics during 1942, 1943 and 1944. This was part of a series of communal atrocities, which after 1944 continued in the form of a communist-led campaign against the Ukrainian Insurrectionary Army. Then, large areas in the south-east were laid waste as a massive transfer of ethnic Ukrainians to the newly-acquired north-west was organised.²⁹

As Poland was being liberated, the communists had the cards stacked strongly in their favour, the stackers being the military administration that the Red Army and Soviet security organs immediately set up to protect the Polish Committee of National Liberation (in Polish: *PKWN*). This had been flown in from Moscow in July 1944 to take charge in the first liberated areas, in pre-emptive action directed against the bourgeois Government-in-Exile in London and its Home Army, the *Armia Krajowa* (*AK*).

This was a truly amazing reversal of fortune. The previous two decades had not been fortuitous to Polish communism. Thoroughly discredited in popular terms by their rallying to the enemy during the Polish-Soviet War of 1920, the communists never regained more than marginal importance on the national political arena. The inter-war party membership predominantly, though not overwhelmingly, comprised of Jews and the party was militantly atheist and supportive of Soviet claims on territories lost to Poland; none of which circumstances were set to enhance mass support among the Catholic majority of the Polish polity. Many leading Polish Bolsheviks, including Feliks Dzierzynski, the first head of the Cheka, indeed decided to settle permanently in the USSR.

After losing their two seats in the *Sejm* in 1922, the Polish Communist Party (*KPP*) never regained parliamentary representation. In 1926 the communists, together with elements of the military and the moderate left, supported the May coup but then 'became the laughing-stock in political circles' when they were promptly dispersed by Pilsudski's gendarmes for doing so.³⁰ The Marshal was, as we have seen, not at all interested in replacing a conservative government with a leftist coalition, but rather in altogether ridding Poland of what he perceived as degenerated party politics. The tally in 1937 recorded only 3,927 *KPP* members³¹, but it was nevertheless a high-water mark. In 1938 the party was dissolved by the Comintern, and most of its members with families physically liquidated—the prevailing estimate of victims is around 5,000. The few who survived did so mainly because of freak

many into our own state.'; no less than a modern implementation of *cuius regio eius religio*. However, in 1946 the Generalissimus declared to Bulgarian and Yugoslav communists that 'all of Germany must be ours, must be communist.' This attests to the somewhat erratic style of decision-making during Stalin's last years.

²⁹ Cf. Davies (1995), 8-9.

³⁰ Davies (1986), 90 pp; Grzybowski (1994), 37 pp.

³¹ Davies (1986), 91; Rupnik (1989), 117, gives a figure of 'barely 20,000 members before the war.'

circumstances; i.e. being held in Polish jails, living in the West, or kept on ice by the *NKVD* for possible future use. The campaign against the *KPP* had many motives. One was Stalin's wish to settle old accounts; the party had strong internationalist traditions, and had largely sided with Trotsky in the 20's. Also, the Soviets harboured strong (and apparently well-founded) suspicions that the *KPP* was infiltrated by Polish counter-intelligence.

New material for the purges was received with the Soviet occupation of Poland's Eastern half, starting 17 September 1939, as a result of the Secret Protocol to Molotov–Ribbentrop Non-Aggression pact of 23 August. Some 200,000 square kilometres of formerly Polish territory was annexed to the USSR, as Molotov declared that 'the Bastard of Versailles', as he called it, had 'ceased to exist'. The Germans and Soviets, in their respective zones of occupation and annexation, proceeded with much the same aim: the destruction of all potentially hostile elements within Polish society.³² In this the *NKVD* and *Gestapo* co-operated closely, the Soviets handing over German communist émigrés and Jews in exchange for deviant leftists and nationalist Ukrainians.

When Germany then invaded the USSR in June 1941 and Soviet strategy again required a Polish communist party, the *KPP*'s ranks were so utterly decimated that an altogether new party had to be constituted, clandestinely in Warsaw in January 1942. Its core consisted of a handful of *KPP* survivors and of an 'initiative group' smuggled in from the USSR. In its first manifesto, the party, named the Polish Workers Party (*PWP*), 'stressed the twin goals of national independence and social revolution, thereby breaking with the internationalist ideology of the *KPP* and initiating the characteristic blend of Nationalism and Leninist Socialism.'³³ Yet the natives did not get a free reign:

At this same time, in Moscow, the Polish Bureau of the CPSU set up a body called the Union of Polish Patriots (*ZPP*) under the chairmanship of Wanda Wasilewska. Their aim was to create a vehicle for Soviet control over all the new Polish organisations, both military and civilian, which were then in the making [...] The *ZPP* was designed not so much to strengthen the Polish communists as to attract all Poles irrespective of their political connections who could be induced to serve under Soviet orders.³⁴

According to this strategy, the main efforts of the *ZPP* and the *PWP* were not to be directed at the anti-Nazi struggle (for which the Soviet army would take prime responsibility), but against the London government and its institutions. Sights were already set on the post-war era. It follows that the co-operation between the *PWP* and other political organisations was not part of a long-term strategy of generating mass support: any alliances were likely to be of a temporary character.

Stalin followed what could be termed a dual strategy; communists would be encouraged to attain power through a popular front 'from below', but, as a back-up in case that failed, Stalin built up within the Soviet Union parallel Communist party

³² Reed and Fisher (1988). The 1940 Soviet massacre of Polish officers at Katyn is the most infamous example. Katyn was not an isolated occurrence: in 'Western Ukraine', political commissars handed out leaflets urging the Ukrainians and poor peasants to take out revenge with slogans such as: 'For Poles, masters and dogs, a dog's death', uniting appeals of national liberation and class emancipation. See Bullock (1993), 709, quoting Jan T. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia*, (Princeton 1988).

³³ Davies (1986), 91.

³⁴ Davies (1986), 92-96 points out that the consistent strategy of the Soviets was that 'every time that the Polish communist element attempted to establish measure of autonomy, it was overtaken shortly by the imposition of a watch-dog group sent from Moscow'. Cf. Toranska (1987), an indispensable illumination of the era of High Stalinism in Poland.

organisations which could intervene decisively with the support of the Red Army. These organisations [...] played a crucial role in Poland where the communists' popular mandate scarcely existed.³⁵

That highly cynical view is not wholly undisputed. There may in fact have occurred a reasonable increase in the spontaneous support of communism after 1941, as the war set strong social forces in motion. Leftist parties had a chance of generating support 'by fulfilling the expectations of the majority which craved for social reforms such as agrarian reform, the nationalisation of industry and basic resources and democratisation of access to education and culture'.³⁶ Indeed, until after the Yalta Conference, the London Government-in-Exile not only insisted on the pre-1939 boundaries, but also wanted to retain the authoritarian constitution of 1935.

The PWP in Warsaw had in fact initially been calling for a Popular Front 'without traitors or capitulators', but in 1943, on the Comintern's insistence, the line softened for a while. The Party was prepared—or rather managed—to set up alliances with some second-rate forces, mainly the left flank of the Polish Socialist Party (PSS) and some leftist organisations catering to peasants and intellectuals. Nevertheless, only marginal elements even on the left of Polish politics actually defected from the London to the Moscow camp before early 1945. Talks also started with the Warsaw representatives of the London Government, and reached moderate success. But as the Red Army advanced, the Soviets took full control of the local communist parties. In Poland, this meant a purge of the home communists led by Gomułka, who had sinned by launching a communist partisan movement without Moscow's blessing, and went to far in the forging of alliances.



HUFVUDSTADSBLADET ARCHIVES

People's Power: Socialism Soviet style was introduced immediately after the annexation of Eastern Poland. Here a 'Workers' and Peasants' Council' in Grodno holding its first meeting in October 1939

The new Secretary-General of the PWP was Bolesław Bierut, head of the Soviet-sponsored Lublin interim government. Ever since returning to Poland in the summer of 1943 Bierut, a Comintern operative, had insisted that undisputed communist control over the popular front

³⁵ Swain and Swain (1993), 33.

³⁶ Grzybowski (1991), 43.

set up by Gomulka was more important than whether or not the socialists joined it. The Bierut strategy was clear: ally only with weaker forces that can later be swallowed. This was demonstrated again in February 1945 when the relatively broad-based Council of National Unity cut its ties with London, recognised the Yalta agreement and created prospects for a genuine government of national unity. The Soviet secret services had to ferry the representatives of the Council to Moscow,³⁷ as Stalin and Molotov stalled all talks on Poland's future with the US and Britain.³⁸

At this time, outright civil war broke out between fighters from the Home Army and communist-led security forces aided by the Red Army. Faced with the *fait accompli* of Soviet control in Poland, and fatally weakened by losses during the Warsaw uprising of August 1944, the Home Army had been formally disbanded in February 1945, with most members folding their tents, others joining the communists and a few going underground. The last holdouts of the AK were on the whole defeated and disarmed by April, although armed resistance continued on a moderate scale for another two years.³⁹

The communist establishment which was installed to rule Poland with Soviet support was truly a motley crew. Norman Davies lists⁴⁰ five main categories, ingredients which in different combinations were seen all over Eastern Europe.

(1) the few hundred survivors of the pre-war KPP, premier among them Gomulka;

(2) Soviet citizens of Polish origin, including Bierut, Radkiewicz, Romkowski and Zawadzki, all former or present employees of the Soviet security apparatus. Stanislaw Radkiewicz, a native of Byelorussia, became the first chief of the communist secret police, the *Urząd Bezpieczeństwa*, set up in late 1944, and Romkowski his deputy. The most influential in this category was Marshal Konstanty Rokossowski, a Soviet citizen who ran the Polish armed forces as Defence Minister and Commander-in-Chief until 1956, as well as being Deputy Premier and Politburo member;

(3) Polish communists and radical leftists from the West, such as the economist Oskar Lange, or Poles previously active in European Resistance, such as Gierek, a miner from Belgium; and

(4) Poles recruited among the huge number of refugees, deportees and prisoners in the USSR. They had in early 1943 been permitted to form a 'Union of Polish Patriots', and later also 'Kosciuszko' units within the Red Army eventually numbering more than 100,000 men. Many were of Jewish origin, as the Soviet authorities 'judged them unlikely to sympathise with the Polish population at large, and were drafted in force to the security organs.'

Not leaving anything to chance, the Soviets took care that the dominant group consisted of:

(5) 'acting Poles', i.e. Russians or Ukrainians hastily dressed in Polish uniform, and often not even possessing more than rudimentary command of the Polish language.

This set-up points to the extent of compulsion, control and terror. Already in May 1945, the communist-controlled security apparatus in Poland numbered some 11,000 members:

³⁷ The 16 were arrested in Marshal Zhukov's HQ even though they had been assured of immunity. They were eventually put on public trial in Moscow in June 1945 for 'subversion', and sentenced to prison and hard labour.

³⁸ Tismaneanu (1993), 16-17; Swain and Swain (1993), 41-42.

³⁹ The main forces of armed resistance were right-wing National Armed Forces (*NSZ*), fighting in the Holy Cross mountains until late 1945; the National Democrat-oriented Freedom and Independence Movement *WiN*, its 40,000 men in the Lublin-Bialystok area surrendering to an amnesty in February 1947; and the nationalist Ukrainian Insurrectionary Army (*UPA*), which was finally routed by joint Soviet, Polish and Czechoslovak forces in July 1947, and by the extensive *Vistula* programme of population transfers to the north and north-west. See Davies (1986), 80.

⁴⁰ Davies (1986), 45-47.

'Throughout Eastern Europe communist-run security services supervised, save in Yugoslavia and Albania, by Soviet "advisers", played a crucial part in the transition to "people's democracies"', and this was more pronounced in Poland than anywhere else, save possibly the Soviet occupation zone in Germany. Until 1947 Soviet advisers with the right to final decision were posted to every *UB* office.⁴¹

The provisional government also included a number of pre-war *glitterati*. Among those co-opted were Edward Osóbka-Morawski (first Chairman of the Committee for National Liberation and then, until early 1947, Chairman of the Council of Ministers), who had led a break-away pro-communist faction of the Socialist Party before the war; the demoted General Michał Róma-Zymierski (the first Minister of Defence); the Zionist *Sejm* deputy Emil Sommerstein; Kwiatkowski, the pre-war Finance Minister; and even Bolesław Piasecki, known as leader of the *ONR* and the *Falanga*, the pre-war fascists. Piasecki was to set up the *Pax* organisation, which tried to establish a common communist-Catholic platform to rule the country.⁴²

On 28 June 1945, the communists scored a major victory when the Prime Minister of the London government, Stanisław Mikołajczyk, leader of the right wing of the Peasant movement agreed to return from exile and enter into a Provisional Government of National Unity. At this point it was not overtly dominated by the communists or their allies; the agrarian, socialist and communist parties had six seats each, the Catholic Labour Party three—in fact, though, all other operating parties were infiltrated by the communists. The

⁴¹ Andrew and Gordievsky (1990), 285; 287. The *UB* was the communist secret police.

⁴² Piasecki's story, bizarre as it is, is worth recounting parenthetically as it illustrates the lengths to which the Soviets were prepared to go to ally themselves with the generic radicals—and, to a lesser extent, to appease the Catholic Church.

In the summer of 1945 he was sprung from Warsaw's Mokotów prison by the *NKVD* General Ivan Serov after intervention from prominent Polish communists, particularly Politburo member Jakub Berman, and given the task of publishing a Catholic journal bearing the non-committal title *Dzis i Jutro* (Today and Tomorrow). Immediately after his release, he also met repeatedly with Gomulka. The magazine had a clear, if coy, Catholicist and nationalist stance, from the outset propagating the Catholic nationalist agenda that Piasecki had voiced already during the *Falanga* days. To bridge the gap between spirituality and materialism he coined the term *wieloswiatopogladowosc*; roughly translatable as 'multiple-world-viewism' but in effect meaning pluralism. The magazine and the *Pax* organisation that developed created around it soon developed into a refuge for 'poor and persecuted clerics, ruined noblemen, homeless leftists, Catholic liberals and nationalists. Bishops, even the Cardinal Primate himself, started to treasure the good offices of Piasecki, particularly during the Stalinist era'. I.e., he served as a conduit when the communists and the Church struck their first deal in 1950. Piasecki, however, played it both ways, financing an association of 'Patriotic Priests', i.e. collaborators with the régime against the express orders of the Vatican. Only three days before Stalin's death in March 1953 he made an ultimatum to Primate Wyszyński: either support capitalism or the building of socialism. When Wyszyński was arrested the following autumn, *Pax* all but collapsed, and Piasecki was widely branded as a traitor when he spoke out against liberalisation during the Hungarian crisis of 1956.

At the same time Piasecki hit it big—very big—financially. Within a decade after the war he controlled a vast business empire publishing novels, prayer books and papers with a combined circulation of more than 300,000, and virtually cornered the market in religious paraphernalia. With a Jaguar motor car in the stable of his luxury villa and a private telephone line to the security police, he was the 'first and greatest capitalist in the communist Eastern Bloc'. Piasecki died on New Year's Eve 1978/79. Cf. Stehle (1995); Toranska (1987) includes accounts of Berman's, Gomulka's, Bierut's, and the secret policewoman Julia 'Lula' Bristigerowa's discussions with and about Piasecki.

main significance of Mikolajczyk's return was that it led the US and British to recognise the transitional government, abandoning its London rival.

As the socialists and communists pushed for swift reform, i.e. nationalising all factories with more than forty employees and putting production under state control, Mikolajczyk, the peasant leader and former Prime Minister in the London government, found himself in the odd position of simultaneously being Vice Premier and for all practical purposes leader of the opposition. The showdown came during the plebiscite in the summer of 1946. Mikolajczyk directed his supporters to vote no to one of the three—all rhetorical—questions posed, so as to differentiate from the communist-dominated bloc. After some blatant vote rigging the Bloc declared a resounding victory for its 'three times yes' line, which demoralised the Mikolajczyk camp.

In November 1946 the socialists agreed to an election pact with the PWP, fearing that a Mikolajczyk comeback would mean reaction, Soviet clampdown and even a new civil war. In the February 1947 elections the Bloc was reported as having won four of every five votes cast; the result is suspicious, to say the least. Mikolajczyk soon after got word that he was about to be implicated as a traitor and foreign spy, and fearing for his life slipped out of the country in October. Within two years the party system was fully consolidated under the complete hegemony of the communist party, renamed the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP; in Polish: *PZPR*) after finally amalgamating with the rump Socialist Party.⁴³

Subordination to the Soviets was to be the guiding light for the communist party well into the 50's, and any attempt to create a 'Polish path to socialism' was instantly repressed, as witnessed by the replacement of Gomulka with Bierut in late 1948. Gomulka was a devout Stalinist, but nevertheless had second thoughts about the Party joining the Cominform, doubted the terms of the PWP merger with the socialists, and opposed agricultural collectivisation.

The intentions of the communists' Front tactics can be debated. One initial aim was certainly to undermine the London government's claims to legitimacy by presenting the alternative ones in Lublin and Warsaw as the sole authorities of real power in the land. Another motivation, linked to the first, was to placate the Western Allies. The strategy was only partly successful. In a letter to Churchill in March 1945, Stalin demanded that the Polish government be manned with individuals who not only were 'not fundamentally anti-Soviet', but insisted on 'persons who have actively shown a friendly attitude towards the Soviet Union and who are honestly prepared to co-operate with the Soviet state.'⁴⁴ This goes to show the virtually non-existent room for manoeuvring available to the Poles, including the local communists. It may not have been absolutely clear to the Soviets or to the Polish communists, but the West gave up early on Poland, instead concentrating on the German question. Not wholly without significance was the disgust which Western public opinion felt after the anti-Jewish pogroms in Cracow in 1945 and in Kielce in 1946.⁴⁵

One urgent task for the communists was to create a mass following. This was not easy: 'in the immediate post-war years, the communist party and its allies commanded no significant popular support in the country. The great majority of Poles remained loyal to the Polish Government-in-Exile and, subsequently, supported the opposition lead by the Polish Peasants Party [led by Mikolajczyk]'⁴⁶ But as the party strengthened its hold on power, membership

⁴³ This process is described in detail in Grzybowski (1994), 40-47; also Coutouvidis and Reynolds (1986), Krzeminski (1993), 114-7 and Davies (1986), 4-6 and 80-100.

⁴⁴ The letter is quoted in Churchill (1954), 436.

⁴⁵ Some recent evidence strengthen the impression that Soviet and communist agents were instrumental in provoking the pogroms, with the intent of making Western opinion less favourably disposed to stand up for Poland's sovereignty. Cf. Krzeminski (1993), 119.

⁴⁶ Bromke (1967), 60-1.

rolls expanded to some 1.3 million by the end of 1948. The absorption of the Socialist Party, however, accounted for a large portion of the influx.⁴⁷

Obviously, all these new members had not been closet communists before; in case they had been politically active at all, it was likely to have been in some of the more mainstream pre-war parties or movements. A large portion of the new membership had a peasant background and were eager for social advancement. Many others, though this portion started decreasing already in the 50's, were industrial workers. The recruitment drive was also aided by the use of political patronage, especially in the 'Recovered Territories', i.e. the areas to the East of the Oder-Neisse line annexed from Germany. These were resettled with some five million new inhabitants, mainly from Central Poland but also from the eastern provinces lost to the USSR—'Polish Lwów moved to German Breslau', as somebody has observed. These territories, devastated and plundered, were 'for all practical purposes treated as a communist colony, where non-communist parties were unable to establish even a toe-hold.'⁴⁸

The legality and historical justification of Polish claims to the lands were shaky at best, and it is clear that the settlers were unsure of their future. Stalin's curt statement at Potsdam that the Western, not—as at Churchill appears to have understood—the Eastern Neisse (Nysa) would constitute the new Polish-German border indicates shrewd Soviet calculation: 'the enmity between Poland and Germany would be intractable if Poland acquired historic German territories, including the ancient German city of Breslau, and evicted 5 million more Germans'. This was part of Stalin's effort to make the Poles feel that their security and territorial integrity was, in the final analysis, dependent on the support of the USSR.⁴⁹ The Polish communists wasted no time in pointing to the alliance with the Soviet Union as the only safe guarantee against German revanchism. This argument was indeed to be a permanent slogan of the PUWP and a basis for genuine mass support.

Despite the loss of ancient Polish cities and districts such as Lwów (Lviv) and Wilno (Vilnius) to the USSR, Polish nationalists indeed had some reason to rejoice. Never in history had the Polish state had a more homogenous population base; 96 per cent were now Polish-speaking Catholics. Not only was the pre-war Dmowski'ite vision of a smaller but ethnically unitary, 'Piast-style' state revived. The communists were quick to exploit the fact: history was vigorously reinterpreted and rewritten to legitimise the new borders and propagate Slavic unity. The hero of the day was, absurdly, the Piast Prince Mieszko I, who in 966 had chanced to receive Christianity from the Slav Bohemians instead of from the Germans.

Hungary: From Occupation to Sovietisation

Hungary, in contrast to both Poland and Czechoslovakia (but like Romania and Bulgaria), had been an ally of Germany. This meant that the Red Army eventually entered not as a liberator, but formally as a conqueror, occupying the country and installing a Soviet-dominated Allied Control Commission that was to play a active and crucial role in the communists ascent to power.⁵⁰

In Hungary, the pre-war communist party had been in a sorry state almost similar to that of its Polish or Romanian counterparts. Acting in illegality, it also carried the double-edged

⁴⁷ Rupnik (1989), 117.

⁴⁸ Schöpflin (1993), 67. The expulsions are chronicled in great and gruesome detail in the three-volume *Die Vertreibung der deutschen Bevölkerung aus den Gebieten östlich der Oder-Neisse*, (Augsburg 1993), originally published in 1954 as a Federal Ministry for Expellees white-book. Wiskemann (1967) provides a good summary of the events.

⁴⁹ Kissinger (1995), 434-5.

⁵⁰ A good overview of Hungarian politics in the immediate post-war years is provided by Gati (1986), particularly pp 73-99.

stigma of the short-lived Soviet Republic under Béla Kun in 1919: the good news for the Hungarian communists was that they belonged to the few who actually had managed to stage a successful revolution, the bad news that they were booted out of power within weeks. After 1919, the communists quickly lapsed into obscurity. By the 30's, the Hungarian Party was down to a membership of 2,000, and in 1936 the party organisation was even temporarily dissolved. Even if the party was given some boost by the Hungarian annexation of Slovakia, with its relatively well developed communist movement, at the end of the war it is estimated as having had a membership of only some 3,000 in a population of ten million.⁵¹

For most of the war, the resistance against the pro-German, authoritarian policies was almost exclusively led by an alliance of the Socialist and Smallholders Parties. The communists remained an essentially irrelevant political force, even to the somewhat tragicomic extent that the leaders of the illegal party in 1943 again ordered its dissolution. The opportunity for the communists came when the Socialist and Smallholders Parties were finally banned and forced underground in March 1944. Stressing their common illegality, the communist home leader László Rajk persuaded these two parties to form a tripartite alliance on the basis of equality.

On 1 October 1944, a delegation from Admiral Horthy arrived in Moscow to negotiate an armistice. This provoked the Germans to take control of the capital and the vital Hungarian oil fields, and to install a puppet régime under the radical-right Arrow Cross movement. By then Soviet troops were already advancing into Hungary proper, and leftist activists started flowing to Soviet-controlled territory in order to take up arms against the brutal Arrow Crossers. The communists and socialists planned a merger and the staging of a Slovak-style uprising to set up a dictatorship of the proletariat.⁵²

This was not what the Soviets had in mind. At this stage Moscow did not want any ultra-revolutionary behaviour, insisting instead on a 'Popular Front' model of initial broad-based coalitions. The Moscow-dictated policy line won the day in early 1945, when the highest party leadership returned from exile in the USSR. It had much in common with its Polish, Czechoslovak and Romanian colleagues: it was largely Jewish, had strong Stalinist leanings and professed total loyalty to Moscow. The 'Muscovites', to quote one authority, 'established a clique dictatorship under a leading foursome made up of General Secretary Rákosi and his faithful underlings Ernő Gerő (the former NKVD officer who had presided over the purge of anti-Stalinist revolutionaries in Barcelona during the Spanish civil war), Mihály Farkas, and József Révai, a former disciple of the celebrated Marxist thinker György Lucacs who had been converted to hard-line Stalinism.'⁵³ They denounced the 'Left sectarian veterans of 1919', strengthened the alliance with the Socialist Party, grabbed hold of the trade unions, but made no decisive bid for power. Energies were concentrated on a longer-term project, undermining the country's clearly strongest political force in terms of electoral support, i.e. the Smallholders Party.

Despite backing from the Soviet occupation authorities, the communist party polled only 17 per cent of the vote in the November 1945 general elections. These were resoundingly won by the Smallholders party with no less than 57 per cent of the vote. Even the social democrats, with 17.4 per cent, were ahead of the communists.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, a grand coalition remained in place, though the leftist parties formed a front within the front which controlled the important security forces and the unions. The communists, making use of

⁵¹ Schöpflin (1993), 53; Rupnik (1989), 117.

⁵² Swain and Swain (1993), 50 pp; Bullock (1993), 929-30.

⁵³ Schöpflin (1993), 17. Incidentally, of the four only Révai was non-Jewish. The leading 'Home Communist', László Rajk, as well the first head of the communist secret police, the *ÁVO* or *Államvédelmi Osztály*, Gábor Péter, were also Jews.

⁵⁴ Grzybowski (1994b), 173.

secret agents and 'crypto-communists' 'systematically created or strengthened conflicts among and inside rival parties. These splinter groups were then swept out of government with allegations that they were "fascist" or "enemies of the people's democracy."⁵⁵

The uneasy coalition between the radical left and the Smallholders came to an end in early 1947. On the previous New Year's Eve, the communist-controlled Interior Ministry and the security service reported having uncovered a conspiracy in which officials of the Smallholders were implicated as trying to restore the Regency, which by then was a criminal offence. The then Prime Minister, the Smallholders' leader Ferenc Nagy was not impressed with the evidence and refused to authorise arrests, but the Soviets intervened and arrested the 'conspirators'. The round-up pulled in the main leadership of the Smallholders Party, who were then charged with plotting against the occupation forces. This was clearly over the top, albeit that the right wing of the Smallholders Party ever since 1945 had campaigned against the occupation, the heavy reparations and communist influence, as well as raised the question of the treatment of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia in no less than chauvinistic terms.

The repression weakened the Smallholders Party to the extent that it lost its leading role in the coalition. Nagy resigned after being threatened with implication in anti-Soviet activities; in May he decided not to return from a holiday in Switzerland. Then the National Party was banned. The election law was modified so that the circle of citizens excluded from the franchise extended even to local-level leaders of the inter-war Government Party, to those who had been interned or sentenced in political cases since 1945, and to various members of 'rightist groups': in all, 460,000 people were expelled from the electoral register, which was thus cut down to some 5.3 million voters.⁵⁶ Yet despite this 'salami tactics'—the catch-phrase coined by Rákosi—and blatant (but apparently incompetent) vote-rigging,⁵⁷ not even the August 1947 election gave the communists an indisputable grip on power. They did become the single largest party, but still commanded far from a majority on their own after polling only 22.3 per cent of the vote.

From then on developments largely followed the same path as in Czechoslovakia some months later. The Independence Party was dissolved in late 1947, while the National Peasant Party was headed by a communist penetration agent, Ferenc Erdei. In March 1948 the left wing of the socialists won out and that party merged with the communist party into the Hungarian Workers Party. Already in early 1947 a National (later called Popular) Independence Front had been established as an umbrella organisation for the leftist parties in government and major social organisations; it was more a subsidiary of the communist party than dominated by it. Among other things, the Front had the right to screen all candidates for public office. Equipped with these powers the front was used as the vehicle to make the May 1949 elections into a tightly controlled plebiscite for communist rule. Unsurprisingly, it was announced that 95.6 per cent of voters had supported the single Front list, and one-party rule was introduced for all practical purposes. It was, however, not until 1953 that the non-communist parties were evicted from the Front and had to formally dissolve.⁵⁸

Czechoslovakia: Suave Manoeuvring and Intimidation

Czechoslovakia was the only Central European country where the communists enjoyed substantial support in the 1920's and 1930's, and the party was allowed to operate freely until the Munich partition. Starting off in 1918 as a party with strong Austro-Marxist leanings, it

⁵⁵ Dessewffy and Hammer (1995), 12.

⁵⁶ Dessewffy and Hammer (1995), 13.

⁵⁷ Cf. Gati (1986), 23 pp; much of the fraud apparently had to do with the misuse of absentee voters' blue ballot slips.

⁵⁸ For a detailed documentation of the story, see Ignotus (1975).

was taken over by the Comintern machinery in the late 20's, Bolshevised, and purged to blind obedience. As the party was transformed into a Leninist cadre organisation, membership rolls shrunk by more than 90 per cent from 1918 to the early 30's, and 'from this stage until the 60's, the KSC remained one of the most obedient parties from Moscow's standpoint.'⁵⁹ Still, retaining formal legality meant that the main part of the party cadres remained in Czechoslovakia during the 30's, thus surviving the most ferocious Moscow purges.

As a result of the 1938 Munich agreement, the *Sudetenland* was annexed by Germany and southern Slovakia by Hungary. The rest of Slovakia as well as the eastern province of Ruthenia (Carpatho-Ukraine) took the opportunity to declare autonomy. In March the following year the Germans marched into Prague and created a Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, where some Czech institutions were formally preserved but totally subjected to the 'protector'. Slovakia then declared full independence and gained at least the trappings of it under the leadership of the radical nationalist prelate Jozef Tiso and the auspices of Nazi Germany. Finalising the carve-up, Ruthenia was annexed by Hungary in March 1939, while Poland took over the Czechoslovak half of the Teschen (Tessin, Cieszyn) area.

Though the communists came to dominate the resistance movement, the scope of their activities in the Czech lands was very limited until the German withdrawal starting in April 1945. The communists were able to organise and dominate the 'Revolutionary National Committees' then set up locally, but did not even try to wrest control of the Czech National Council, where they were one party among several.

The situation was different in Slovakia. The resistance movement there was formally led by the Slovak National Council set up in the summer of 1943. In theory there was a parity in the Council between communist and non-communist representatives. The communists, however, had the advantage of controlling their own partisan movement: in August 1944 it staged an armed uprising which, although crushed within a few weeks, bestowed increased prestige upon the communists and helped them to eventually dominate the so-called national committees set up after the Soviets crossed into Slovakia in October 1944. Some weeks earlier, the Slovak social democrats had merged with the Slovak communists; the reason for preserving the autonomy of the Slovak communist party for some time appears to have been the need to prevent the social democrats from forming a strong party operating over the whole territory of Czechoslovakia.⁶⁰

In May 1945, president Benes returned from exile and was presented with a National Front National Assembly, set up according to the five-party Kosice power-sharing agreement of April 1945. In the interim Cabinet which was formed, the communist and social democratic parties were only two out of five parties represented, though, significantly, they controlled the sensitive ministries of Interior (with police, security forces and army), Information, Education and Agriculture (including land reform). Significantly, the main rival of the communists, the Agrarian Party, was banned from operating, as were all fascist and semi-fascist parties.

Meanwhile, in the *Sudetenland* and elsewhere, some three million ethnic Germans and thousands of ethnic Hungarians were forcibly expelled, creating a *terra inoccupata* similar to the one in Poland.⁶¹ As in Poland's 'Recovered Territories', communist patronage became

⁵⁹ Schöpflin (1993), 53; see also Bankowicz (1994), 145 pp.

⁶⁰ Broklová (1995), 34. The story of the communist ascent to power in Czechoslovakia is documented in Bloomfield (1979), Kaplan (1987) and Myant (1981).

⁶¹ The Germans in Czechoslovakia before the war counted 3.5 million, 22 per cent of the total population. But whereas most of Lower Silesia, Pomerania and Prussia were thoroughly Germanised, in Bohemia and Moravia, Germans and Czechs had for centuries lived in a mosaic of ethnic and linguistic diversity, and never been subjects of the German Reich. Apart from the *Sudetenland* rim, Central Bohemia and Moravia also had a substantial German-speaking

rampant. On 25 October 1945, Benes issued the draconian Presidential Decree No. 108, which stipulated confiscation without compensation of 'property of physical persons of German or Magyar nationality'. By then most remaining Germans were already packing to leave.⁶² Radical land reform was implemented and all enterprises employing more than 150 people were expropriated; the confiscation was made substantially easier and less controversial by the fact that nearly 70 per cent of Czechoslovakia's national wealth had been in Nazi hands.⁶³ Electoral law was amended so as to exclude all citizens not of Czech, Slovak or Slavonic nationality, i.e. primarily Germans and Hungarians, but also Jews.⁶⁴

The presidency retained, as a legacy from the First Republic, extensive executive powers, but Benes remained strangely aloof and deferential in his dealings with Soviet leaders, 'anxious to please and be accommodating'.⁶⁵ His strangely passive behaviour during the events of February 1948 and his disappearance from the political scene thereafter do indeed lend some credence to allegations that the President actually was a long-serving Soviet agent of influence.⁶⁶

Yet the Czechoslovak communists did not follow the Polish example. Instead of quickly taking over the National Front and seizing power, they—on direct instructions from Moscow—embarked on a gradualist and rather unexciting path to socialism. The first post-war parliamentary elections were held in May 1946, when the communists won 38 per cent by themselves, more than twice the share of any other party, and a majority of 51 per cent together with their socialist allies. The left was strongest in Bohemia and Moravia, while in Slovakia the Democratic Party, a formation that presented itself as all-national and campaigned under the broad slogan 'For the triumph of democracy and the Christian world outlook', won no less than 62 per cent of the vote.



*Taking Control:
Benes signing
Gottwald's
cabinet list,
February 1948.
From the far left
Interior Minister
Nosek; Gottwald;
Benes; and
Trade Union
Federation
Chairman
Zapotacky*

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minorities, and even in Slovakia German-speakers numbered some 160,000. There is a wealth of literature on the Czech-German relationship; especially useful are Wiskemann (1967); Cohen (1981); Leff (1988); Brügel (1973) and Brügel (1974); Dralle (1991), as well as Kiaval (1988).

⁶² Cf. *Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa*, München, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag (1984).

⁶³ Swain and Swain (1993), 47.

⁶⁴ Broklová (1995), 36.

⁶⁵ Wandycz (1992), 246.

⁶⁶ Sudoplatov et al. (1995), 63-4, 233-5; the former Soviet chief of foreign intelligence claims that Soviet agents provided funds and logistical help for Benes's escape to Britain in 1939. However, he explains Benes's willingness to hand over of power to Gottwald mainly with the President's failing health and will-power under tremendous pressure.

The pre-election programmes of all competing parties were leftist and pro-Slavonic in character. 'What was absent in them was orientation on Central Europe and Europe in general. The supra-national humanitarian accent of the pre-Munich republic was attenuated.' The communist party presented itself as 'national and patriotic', and as a guardian of Czechoslovakia's position in the Slavonic family with the mighty Soviet Union as its head. While stressing the fraternity between Czech and Slovak, it took a radical line on the national minorities, demanding the expulsion of every single ethnic German and a population exchange with Hungary. The Slovak communists were even more militant, trying to link their brand of communism with Slovak national tradition.⁶⁷

The strong showing in the elections seems to have prompted the Party, led by the former Moscow émigré Klement Gottwald (already Prime Minister in a communist-dominated cabinet) to take a more radical approach, possibly fearing that its ascent might prompt other parties in the National Front to bloc against the left. The risk had increased with Secretary-General Rudolf Slánský's Tito-inspired success in transforming the National Front into more of a mass organisation, with a more visible role given to trade unions, women, youth and other civic organisations. From the Soviet point of view this created the double jeopardy of the communists losing actual control of the Front—as soon was to happen in France and Italy—and of Moscow losing control of the Party.⁶⁸

The fears were exacerbated by opinion polls in January 1948 which forecast that the communist share of the votes in the elections set for May would fall to 28 per cent.⁶⁹ Soviet agents in the country forwarded increasingly pessimistic assessments to Moscow, outlining the prospect of an impending anti-communist *coup d'état*.⁷⁰ The Soviet leadership then decided on a change of strategy, prompting a drawing-up of lists of leading opponents of communism and preparing for a 'decapitation of reaction'.

The first sign of a sea change was that Czechoslovakia withdrew from participation in the Marshall plan, which the Gottwald government rather surprisingly had acceded to in July 1947. In February 1948, Gottwald declared that only the left wings of bourgeois parties were acceptable as partners, and 'action committees' were formed to purge the Front, as well as other parties and organisations.⁷¹ The security forces had by then been purged and refilled their ranks with hard-line communist supporters. The *Státní Bezpečnost* geared up its accusations against the communist party leadership for being soft and 'coddling reaction', and also provided all ministers with 'bodyguards' whose real job was to spy on them. All this led to an outcry among the Catholic, Democrat and National Socialist parties. Their representatives in cabinet resigned *en masse*, mistakenly expecting this to lead to the fall of Gottwald and his cabinet and immediate new elections. The Prime Minister had no such plans, however, instead letting armed communist militia loose on the streets and in the factories and having the security forces detain non-communist leaders and activists.

In early March, parliament, in an atmosphere of fear, approved the programme statement of Gottwald's government and voted for the introduction of a single National Front ballot. The left wing of the social democrats under the fellow-traveller and former Czechoslovak Ambassador to Moscow, Zolenek Fierlinger, agreed to join the communist party in a new government, on conditions dictated by the latter and the action committees. In May a new constitution was enacted by the rump National Assembly, defining Czechoslovakia as a People's Democracy on the road towards socialism. Soon after, elections were held in which the electorate was faced with the alternatives of endorsing or rejecting the National Front

⁶⁷ Broklová (1995), 39.

⁶⁸ Swain and Swain (1993), 48-49; Bankowicz (1994), 146-9.

⁶⁹ Tigríd (1975), 419-20.

⁷⁰ Cf. Andrew and Gordievsky (1990), 295.

⁷¹ Kaplan (1987), 135 pp.

list. The result was, of course, clear in advance; a turnout of 93.5 per cent was reported, with 89 per cent of voters supporting the list. Benes resigned the next month and Gottwald took over the presidency, while the social democratic party formally merged with the communists.

The Purges

It was not long after the establishment of the People's democracies in Eastern Europe that the Soviet leadership got increasingly suspicious of the true loyalty of their henchmen in Warsaw, Prague, Budapest and the other Eastern European capitals. The misgivings were fuelled by the Soviet breach with Yugoslavia: 'Titoist deviation'—an euphemism for suspected independent-mindedness and national priorities—was one of the main indictments when the purges after 1948 were pinpointed at the communist parties. This came after a phase when the machinery of repression had primarily been directed at forces, real or imagined, that were liable to endanger communist control of society in general: leaders, members and supporters of non-communist parties; union activists; the clergy; the officer corps; the police; academics—in short, what remained of the pre-war élite. Some show trials were organised also during this phase, with the aim of generating fear and mobilising the public behind the Party.

The theoretical basis for the second phase of the purges, when the blowtorch was turned on the party cadres—and also on the security apparatus itself—was the theory that class struggle intensifies as socialism is being built. This conception was created by Stalin himself to legitimise the Soviet purges in the 1930's: its essence is that the more 'enemies' are unmasked, the closer to socialism society is. Indeed, the purges in Eastern and Central Europe resembled a condensed version of the Soviet experiences since the early 1930's, complete with their own mini-Stalins Bierut, Gottwald and Rákosi.

Yet the Party purges largely—but not altogether—passed Poland, Romania and Bulgaria by. One can only speculate as to the reasons for this: they may not have been needed to secure Soviet control as that had been firmly cemented by 1947 at the latest—and that by particularly brutal repression of non-party forces. In Hungary and Czechoslovakia, Moscow could not be as confident, and therefore opted for widespread repression within the Party.⁷² The machinations behind the purges are well documented elsewhere⁷³, but a short exposé is relevant as the purges and show trials had such a traumatic effect on Eastern European communist parties well beyond Stalin's death in 1953.

In September 1948, the Secretary-General of the Polish Workers Party, Wladyslaw Gomulka, was 'forced into a humiliating public recantation of his miserable errors, and eventually into prison.'⁷⁴ Gomulka, who also served as Minister for the Recovered Territories, had made the political mistake of having reservations about the PWP joining the Cominform; his demise was also connected with the ongoing discussions of a communist-socialist merger as he was opposed to dictating the terms and wanted a smoother, more voluntary union. Gomulka's independent-mindedness is shown, i.a., by his public declaration that 'we have completely rejected the collectivisation of agriculture. Our democracy is not similar to Soviet democracy, just as our society's structure is not the same as the Soviet structure'. Gomulka's replacement as party leader was the former NKVD operative and Stalin loyalist, the President of the Republic, Boleslaw Bierut. Bierut did not share Gomulka's views on the need for a Polish version of socialism as opposed to directly copying the Soviet blueprint. The Polish party clearly contained more believers in a native road to socialism

⁷² Swain and Swain (1993), 66; Rupnik (1989), 111.

⁷³ Cf. Hodos (1987); a good summary is found in Andrews and Gordievsky (1990), 336-348.

⁷⁴ Davies (1986), 7.

than its Hungarian and Czechoslovak counterparts, but the terror in Poland was still by and large limited to non-party figures, particularly high-ranking military officers and the clergy. At the time 'Soviet suggestions to resort to anti-Semitic pronouncements in purges were resisted.'⁷⁵

In the summer of 1948, Moscow informed First Secretary Rákosi that none other than László Rajk, then Interior Minister and thus responsible for the security services, was suspected of spying for Western intelligence. The evidence was supposedly 'coded references' that Soviet agents had 'discovered' in intercepted letters written by Noel Field, an American with extensive war-time contacts among Eastern European communists, especially with the Yugoslavs. It was soon noticed that Field (who, in a bizarre twist, sat incarcerated in Prague while simultaneously being implicated as an Soviet agent in the Alger Hiss hearings in Washington) had helped Rajk return to Hungary in 1941 after three years in French internment. As Rajk had also been friendly with his Yugoslav colleague, Interior Minister Aleksandar Rankovic, the conspiracy theorists in Moscow had no trouble concocting proof that Rajk had been planted as an infiltration agent in the leadership of the party, working simultaneously for the US and for Tito, that 'chained dog of the imperialists'.

Rajk was arrested on 30 May 1949, severely interrogated, and finally agreed to confess publicly—apparently after being convinced of his Stalinist duty to expose Tito as an agent of imperialism. He had also been promised clemency or even a new identity and life in the Soviet Union. Rajk was nevertheless put on trial in September 1949, sentenced to death together with five of his seven accomplices in the vast but illusory conspiracy and spy-ring, and executed on 15 October. The Party purges continued until 1953, rendering, i.e., the future party leader and one of Rajk's leading detractors, János Kádár, a stiff jail sentence. Indeed, the purges affected not only the higher party echelons, but a wide-ranging campaign of terror simultaneously was inflicted on the broad population. Official Hungarian statistics show that 700,000 people were sentenced between 1948 and 1953, and according to estimates, at one point or another during the Stalinist period, every third family had a member in jail.⁷⁶ In addition, from 1950 onwards more than 100,000 members of the old middle classes were deported into the countryside.⁷⁷

The Rajk trial and sentence finally prompted the Cominform to denounce the Yugoslav leadership and call for all communists to help overthrow Tito. The Soviet Union and its allies broke diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia and offered support to a pro-Stalin Government-in-Exile which was waging an assassination and terror campaign against the Belgrade government. Plans were even drawn up for an outright invasion of Yugoslavia, in which the armed forces of the Eastern European countries (except the GDR) were committed to aiding the Red Army.

The most dramatic show-trials were held in Czechoslovakia, targeted on Slovak autonomists and non-'Muscovite' leftists ('undergrounders' as well as 'Londoners'). They also had strong anti-Semitic overtones.⁷⁸ As Rajk was being put on trial in the autumn of 1949, the Hungarians and their Soviet advisers alerted the Prague leadership of a 'Czech connection' that was to come up during the proceedings. The Soviet security service generals Makarov and Lichatchev, who had supervised preparations for the Rajk trial, were trans-

⁷⁵ Wandycz (1993), 250.

⁷⁶ Rupnik (1989), 113.

⁷⁷ Schöpflin (1993), 101-2; his estimate is that '[t]he Terror in Hungary encompassed at least a tenth of the population and probably not a single family was untouched by it.' A cruel joke circulating at the time told that the former classes of workers, peasants and bourgeoisie had been replaced by three new ones: those who had been, those who were in, and those who were going to prison.

⁷⁸ Rothschild (1989), 135-6.

ferred to Prague. A special department was set up within the Interior Ministry to investigate Party crimes, and it soon found a series of 'bourgeois nationalists', among them Foreign Minister Vladimír Clementis and the future party leader Gustáv Husák (a Slovak), who looked set for a tour in the dungeons, or worse.

However, the sudden replacement of the Makarov and Lichatchev in the summer of 1950 changed the direction of the 'investigation'; 'the main emphasis henceforth was on Zionism rather than Titoism as the chief tool of the subversive plots of the Western intelligence services.'⁷⁹ This certainly was a direct result of Stalin's increased anti-Semitism, which had been fuelled by the disturbingly spontaneous and genuine enthusiasm shown by many Soviet Jews for the state of Israel. In Czechoslovakia, the Soviet advisors could count as allies a number of anti-Semites within the *StB*, which even proceeded to establish an 'anti-Zionist department'. While the campaign against the 'Titoist-Zionist agents' failed to incite large-scale public anti-Semitism, it started producing arrests of Party members in the winter of 1950–51. By the following summer the Secretary-General of the Party, Rudolf Slánský, had been identified as the chief conspirator. Slánský was indeed a 'Muscovite' and no less a hard-line Stalinist than Rajk, but he happened to be of Jewish origin.

So was Bedřich Geminder, another Politburo member; Foreign Minister Clementis; and eight of 12 other co-defendants at the 'Trial of the Leadership of the Anti-State Conspiratorial Centre Led by Rudolf Slánský' in November 1952. During the show trials, the prosecutor and media did their best to whip up anti-Semitic feelings: Geminder was repeatedly asked if he was able to respond in Czech, and the party organ, the *Rudé právo* published an editorial on Czechs of Jewish origin which stated that 'Under the cloak of Jewish national interest, they pursue only their class interest and dirty moneymaking trickery'.⁸⁰ Eleven of the fourteen, including Slánský, were sentenced to death and executed, after which their ashes were scattered on a country road outside Prague. The remaining three received sentences of life imprisonment. Soon after, a Jewish-Zionist 'doctors' plot', similar to the one unearthed in Moscow on Stalin's instructions, was discovered in Hungary,⁸¹ beginning with Gábor Péter, the Jewish head of the *ÁVO* (or *Államvédelmi Osztály*, as the security police was then called), being arrested as an agent for British and Israeli intelligence.

The purges as well as the anti-Semitic campaigns were scaled down after Stalin's death in March 1953, but the scare left a permanent impression on Soviet and Eastern European politics.⁸² It was not to be the last appeal to pre-communist chauvinistic prejudices, but even more importantly, the purges firmly established a style of top-down politics, where almost every form of independent civic initiative and critical public discourse was not only discouraged, but violently repressed. Indeed, between 1957 and 1967, i.e. after Stalinism had been formally denounced, some 4,000 people were put on trial for political 'betrayals and deviations' in Czechoslovakia alone.⁸³ As Norman Davies writes, Stalinism (here in its Polish version) created a remarkable set of mental attitudes.

Xenophobia was the official fashion. Any contact with the outside world was instantly denounced, creating an atmosphere where political trials looked normal and innocent men and women could be arbitrarily sentenced as foreign spies. People were encouraged to live communally, and to think collectively. [...] The Russian system of

⁷⁹ Andrews and Gordievsky (1990), 341.

⁸⁰ Gross (1995), 11.

⁸¹ For details, Cf. Rapoport (1990).

⁸² Cf. Checinski (1982) and Lendvai (1971).

⁸³ Bankowicz (1994), 152.

informers was introduced in factories and schools. [...] A specific form of megalomania took hold. All the public works of the day had to be colossal.⁸⁴

Despite the excesses and the paranoia, the purges, especially as they were accompanied by an avalanche of propaganda, fulfilled important functions in strengthening the communist régimes. If even leading party-figures, well known as die-hard Stalinists, were liable to sudden demotion, imprisonment or even execution for treason, then clearly no one was safe and all acts of opposition were doomed at the outset.

Repression guaranteed not only fear-induced public obedience in the face of huge programmes of primitive capital accumulation and social engineering ('Ivan the Terrible with electrification', as someone has paraphrased Lenin), causing a state of permanent turmoil and extreme social mobility. The permanent purges of all institutions—government and party offices, academia, industry, the security organs, the armed forces—continuously created openings for hundreds of thousands of upwardly-mobile members of the lower strata. As political reliability was introduced as a criterion for filling all non-menial jobs—the more important the job, the more important was demonstrated trustworthiness—knee-jerk loyalty to the régime was strongly encouraged. A system of social stratification was established which created a large group of functionaries who had the régime to thank for their advancement while simultaneously and correctly fearing they would be sold down the river just as their predecessors had been. This combination of fear and opportunism created a pool of loyalist supporters for the régime. In the longer run, the creation of a political *nomenklatura* was of course to prove devastating, as a huge number of decision-making posts were occupied by individuals who lacked proper professional qualifications and training.

The show trials themselves, however weird, drove home the message of the politicisation of everything, particularly the administration of justice. They also established the Party's claim to omniscience and omnipotence, not just in the past and present, but also projected forward into the future. The patently absurd and ridiculous claims of vast and simultaneous conspiracies of Zionist, Titoist, Trotskyist, Imperialist and Fascist 'forces' was a way of saying that the Party would deal with all its enemies in the same way. Finally, it has also been observed that the Stalinist trials have roots in the Eastern Orthodox Christian rites which, as opposed to the Western Christian communion, has a tradition of public confession of sins.

But if the Stalinist methods were effective for implementing communist control over the Soviet satellites in the short run, the long-term results were more ambiguous. If the overriding ambition was forced and breakneck modernisation, this was indeed accomplished in terms of a rapid rise in industrial production. Yet as the economic goals were defined exclusively in the political sphere by party fiat according to ideological dogma, the capital accumulated was allocated in highly irrational ways, creating a distorted and soon also obsolete economic structure. The megalomaniac projects in heavy industry slowed productivity growth and living standards for the industrial working class were generally falling during the Stalinist era, even to below pre-war levels. The lack of economic incentives was compensated for by the use of authoritarian methods of compulsion, which obviously further alienated even the class in whose name the régimes were ruling.

In agriculture, results were even more depressing. The ideologically motivated war on the peasantry and the incompetence by which the newly collectivised farms were managed could not but drive the rural population into sullen resistance. As earlier in the Soviet Union, it was the rural population that was to supply the capital needed for industrialisation, at the cost of their already low living standards. In addition, forced collectivisation and the resulting imposition of industrial methods of worker supervision and division of labour into agriculture diminished the appeal of consensual co-operation. The pre-war process—albeit

⁸⁴ Davies (1986), 8.

slow—of subsistence farming being replaced by commodity production for the market, and the peasantry's inclusion into a modern economy of exchange, was not only slowed but reversed.

The brutal methods and appalling human suffering imposed in the process of forced modernisation could, of course, not but create a mental backlash. While the communists managed to force society into passive compliance and lip-service to the rituals, the inevitable counter-reaction was an increasing withdrawal to the private sphere. The distrust and fear of the new political system caused large segments of the population to nostalgically recall the concepts of the previous eras, even when they originally had been opposed to them. The most obvious evidence of this is the resilience, even revival of religion. The process of secularisation that had started in Central Europe during the inter-war years was actually reversed, as the communist revolution provided religion and Church institutions with an attractiveness and legitimacy it had already begun to lose: 'in this sense the Stalinist revolution halted a particular secularising trend and actually acted as an anti-secularising force.'⁸⁵ So if Stalinism modernised machinery, in many respects it also created more archaic minds.

⁸⁵ Schöpflin (1993), 102.

From Consolidation to Crisis

If you can't make it
Stay hard, stay hungry, stay alive
If you can
— Bruce Springsteen, 'This Hard Land'

Élite-Level Politics During Communist Hegemony

How did political culture develop during the years of communist power, after the Stalinist era had passed? This chapter attempts to chart the structures of and developments on the élite, meso and mass levels. Much attention is focused on the systemic crises which erupted in Central Europe with almost staggering frequency. The reason for this is quite simple: the crises appear not as aberrations, but indeed as the main mechanism through which intra- and extra-systemic change was instituted.

The defining features of post-war Central Europe were the twin phenomena of communist party domination and USSR hegemony. The former has often, for reasons propagandistic or naïve, been interpreted as merely a reflection of the latter: according to this notion, the communist parties of the so-called satellite states were only and always instruments for Soviet control.

Although this argument may be partly true for some Central and Eastern European states at some periods in time (the take-over in Poland immediately after the war, the period of the show trials and High Stalinism 1949–52, and the aftermaths of the suppressions of the Hungarian and Czechoslovak uprisings in 1956 and 1968 spring to mind) it is clearly too simplistic. That theory gives few, if any, tools for analysing conflicts in the Central European polities—as they would then have been settled in and by Moscow. It also blatantly disregards the various political and social traditions of the individual socialist countries, and fails to account for the continued political diversity among, as well as within, these polities.

The 'monolith theory' has indeed largely fallen out of fashion as a way to seriously analyse the political and social history of the Socialist Bloc. As early as in 1961, Zbigniew Brzezinski differentiated between the Stalinist period of 1945–52 and the subsequent post-Stalinist epoch characterised by various degrees of pressure towards conformity.¹ It is clear that 'the new options which became available to the local East European communist party élites after Stalin's death were conducive to a climate of experimentation within the framework of the common ideological heritage on the assumption that the road to socialism in Eastern Europe need not always be identical with that of the Soviet Union.'² This finally opened vistas for national variations of communism, and consequently made it possible (and necessary) for the communist parties to openly exploit indigenous political and social traditions, particularly nationalist and traditionalist sentiments.

¹ Brzezinski (1961).

² Berglund and Dellenbrant (1994c), 18.

The Yalta and Potsdam agreements stipulated in loose terms that countries liberated by the Soviet forces should introduce 'democratic' systems of government and establish friendly relations with the Soviet Union. In practice, this formula became heavily tilted towards the friendship stipulation; according to the Soviet interpretation, the degree of friendship was even the principal indicator of the prevalent level of democracy. This was sometimes even codified: the constitution of the German Democratic Republic—a front-line country that epitomised the division of Europe and the very existence of which was explicitly based on ideology—prominently confirmed that country's permanent and irrevocable alliance with the Soviet Union.

The USSR had vital interests in Central and Eastern Europe and defended them vigorously and ruthlessly if needed. But at the same time, the cohesion of the Socialist Bloc was upheld not only through coercion, but also by the common interests and ideological prescripts of the various national élites. When and where these common interests were weak, cohesion was weakened. In terms of power politics, the Eastern bloc was a hub-and-spokes system of junior members with strong bilateral links to the USSR, rather than a multi-polar configuration of relationships between equals. It was the common relationship with the Soviet Union that defined the relations between the junior members. They were in fact frequently cool to the point of trade wars, travel restrictions, or even violent border incidents as reported, i.e., between Poland and the GDR, between Poland and Czechoslovakia, or, in particular, between Romania and Hungary.

Soviet domination, cemented by the superpower spheres-of-influence configuration of the Cold War period, meant a dramatic reversal of tides in Central Europe. During the previous millennium the region had by and large been on the periphery or semi-periphery of Western Europe—even the bulwark of the West; now it became the borderland of an even more backward USSR: an *antemurale Sovietis*. Poland had of course experienced periods of Russian domination, but for Czechoslovakia and Hungary it was a historic first.

The new relationship between centre and periphery cannot be described as but colonial or semi-colonial, where trade flows, prices and the division of labour within the Socialist Camp were determined by the interests of the Soviet Union and by the interests of the ruling parties. This produced an truly unique model of societal development and international co-operation.

The goals of Real Existing Socialism were certainly socially progressive—indeed, the régimes based their claims to legitimacy on their ambitious programmes of social modernisation, economic growth and the eradication of old privileges. This was also, together with references to Marxist-Leninist theory, the foundation of the régimes' claims to legitimacy and basis for generating mass support. In some respects, the Soviet conception of modernisation was administered directly. This meant heavy investment in literacy, education, health care and urban development, but also Soviet-style obsession with centralised planning,³ industrial gigantomania and contempt of agriculture. Where the new socialist states had been industrialised before the communist take-over, they soon became saddled with an antiquated coal- and steel-dominated structure of production; in the previously more backward, agrarian-dominated societies the result was much the same, only after even more social turmoil, misallocation of capital and environmental degradation.

The communist blueprint for modernisation may have produced the desired effects in terms of a rapid and substantial growth of the industrial working class and a boost of heavy industrial output which strengthened at least the defence capabilities of the Socialist Bloc. It

³ Planning methods could border on the imbecile. A student at Prague's Workers' Planning School has recounted how he in the early 50's followed the drawing-up of a central plan for Czechoslovakia; it included, just as the Soviet model did, quotas for 'number of reindeer herdsman' and 'high-seas fishing'. Cf. Rupnik (1989), 178.

did not, however, generate economic structures that in the longer run could compete successfully with the capitalist world and create long-term public contentment with the social and political order. The erosion of the régimes' base of support which this failure caused among a population no longer consisting of impoverished, intimidated and ignorant masses, combined with a weakened resolve and ability to use repression, eventually led to the undoing of Real Existing Socialism.

Indeed, it 'collapsed because of a loss of legitimacy resulting from the disjuncture that had developed between the radical promise still present in its ideology and an economic inability to meet it. As promises of equality, solidarity and communal well-being proved hollow, more traditional concepts, such as nationalism, ethnocentrism, étatism or religious traditionalism, took their place.'⁴ These traditional ideological values were indeed never far from the surface, hibernating both within factions of the ruling structures, and in the non- or anti-communist strata of society. The development was strikingly similar to that of early Soviet Russia, where the Bolsheviks pragmatically incorporated national-chauvinist or technocratic elements into their policies in order to tactically garner vital support from groups fundamentally opposed to purist Marxism-Leninism.⁵ In Eastern and Central Europe, just as in Russia, the communist régimes were also fundamentally and permanently transformed by the influx of ideologically non-orthodox elements. It is, after all, people who make parties and not the other way around.

The Scope and Avenues for Political Pluralism

From the outset, the political systems of socialist Central Europe were qualitatively different from the Soviet version. Marxist-Leninist theoreticians did stress that 'popular democracy' was a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and predicted an eventual convergence of popular democracy with the Soviet form of government to developed socialism, but significant structural differences nevertheless remained up until 1989–90.

The constitutions of all the Central European states defined the applied political system as socialist, and explicitly gave the communist parties a permanent leading role. But in contrast to the Soviet Union, where the system of government was totally overhauled after the October revolution, some pre-war institutions and structures were retained. Another salient feature of the popular democracies was the Popular, Patriotic or National Fronts, which under communist party supervision and guidance incorporated various social organisations across socio-economic and ideological lines, and were responsible for the election process. Poland and Czechoslovakia (but not Hungary) remained multi-party systems throughout the period, although the so-called allied parties accepted both the supremacy of the communist parties and the validity of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. The number of allied parties did decline over time, as an indication that the demarcation line between the Soviet Union and its East European allies was fading away, but this was not a dominant trend.⁶

The multi-party systems of Eastern Europe had little in common with their Western counterparts. The allied parties can be described as ideological-social interest organisations—flavoured by traditional ideological concepts such as liberalism, agrarianism, Christian Democracy or nationalism—where individuals, classes and strata not yet ready for full-blown communism could find a half-way house. The constitutionally defined and permanent subordination of the allied parties to the communist party clearly indicated that the party system was hegemonic, not competitive. Much the same can be said about the

⁴ Swain and Swain (1993), 101.

⁵ Cf. Chapter 2.

⁶ Berglund and Dellenbrant (1994c), 20–21.

election process: until the terminal days of communist hegemony, the Front lists were normally accepted in full—a fact officially attributed to the thorough process of screening candidates to reflect society's preferences and to objectively represent its social structure, but by critics seen as a result of the ballot system which for all practical purposes was open. Parliamentary debates where fundamental conflicts were brought to the open were rare, occurring only in conjunction with severe internal crises in the communist parties. Non-unanimous voting results in parliament was otherwise tolerated only when some morality-type issues were debated, such as abortion legislation. As with the election process, the low level of parliamentary debate when enacting governmental legislative initiatives was officially explained with reference to the system of pre-consultation and the effective channels of feedback.

The status of parliament was further deflated by the fact that many of its powers were permanently delegated to a smaller organ, normally with powers to issue decrees with the force of law: a Presidium (in Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the GDR), a Presidential Council (in Hungary and Bulgaria), or a Council of State (in Poland, the GDR after 1960, Romania post-1961, and in Bulgaria from 1971). These were in session year-round, in stark contrast to the full chambers which normally sat only intermittently. Yet the question of the legitimacy of the parliament or other representative institutions was never an issue, as the legitimacy of the political system as a whole was defined by references to objective, scientific truths established in the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin and manifested by the leading role of the Marxist-Leninist parties, the principle of democratic centralism, and the eternal friendship with the Soviet Union. In fact, all important state decisions were taken by the highest echelons of the ruling party.

This harmonic picture of the political process does, however, not tell the whole truth. Political conflicts did obviously exist, but were fought out and adjudicated in other arenas than the electoral or parliamentary systems. The most important of these were the communist parties. They were supposed to function according to the Leninist doctrine of democratic centralism, the essence of which is that all Party members must abide by and further the implementation of decisions made by the majority in democratic order. In practice, however, factionalism could be rife and prolonged. Observers outside the Marxist-Leninist tradition often stress the centralist element of the dogma or even regard democratic centralism as an oxymoron; at least for communist parties in power, the democratic process has been described as weak, with policy and personnel decisions made by the highest leadership and then rubber-stamped successively by the lower levels of the organisation. There is no question that the Marxist-Leninist concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat has little to do, both in theory and in practice, with Western-style democratic socialism's commitment to equality, the right to choose, objective justice and broad access to the decision-making process. The low transparency of the decision-making process and the high degree of ideological rhetoric made it difficult to discern the mechanisms behind policy shifts, and prompted many Western observers to interpret politics in the Socialist Bloc mainly in terms of power and the ascendancy or fall of certain leading individuals, as demonstrated by the peculiar kind of content analysis known as Kremlinology.

The picture is blurred by the fact that contested leadership changes within the Socialist states were usually portrayed as structural changes, even when they were only substitutes for such. This does not, however, imply that the party leaderships were wholly unresponsive to demands emanating from the lower echelons of the party hierarchy. Conflicts at the top were often fired by personal antagonism and ambition, but could also reflect substantive differences in views on major policy, with leading personas appealing to various constituencies within the party and society at large. Even in an environment where association

for political ends was strictly controlled and formally subordinated to the communist aims, groups continued to form in society to express political preferences.⁷

One incarnation of this was, of course, the recurrent factionalisation within the ruling parties; the dogma of democratic centralism, however, meant that these normally had to operate in a clique-like fashion, and organised around informal, personal and affective ties. There was certainly also some scope for autonomous action outside the ruling parties. The allied parties provided one type of vehicle: while formally subordinated to the ruling parties, they and their media could propagate the fine-tuning of the system according to the preferences of their respective constituencies: rural-agrarian, regional, Christian, etc. Regional governments, such as the Yugoslav or the one established in Slovakia in 1969, have also been mentioned as other expressions of semi-autonomous organisation. So have the churches, though their importance should not be overestimated: the Polish Catholic Church certainly was a mighty and active force, but that was far from the case as regards the Czechoslovak and, in particular, the Hungarian Catholic Churches. In the German Democratic Republic, the Evangelical Church did play a role in organising the demonstrations in 1989, but infiltration of the Church by the security services was then, as before, so extensive that it has been called 'almost a sub-division of the *Stasi*'.⁸ In the Balkans, where Orthodox Christianity dominates, the Churches tended to docile due to the long-running tradition of subordination to the state.

By the 1980's, Party-sponsored mass organisations emerged as another group of vehicles for the expression of group preferences, and with some capacity for autonomous action. Of particular importance were the official youth organisations and peace councils in some Eastern European countries (notably in Hungary), which openly came to challenge the official Party line on issues such as environmental degradation or the arms race, and even occasionally collaborated with the extra- or anti-party opposition in doing so.⁹

The main source of intellectual pluralism during Real Existing Socialism was, however, the technocratic élite. As the societies and economies became more advanced, complex and differentiated, they were increasingly dependent on administrative and technical expertise. Even when the technocratic structures were associated with the very core of the system, such as the Academies of Science, the Party Central Committee research institutes or even the security services, they often formed groupings advocating sector interests that contributed to pluralism, if not to outright opposition. Already by the 1960's the expert classes' demands for flexibility became the main impetus for reform, as technocrats rebelled against what they saw as political impediments to development and rational social development and engineering. Indeed, the debates over change tended to be conducted not on the floor of a parliament or even during Party meetings, but more or less informally within and between the administrative, technocratic and academic élites. As the dogma of the leading role of the Party led to a blurring of the line between state and party, managerial-technocratic conflicts within the state sphere were almost automatically mirrored as schisms within the Party.

The Post-Stalinist Crises

The three main crises which rocked Central Europe—enveloping the entire region but in 1956 centred on Hungary, in 1968 on Czechoslovakia, and in 1980–81 on Poland—were all 'predicated on an assumption of homogeneity and [...] were, to an extent, energised by

⁷ The argument below is from Waller (1994), 136–8; the development of the Eastern and Central European independent peace movements is charted in detail in Tismaneanu (1990).

⁸ Halter (1995), 90. *Stasi* was the Office—later Ministry—of State Security.

⁹ Cf. Tismaneanu (1990).

nationalism'.¹⁰ Yet they generated widely different outcomes. For Czechoslovakia, 'normalisation' after 1968 meant two decades of 'deep freeze', during which the régime centred its strategy for maintaining power not on domestic reform but on maintaining internal control and on ensconcing itself firmly under the Soviet wing. As the cynical joke went in Prague: 'We are the most non-aligned people in the world. We don't even interfere in the affairs of our own country anymore.' That sarcasm had, however, lost most of its poignancy by the early 1970's in both Warsaw and Budapest. Hungary, after a period of very harsh repression, was by the early 1960's put on a path of economic liberalisation known as 'Goulash Communism', the essential ingredient of which was the de-politicisation of everyday life. In Poland, the government applied parallel strategies of employing moderate repression, buying off the population with foreign credit, and making populist appeals to nationalism.

The uncertainty created by the death of Stalin—the man who had personified permanence and ideological consistency—brought the first wave of unrest to Central Europe. The collective leadership which took over in Moscow declared a 'New Course' for the economy with relaxation of the crash programme of growth, and indicated a willingness to ease Cold War tension to free additional resources for private consumption. The Stalinist methods of repression were not officially denounced until 1956, but already the announcement of Beria's arrest in July 1953 sent a powerful signal that the security apparatus was to be reigned in.

May 1953 saw outbursts of labour unrest in Czechoslovakia, prompted by a currency reform and news of government plans to further restrict labour mobility. A wave of strikes swept the country; in Plzen portraits of Gottwald and Stalin were publicly torn down. Then, on 16–17 June, a violent workers' rebellion erupted in East Berlin, directly triggered by a raising of working norms, but stirred by mounting resentment with food shortages resulting from farm collectivisation and the nationalisation of much of the remaining private sector. In Hungary, too, there were widespread strikes and disturbances during June. Embarrassingly, all these protests were not only spontaneous but initiated by the very working class in whose name the régimes were claiming to rule.

Any analysis of the responses must take into account the dual nature of the 1953–56 events: they were at once political rebellions against the social order and movements of national emancipation against a foreign power, i.e. the Soviet Union.¹¹ Indeed, the immediate reaction to popular unrest varied widely. In Czechoslovakia the government backed down, but acknowledged 'mistakes' made. No significant changes in the highest leadership were made; the local incarnation of Stalinism, Gottwald, had already passed away from pneumonia apparently contracted at Stalin's funeral. The new Party leader, Antonín Novotný, who kept his position until 1968, managed a go-slow policy of de-Stalinisation and partial reform.

In the GDR, Soviet tanks aided local forces in crushing the protests during fierce street battles. If anything, the disturbances resulted in a hardening of attitudes within the ruling party. The exceptionally severe crackdown in East Berlin should nevertheless be seen in the context of European power politics and Western containment. At the time, the Cold War was focused on divided Germany and divided Berlin. The nationalist element of the protests, though not dominant, were thus particularly dangerous from a Soviet and *SED* point of view, as it questioned the very existence of the East German state and the Soviet say in the future solution of the German issue. Yet the point was partly taken: the GDR government adopted a more national stance—particularly visible in relations with Poland—while Moscow kept simmering the offer of a re-unification of Germany in exchange for its neutralisation and non-rearmament. The Soviets even threw in the prospect of a return to Germany of some lost

¹⁰ Schöpflin (1993), 264.

¹¹ Tismaneanu (1993), 55–6.

territories, particularly the Königsberg (Kaliningrad) exclave in East Prussia, which in April 1945 had come under Russian administration.¹²

The most radical outcome was seen in Hungary. After intense Soviet pressure Mátyás Rákosi stepped down as Prime Minister and the leadership structure was made collective. Encouraged by Khrushchev and Malenkov, Rákosi's successor, Imre Nagy, embarked on a radical programme of economic reform along Soviet lines. Nagy explicitly warned that, as he put it, the link between the working class and the communist party was in danger of being broken. He publicly admitted that the Party had 'failed to realise the basic economic law of socialism—the constant raising of the standard of living of the population.'¹³ As a remedy, in addition to increasing the supply of consumer goods, the Front was revived to serve as a channel for increased participation. To create a wider base of mass support for the Patriotic People's Front, patriotism was made respectable and fused with ideas of democracy and socialism. Although he firmly defended the party's leading role, Nagy envisaged the right for citizens to set up, within the front, organisations as they saw fit, thus allowing non-party members to exert significant influence on policy. The programme of forced collectivisation of agriculture was abandoned, the notorious internment camps of the Hungarian Gulag were dismantled and a partial amnesty granted for political prisoners.

*Table 5.1: The 'New Course' in Eastern Europe 1953–55; Political Instability in 1953*¹⁴

	Level of Political Turmoil	Share of net material product, %				Share of investment by sector, %			
		Accumulation		Consumption		Industry		Agriculture	
		1953	1955	1953	1955	1953	1955	1953	1955
Bulgaria	+	n/a	n/a	66	77	40	39	10	18
Czechoslovakia	+	25	20	57	61	42	39	14	20
GDR	++	n/a	n/a	82	81	50	52	17	15
Hungary	+++	25	15	46	58	48	41	6	11
Poland	+	28	22	54	60	52	43	10	15
Romania	++	32	24	n/a	n/a	57	57	7	14
Yugoslavia		n/a	n/a	53	54	45	34	5	9

¹² The Soviet offer of unification for neutrality or a Soviet security guarantee was first given by the so-called Stalin notes of March and April 1952 (the essence of which were the establishing of diplomatic relations between Moscow and Bonn), and reiterated between Stalin's death and the 17 June uprising. It was again raised during 1954, supported by some West German Social Democrats, but turned down by the Western allies. Only in May 1955 did Khrushchev 'decide to back the GDR fully'; the following autumn the USSR restored full sovereignty to the GDR, and simultaneously recognised the Federal Republic of Germany. That year the neutralisation and withdrawal of occupation troops from Austria was in fact successfully negotiated with the West, along similar lines proposed for Germany. Cf. Swain and Swain (1993), 96–7.

¹³ Quoted in Swain and Swain (1993), 78–80.

¹⁴ Source for economic data: Swain and Swain (1993), 113; adopted from Brus, Włodzimierz, '1953 to 1956: "The Thaw" and "The New Course"', in Kaser, M. C. and E. A. Radice (Eds), *The Economic History of Eastern Europe 1919–1975*, Vol. III, Oxford 1986.

As Table 5.1 indicates, the relaxation of forced industrialisation initiated by the Soviet leadership after 1953 did have marked effects on both levels of consumption and on capitalisation in agriculture. This seems to indicate a rather strong degree of responsiveness. There appears to be a correlation between the level of political unrest during 1953 on the one hand, and increased allocation of funds for consumption and agricultural investment at the expense of industry, on the other. Yet externalities played a critical role: it was Khrushchev's 'New Course', with its calls for an easing of crash modernisation, which started the process where increasingly consumer-oriented policies and the venting of pent-up disaffection became mutually reinforcing. Whether a similar process could have been initiated without Soviet example and encouragement is impossible to say.

The GDR stands out as an exception, with falling consumption ratios and investment even more heavily tilted towards industry. But at the same time the figures indicate that the share of consumption already in 1953 was markedly higher than in any other country in the group. This can be interpreted as a result of the fierce competition with the Federal Republic: between 1949 and 1961, when the border was sealed, 2.7 million East Germans emigrated in search of a better life.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the GDR deviancy raises the question of whether there actually was a causal connection between unrest and economic liberalisation—and of which of the was the cause and which was the effect.

In any case, the Soviets were well informed of the dismal state of the Eastern European economies, and clearly took the view that an accommodation would be more productive than repression. The new collective leadership in Moscow also had other considerations. The anti-Titoism which had been a strong feature of late Stalinism had been reversed and relations with Belgrade restored. To retain unreconstructed Stalinists in charge in Eastern Europe was untenable given that Moscow was trying to steer a new course in foreign and economic policy and attempted to ensure that the Stalinist irrational excesses in purges of the party, government bureaucracy and the military would not be repeated.

After the crisis of 1953 had passed a short period of lull set in. The establishment of the Warsaw Pact in May 1955 signified both an institutionalisation of Soviet military hegemony in Eastern Europe and an indication of the fact that the communist régimes were regarded as sufficiently entrenched to allow them a more equal—though not fully equal—alliance relationship with the USSR. This proved to be a grave miscalculation, as 1956 brought the arguably most severe challenge to the Marxist-Leninist system of government in Eastern Europe before the final collapse in 1989–90. Again the impetus came from Moscow, with the explosive exposition of Stalinist ill-deeds by Khrushchev at the XX Congress of the CPSU. It was certainly not the intention, but the 'secret' speech could not but seriously undermine the Marxist-Leninist movement's claims to omniscience and infallibility.

The next wave of eruptions started in Poland, where a leadership vacuum had developed when Party leader Bierut had died in April 1956, of shock or—according to some accounts—committing suicide after Khrushchev's elucidation. In June, workers in Poznan who were dissatisfied with an increase in work quotas staged a riotous strike which was put down by tanks and resulted in more than 50 fatalities. This was only the culmination of a period of brewing discontent. The hard-liners in charge of the Party had for some time been attacked by a more liberal grouping for showing a lack of understanding for the plight of ordinary working people. The six-year economic plan started in 1947 had proven a disaster, and there were widespread fears that the promise not to introduce collective farming in Poland made in connection with the 1944 land reform programme would after all not be honoured.¹⁶

¹⁵ Stokes (1993), 60.

¹⁶ Krzeminski (1994), 126–7.

*Finally
Rehabilitated:
Gomulka (left,
in glasses),
Zawadzki and
Ochab arriving
at a banquet at
the PUWP
Central
Committee,
December 1956*



HUFVUDSTADSBLADET ARCHIVES

Yet the political instability of 1953–56 which ended in the ‘Polish October’ essentially remained an intra-party affair. Even the ‘liberals’ within the Party did not believe that the solution could possibly come from outside it; they only hoped for more enlightened leadership. Indeed, they eventually won out with the return of Gomulka to the position of First Secretary, at a Central Committee session where a high-level Soviet delegation headed by Khrushchev himself sat in uninvited. The Soviets reluctantly accepted Gomulka’s comeback, but the rhetoric in Moscow on the Polish situation was consistently hard-line, blaming disturbances on ‘imperialist agents and a lack of vigilance’ and making clear that reform efforts were to be strictly contained to within the party. This was a major difference in comparison with the more relaxed attitude towards liberalisation in Hungary.¹⁷

Gomulka’s main assets were his credentials as a war-time ‘Home Communist’, later persecuted as a nationalist non-conformist. His re-ascendancy became the first step on the ‘Polish Road to Socialism’, which was to cause Moscow so much trouble further down the road. Apart from the national assertiveness he propagated, Gomulka also insisted on the need for lessened repression, increased tolerance of criticism in culture and more autonomy in the economic field, particularly advocating a scaling-down of investments in heavy industry. Nevertheless, he was careful to affirm his loyalty to Poland’s commitment to the Warsaw Pact and to the Soviet line in international politics. The Soviet Marshal Rokossowski, however, was forced to step down as defence minister and C-in-C, and the bulk of the remaining Soviet advisers, the ‘acting Poles’ mentioned earlier, were sent home.

Gomulka shared the opinion that Poland needed a firm military and security alliance with the Soviet Union to withstand German revanchism and the demands to return conquered territory. This fear, widespread among the general public, was not dampened when none other than Walter Ulbricht, the hard-line GDR leader, at the height of the Polish crisis in October 1956 proposed an ‘internationalisation’ of Szczecin (Stettin), the formerly German port city on the Oder estuary. The move can only be seen as an flirtation with the GDR’s large constituency of expellees from the east. Ideological differences exacerbated the strains across the Oder–Neisse line: Gomulka never accepted the East Germans’ general attitude, which he saw as Stalinist, while Ulbricht repeatedly complained in Moscow that Polish political non-conformance endangered his beleaguered republic.¹⁸ A reunification and

¹⁷ Cf. Swain and Swain (1993), 93.

¹⁸ Krzeminski (1994), 140.

neutralisation of Germany would, of course, also have raised prospects for the stationing of yet more Soviet troops in Poland; one of Gomulka's first foreign-policy victories was indeed a treaty limiting the USSR's military presence in Poland.

Gomulka's domestic hard-line adversaries, known as the '*Natolin*' faction, also entertained nationalism, but of a different brand. During the crisis of 1956 they had barricaded behind 'strong anti-intellectual, xenophobic and anti-Semitic slogans.'¹⁹ They openly jeered their opponents as 'revisionists' and 'Jews', and tried to generate support by blaming Stalinism on the Jews who indeed had been quite numerous and prominent in the earlier leadership. By 1959, when the Party gathered to a Conference of Stabilisation, the hard-line formation had become dominated by careerist 'peasant sons', who had even less patience with intellectualism and subtle hair-splitting than the original *Natolin*ites: 'Their world view was simple: polonocentric, anti-German and secretly russophobe.'²⁰ Already at that time, party hard-liners had adopted large portions of the pre-war *Endecja* National Democracy heritage, and this was to be ever more accentuated during the following decades. After 1956 the hard-line faction, always a major force and at times even dominant within the Polish communist party, can justifiably be described as chauvino-communist or National Bolshevik in character.

The even more serious crisis in Hungary started in much the same way as in Poland, with a gradual cracking-up of the Communist Party's monolithic appearance and a livening intellectual debate from 1953 onwards. Rákosi manoeuvred back to the top when Nagy fell ill during the Malenkov-Khrushchev power struggle in 1955, but his credibility was fatally weakened the next year by Khrushchev's exposition of Stalinist malice and disregard of 'socialist legality'. Rákosi's campaign against 'the conspiracy led by Nagy' caused acute embarrassment in Moscow, so the Soviets finally intervened to replace Rákosi with his second-in-command, Ernő Gerő. Gerő tried to present himself a national man but was almost as tainted by Stalinism as his predecessor, and a seen as a very poor alternative by the crowds who in 1953 had invested their hopes in Imre Nagy. The leadership change thus proved to be strategically ill-conceived: it demonstrated both to the increasingly liberal-minded Party majority and to the public at large that the prospects for genuine but orderly reform were slim.

During the summer of 1956 huge demonstrations erupted, expressing support for the reforms in Poland and demanding similar policies at home. Appetite was further whetted by the ceremonial reburial on 6 October of László Rajk, the former hard-line Interior Minister who was re-cast in the unlikely role of a martyr of democracy.²¹ Then, on 23 October, a spontaneous student rally eventually brought a quarter of a million people to the streets of Budapest; the unrest culminated in the toppling of a Stalin statue and an attempt by the crowd to seize the Radio Building. By nightfall, units of the police and army openly sided with the protesters and their demands for a reinstitution of the rule of law, the disbanding of the security forces, the withdrawal of Soviet troops, that Rákosi and his allies be brought to trial, and for the return of Imre Nagy to the leadership.

That same evening, Gerő did bring in Nagy as Prime Minister, but simultaneously proclaimed a state of emergency, called on the security forces to fire on the crowds, and asked for Soviet aid. The escalating violence against the demonstrators, however, proved too much for the Central Committee, which on 25 October ousted Gerő. His replacement as Party First Secretary, in a new leadership formally organised as a collective, was János Kádár, the former Stalinist who had fallen out of grace during the aftermath of the Rajk purges.

¹⁹ Tismaneanu (1993), 65.

²⁰ Krzeminski (1993), 133-7.

²¹ Cf. Rothschild (1989), 156 pp.

The initial success of the protesters led to a continued escalation of demands. Reform of and under the leadership of the communist party was soon not enough; the protesters turned into revolutionaries and went for a total overthrow of the communist system and the establishment of a genuinely pluralist democracy. Popular support for the revolt was without doubt strong, even overwhelming, as proven by the direct democracy that sprung up spontaneously around revolutionary committees and councils. Nagy, the initial reformer, was forced along with the tide and ended up a revolutionary, who 'went far beyond the logic of intra-systemic change and joined the momentum of an anti-systemic movement that rapidly swept away the whole edifice of bureaucratic socialism.'²² In a radio speech on 30 October he announced that the Cabinet had abolished the one-party system and that a new government would be formed on the basis of the 1945 coalition.

Although the protesters were driven by strong anti-Sovietism, the absence of intervention from Soviet troops—except for during the riots of 24 October—made the initial phase of the revolution an essentially internal Hungarian affair. Khrushchev vacillated, uncertain whether to apply force or to bite the bullet and 'get out of Hungary'. The Soviets maintained a markedly low profile, professing a policy of non-interference in internal affairs, and declaring the equality of the states of the Socialist Bloc. Behind the curtains, however, the KGB Chief Ivan Serov, who had flown to Budapest along with Politburo members Mikoyan and Suslov, advocated taking a harder line.²³ This Soviet dithering may partly have been an attempt to lull the revolutionaries into a sense of security, but the calculation at the time may also have been that vital interests worth the high political cost of active intervention were not yet threatened. That point was in any case reached when Nagy announced the establishment of a 'military-revolutionary council' to lead the armed forces, on 31 October declared Hungary's intentions to start negotiations for the withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, and the following day proclaimed the country's neutrality. While the Soviet Union could have lived without Hungary alone as a military ally, the precedent would almost certainly have had catastrophic follow-on effects in the other Warsaw Pact countries.

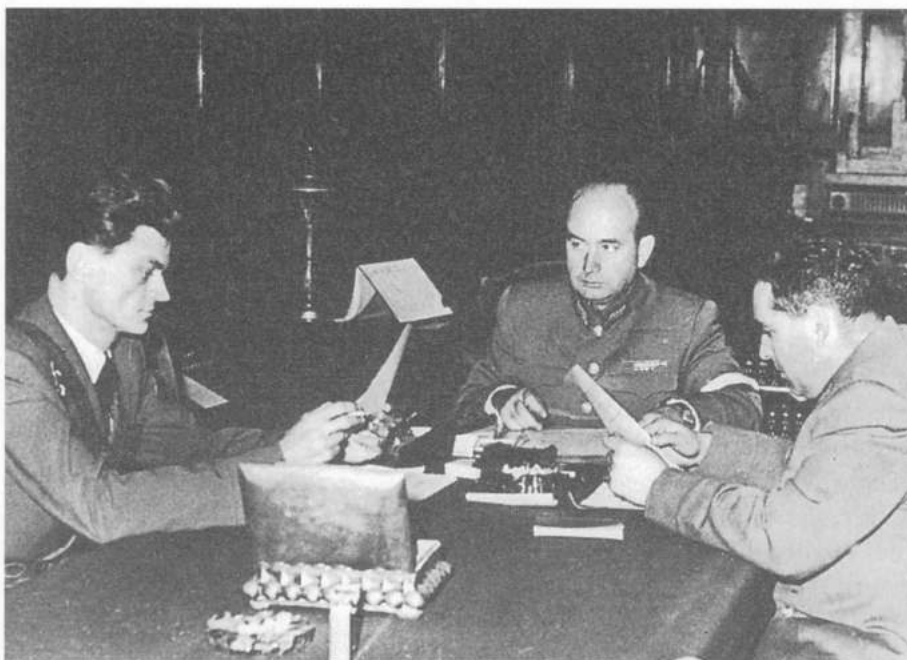
A Hero's Farewell: Seven years after being executed for "Titoism", László Rajk received a state funeral—the die-hard Stalinist was portrayed as a national hero. Left is Zoltan Vas, speaker of the National Assembly, to the right former Foreign Minister Gyula Kallai



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²² Tismaneanu (1993), 75.

²³ Cf. Andrew and Gordievsky (1993), 354-5, referring to Khrushchev's published memoirs.



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The Ringleaders: The military leadership of the insurrectionists, 4 November 1956. From left to right, General Pál Maléter, Defence Minister Károly Janza, and General István Kovács



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Losing the Battle: Fleeing Hungarian insurrectionists surrendering their weapons to Austrian border guards, November 1956. The reforms in Hungary turned into an anti-systemic revolt after factions in the highest communist party leadership started appealing directly to the masses

The decision to intervene was obviously made easier by the simultaneous British and French engagement in Suez²⁴, and the clear message from the West that it would restrict its intervention in Hungary to verbalities. Anything else would obviously have threatened to bring down the whole edifice of Cold War stability.

The Soviets had formally agreed to start negotiations about Hungary leaving the Pact, but early on 1 November the Red Army started pouring fresh troops into the country, while

²⁴ Israel invaded Suez on 29 October, and on 31 October France and Britain announced they would intervene on the ground. Their troops started arriving four days later, within hours of the Soviet intervention in Hungary.

simultaneously pulling its units out of Budapest. The full assault started three days later, after a group of Hungarian leaders including the Defence Minister Pál Maléter had been arrested at a conference they attended at the Soviet military HQ. The same day Imre Nagy and some of his associates sought refuge at the Yugoslav embassy. Kádár, who surreptitiously had dropped out of sight after the cabinet decision to leave the Warsaw Pact, re-emerged and was installed as leader of a Soviet-backed 'revolutionary government of the workers and peasants' which was in full control of the country within days.

Nagy had been promised free conduit to political asylum in Romania, but was nevertheless arrested and executed after a secret trial in June 1958. According to Károly Grósz, the last leader of Socialist Hungary, it was Kádár who personally insisted on the death penalty—overruling the Soviets who had recommended 'sending [Nagy] to prison for a couple of years and then giving him a teaching position at some agrarian institute. [...] He wanted no competitors who could later become dangerous to him. He was also driven by the quest for revenge. He once told me that we lost 357 comrades during the counter-revolution. So 357 of them as well should be put six feet under,' Grósz told in an interview in 1996.²⁵

The Hungarian events of 1956 demonstrated not only how vicious intra-party power struggles could be, but above all the outer limits of Soviet patience with reform in Eastern Europe. The insurrection also raises the fundamental question of why Hungarian reformism escalated into an insurrection that swept the bulk of the party (the purges after 1956 left it with only 37,000 members, as compared with 900,000 before²⁶) and even large portions of the party élite, while other Eastern European countries at the time experienced only comparatively insignificant turmoil and no serious genuinely anti-systemic challenges.

One factor was the degree of cohesion within the Party élite, and its willingness to contain its internal conflicts and not appeal to the lower echelons of the Party or even to non-Party society at large. Stalin's death led to a power-struggle in the Soviet leadership, and competing personalities and competing policies in Moscow each had their supporters in Eastern Europe. Although there existed a broad consensus about the need for change, its scope and direction was hotly contested. And where unity or the outer appearance of unity could not be maintained, 'a gap [was created] in the system and through that gap, all sorts of forces—the one which had been suppressed though not destroyed by Stalin's atomisation—could arise and re-emerge.'²⁷

Even in Hungary, the initial manifestations of opposition and critique were not explicitly political in an anti-systemic sense—indeed the intellectual critics often saw themselves as communists or at least as Marxists—but rather voiced dissatisfaction with bureaucratic incompetence and heavy-handedness. Yet increased freedom in culture almost invariably brought on more direct critique, usually escalating from the exposure of petty corruption, mismanagement at the local level and abuses of power, to outright questioning of the systemic performance, structure and legitimacy.

George Schöpflin has argued²⁸ that the leadership situation in 1953 was quite similar in Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria: in all cases there was a strong, hard-line leader (Bierut, Rákosi, Chervenkov) felt himself threatened by a rival with not only charisma and potential mass appeal, but also enjoying some support within the Party's highest leadership. The difference between Poland and Hungary on the one hand and Bulgaria on the other was that the competing leaders and factions in the Bulgarian Politburo agreed on the overriding need to keep the system intact—a reversed democratic centralism, where the highest echelons actively refrained from consulting and appealing to lower echelons. Chervenkov's downfall

²⁵ Kogelfranz (1996), 182.

²⁶ Wandycz (1992), 253.

²⁷ Schöpflin (1993), 114-5.

²⁸ Schöpflin (1993), 115.

and replacement by Todor Zhivkov as party leader was a gradual and piecemeal affair (taking two years, from 1954 to 1956) which could be presented as an orderly transition. While Zhivkov was slightly more reform-minded than his predecessor, the shift in policy line was relatively minor. Indeed, Chervenkov's greatest liability was his personal traits and attempts to create a cult of personality that had by then fallen out of fashion.

In Poland, on the other hand, the death of Bierut in 1953 had created a vacuum which not only widened the factional split but also brought the conflict to the open as the players jockeyed for position. When Gomulka returned, he was certainly not unopposed, but could as a victim of Stalinist repression ride on a wave of public support and goodwill which his Hungarian counterpart Gerö totally lacked. Also, Gomulka had the advantage of the absence of any rival who could seriously undermine his position. This helped him find a balance between the broad public demands for economic reform and increased freedom, to which he acceded, and Soviet security interests, which he respected and saw as partly consistent with Poland's own.

The Hungarian élite split of 1956 had its roots in 1953, when Nagy, after having been promoted on Moscow's orders, delivered a crude dressing-down of Rákosi at a Central Committee meeting. This alienated the latter's allies, and created a permanent fissure in the leadership. Nagy found his efforts at liberalising reform stalled by the party *apparat* and bureaucracy, but the promises given had already stirred the intelligentsia, the workers and peasants who would be the main beneficiaries of the revised policy. The polarisation was exacerbated when Rákosi and the other hard-liners were hit by Khrushchev's not-so-secret speech. The nomination of Gerö as Rákosi's successor was a worst-case scenario: something neither the liberals in the Party, the radical intellectuals, nor the public at large were willing to accept as a sufficient indication of change. Instead, it was widely interpreted as proof of systemic rigidity.

Nagy had already in 1953 irrevocably brought the brewing intra-Party conflict to the open. During his 1955–56 walk in the wild he viciously attacked the bureaucracy, claiming that '[p]ower is increasingly being torn away from the people and turned sharply against them [...] the people's democracy in which power is exercised by the working class is obviously being replaced by a Party dictatorship [in which] power is not permeated by the spirit of socialism but by a Bonapartist spirit of minority dictatorship.'²⁹ This attack, as others in a similar vein, was directed primarily at Rákosi and his closest allies, but also implicitly threatened party and apparat middle ranks. At the same time, it was seen by the population at large as a promise of a possible return to the 1948 situation. Nagy's conduct thus had a strong mobilising effect on both pro- and anti-systemic political forces.

There appears to be a rather simple reason for the fact that Czechoslovakia, which also experienced social unrest in the early summer of 1953, took another path than its neighbours to the immediate north and south: the restoration of order was effected quickly, according to the Stalinist model then still prevalent in the USSR, instead of the more flexible approach possible after Khrushchev was firmly in power. The impact of 1953 was thus to 'strengthen the factions of neo-Stalinist authoritarians in the Communist Party, whereas the in the aftermath of 1956 the influence of such groups inside [the Polish and Hungarian parties] was significantly and permanently reduced.'³⁰ In Romania, the Party leadership, overwhelmingly hard-line, maintained a united front and managed to counter serious worker and student unrest essentially by paying off the protesters.

²⁹ Quoted in Swain and Swain (1993), 85.

³⁰ Batt (1991), 16–17.

Intra-élite manoeuvring and successes at conflict resolution and containment is a necessary, but still not a sufficient explanation for why paths diverged. One also has to look at the mass level and to structural factors.

Support for the communist take-over in Eastern Europe had never been overwhelming, and many of the supporters had backed it either because they thought it would benefit them personally or would be beneficial for the radical development and modernisation of the country as a whole. The mismanagement of the economies was thus certain to dent public support: communism had not brought increased material well-being to the broad population even remotely to the extent promised. Indeed, the implementation of the coal/steel/machine-building philosophy was paid for by the working class, and even more by the rural population which for all practical purposes was treated as a class enemy. By the mid-1950's, the abysmal living standards could no longer credibly be explained by the devastation of the war or with bourgeois-imperialist wrecking. Ultimately, discussion about the economic performance, if allowed to the extent as in Hungary, obviously raised questions about the communists' very competence to rule, and consequently about legitimacy.

In the case of Hungary one may note particular features in the political culture. Radicalism, including Marxist varieties, enjoyed considerable support among leading Hungarian intellectuals both before and immediately after the Second World War, but by the mid 1950's, many of the earlier proponents of the socialist project had grown disenchanted with the implementation of Marxist ideals by the *apparat*.³¹ This disaffection was particularly significant, as the Hungarian intelligentsia had strong revolutionary and anti-despotic credentials going back to 1848 and beyond. It had also gained broad moral authority, as the group had been severely persecuted under Stalinism. Intellectuals were also widely regarded, not least by themselves, as the repository of national values. Given all this, not only was the intelligentsia willing and ready to raise strong critique, but it also found a responsive audience.

These factors combined in some way to explain why the post-Stalinist crisis of 1953–56 in Hungary escalated to a genuine attempt at counter-revolution, while it elsewhere in Eastern Europe—and, of course, in the Soviet Union—essentially could be restricted to an intra-élite power struggle, or as in Poland to an intra-Party power struggle. The lasting and universal legacy of 1956 was a further diversification within the Central European Socialist Camp. In short, Hungary was eventually propelled into a process of controlled economic liberalisation, as Czechoslovakia experienced reluctant and slow de-Stalinisation. In Poland, the government attempted parallel crash industrialisation and consumerism, and fragmentation increased among the party élite with the 'chauvino-communists' gaining strength.

The 1960's Crisis

Czechoslovakia eventually came to epitomise the 1960's failed attempts at radical restructuring, but the front-runner candidate for instability during that decade was initially Poland. The period of economic reform there was temporarily halted by 1959, and in 1964 a campaign against critical intellectuals was launched. By 1965 Gomulka had proven a disappointment to liberals and conservatives alike, and Polish society began a descent into centrifugality and instability. Most visibly, it took the form of a *Kulturkampf* between, on the one extreme, the revisionist historians and the artistic avant-garde on Central Europe's most vibrant cultural scene, and, on the other, the hard-line so-called 'Partisans'.

Following in the footsteps of the Natolinians and the 'peasant sons', the 'Partisan' hard-liners entertained a strongly authoritarian world view. The group was led by General

³¹ Tismaneanu (1993), 69.

Mieczysław Moczar, chairman of the association of former communist partisans and Interior Minister in 1964–68. It was, to some extent, just another example of an informal communist party clique brought together by a mixture of shared convictions and personal ties. But the Veterans' Association also went beyond that, as its aim was to bring together war-time communist and anti-communist veterans under a banner of Polish patriotism. The essence of Moczarism was a shared conviction of the need for strong state powers, an army as the armed fist of the nation, and Poland's independence and freedom from foreign interference, be it German or Soviet. It was in fact basically an attempt by the communist apparat to make peace with the Home Army (*AK*), London Government and *Endecja* elements it earlier had violently persecuted.

As Stefan Staszewski, a leading Party functionary later turned oppositional, has put it, this development was a result of Gomulka's need to strengthen the watered-down official ideology with new 'anti-Semitic–nationalistic–fascist' components.³² This flirtation—to say the least—with the political right wing was obviously a result of the economic crisis and the resulting weakening of party legitimacy. But Staszewski in fact goes as far as to interpret Gomulka's evolution from his opposition to Stalinism at the time of his ascent to power to his later flirtation with 'Communo-fascism' as almost a structural necessity in Polish—and arguably all Eastern European—Real Existing Socialism. According to this view, strong and active anti-democratic and anti-liberal formations, including the bureaucratising *apparatuses* of party, armed forces and security organs, repeatedly showed a readiness to co-operate with some of the most reactionary pre-war elements.

The national issue came to the fore in 1965, when Poland's Catholic bishops in a letter to their German colleagues had 'forgiven and begged for forgiveness', i.e. for the war and its legacies. The Party hard-liners saw this not only as interference in the Party's prerogative to determine foreign policy. It also prompted them to attack the Church for betraying Polish interests and going soft on German revanchism; indeed, their critique gained credibility by the cool response the bishops received from Germany. The conflict over the German question brought Gomulka even closer to the hard-liners—to uphold the division of Germany was, as mentioned earlier, a pillar of his foreign policy—and he was subsequently swept along by their increasingly xenophobic campaign as well.

Large parts of the Partisans' ideological baggage and rhetorical arsenal came straight from the pre-war *Endecja*, which also had blamed 'enemies within' generally, and Jews specifically, for Poland's perceived misfortunes. But while many of the leading Party hard-liners certainly were rabid anti-Semites and nationalists, their main goal was not a national revival and purges of Jews, but a reversal of the liberalisation in intellectual and economic life. The nationalist campaign primarily served as an instrument in the campaign to remove Gomulka, whom Moczar, his erstwhile ally, eventually accused of leniency in his dealings with the 'imperialist–Zionist conspiracy'. Gomulka himself was by most accounts (though not by all) not personally an anti-Semite, but he chose to play along, realising that he could not rely on the support only of oppositional intellectuals. He thus eventually came out against 'The Fifth Column'—an euphemism for Jews—but distinguished between Zionist Jews, cosmopolitan Jews, and patriotic communist Jews, the latter of which he said should be treated as loyal Poles.

In February 1968 the hard-liners went on a broad offensive. When the performance of a Mickiewicz historical play was banned as anti-Soviet, a wave of student protests broke out, which then were suppressed by force and resulted in hundreds of arrests. The disturbances were used as a tool to intensify the campaign against the few Jews remaining in Poland; they had already been already branded as illoyal because of the widespread Jewish support of Israel

³² Toranska (1987).

during the Six Day War in 1967 when the Polish government supported the Arab side. Many Jews in the Party, armed forces, bureaucracy and academia were dismissed as 'revisionists' or 'Zionists' and urged to emigrate; intellectuals were arrested on the sole ground of their ethnicity. The wave of emigration which ensued eventually encompassed the majority of the country's 35,000 Jewish citizens. Gomulka managed to stay on for two more years, more or less a lame duck dependent on the temporary support he received from a Party faction of pragmatic 'Technocrats' led by the Silesian Party chief Edward Gierek.

The hard-line Partisans scored some successes in 1968, but at the same time they had taken the dangerous step, considering the stability of Party hegemony, of appealing directly to and mobilising the masses under the banner of nationalism, an issue that at least theoretically could be fully reconciled neither with Leninist dogma nor with Poland's alliance with the USSR.

For liberal intellectuals, on the other hand, March 1968 signified the final disillusionment with the Party's ability to self-transform. This was the start of 'anti-politics', the project to create autonomous structures not only outside the party, but ignoring altogether traditional forms of political opposition. As Jacek Kuron, one of the leaders, concluded: in a totalitarian society, even preserving culture, reading literature and discussing philosophy constitute political opposition precisely because they ignore politics in a situation where the state attempts to politicise everything.³³ As the 1968 events demonstrated crude, even archaic demagoguery on the side of the hard-liners, the development of the intellectual opposition also indicated and advanced the maturing of Polish civil society.

Among the Central European countries, the chauvinist communist wing was clearly best organised and most influential in Poland, but it was also a force to be reckoned with in Hungary, where the nationalist and anti-Semitic party faction coalesced around the National Patriotic Front, and in Slovakia.³⁴ The most curious parallel to Polish developments is, however, the strategy employed by the Romanian government.

The Romanian communist party had a long-running tradition of distinct nationalism, but after Nicolae Ceausescu became leader in 1965 the state ideology became outright xenophobic. The discourse that Ceausescu garnished in communist jargon tapped the very themes that had dominated before and during the war when Romania was governed by a rightist-nationalist régime: the country's historic glory, the origins of Romanian ethnicity,

³³ Stokes (1993), 25.

³⁴ Parenthetically, one may note the dual attitude of the East German SED to the nationalist theme. The strained relations with Poland have been mentioned earlier, and there leadership also expressed curious attitudes towards anti-Semitism. The few hundred Jews who lived in the German Democratic Republic were exhibited as proof of the true anti-fascist nature of the state, but at the same time suspected as agents of Zionism and Israel. The GDR also remained extremely hostile to the state of Israel and to Zionism; Israel was not formally recognised by East Berlin until 1990, and all demands for compensation for the Holocaust were rejected. Recent research has also shown that the East German secret service was directly involved in anti-Semitic campaigns conducted in the Federal Republic. The intent was to show the resilience of anti-Semitism and Naziism in Western Germany and thus to undermine the Federal Republic's standing in the Western community. During the 1960's, the *Stasi* organised an appeal in the FRG for Adolf Eichmann, who was then standing trial in Jerusalem; desecrated Jewish cemeteries; and sent threatening letters to Jews living in West Germany. As a recent study on the theme claims: the 'purportedly so anti-fascist GDR [...] in fact produced anti-Semitism, cynically used and misused Jews.' Wolffsohn (1995); the book claims that the *Stasi* was involved the painting of swastikas on the Cologne synagogue on Christmas Eve 1959 and in many of the 470 recorded anti-Semitic incidents in the FRG the following year; the incidents prompted a *Sondersitzung* of the Bonn *Bundestag* while Chancellor Konrad Adenauer demanded corporal punishment for painters of swastikas.

the nature of the 'national essence' and the preservation of national unity. National values, symbols and cultures that had been shelved immediately after the communist take-over were brought out from the closet step-by-step. Even historical figures from the feudal past (and later from the inter-war era, too—including the fascist-style dictator Ion Antonescu) were rehabilitated as forerunners to the Romanian variety of Marxism-Leninism.³⁵

The Romanian Party did incur severe critique from Moscow, particularly after the decision not to participate in the invasion of Czechoslovakia, but there is no doubt that it was successful in generating mass-scale support among the country's majority ethnic-Romanian population. The Romanian communist party's presentation of itself as primarily the bearer of national values, as opposed to the local agent of an internationalist ideology, certainly is a major explanation for the fact that the country escaped much of the turmoil experienced by others in the Socialist Bloc. In fact, what opposition there was to Ceausescu and communist rule, it was mainly voiced in terms of the same nationalism employed by the régime.

In many ways, the ideology that underpinned Ceausescu's leadership was indeed reminiscent of the one advocated by the *Natolin*-Partisan faction of the Polish Party. This is not all that surprising, given some of the structural similarities between the two countries: both were diffuse as state entities, had experienced radical border revisions following both World Wars, and had a legacy of partitions and rule by several foreign powers. Romanians and Poles alike were historically settled among other nationalities, and large parts of the respective ethnic communities lived outside the states' borders. It was, however, no coincidence that the Romanian communist party turned on a markedly more nationalist course than its Polish counterpart: Soviet strategic interests put limits on overt Polish Russophobia; Romania had not, as Poland, experienced an ethnic homogenisation as a result of the Second World War³⁶; and the traditions of political clientilism and feudalism were much stronger in Romania, with its legacy of Ottoman rule and Orthodox Christianity.

National tension ignited also the Czechoslovak crisis in 1968, but was then of a different variety. Many Slovaks felt their part of the country was strongly disadvantaged by economic policy, were irritated by what they perceived as Czech cultural hegemony, and had been outraged by the 1960 constitution which eradicated almost all provisions for Slovak autonomy. Novotny's open insensitivity to Slovak culture and aspirations to more autonomy lost him the support of Slovak conservatives, his natural allies, and directly triggered his downfall and replacement by Alexander Dubcek.³⁷

The problems in the Czech-Slovak relationship was not, however, the main reason for Novotny's fall. Practically untouched by substantial reform until the mid-60's, the Czechoslovak Communist Party was faced with increasing demands, both within and without, for an opening-up of public debate. Above all, economic performance had been disastrous, with negative growth rates in 1962 resulting in the unheard-of decision late that year to abandon the third five-year plan. The acute problems in the economy 'seriously shook the confidence of the leadership and constrained it to look hard at the need for economic reform'. But once the reforms were off the ground, economists and managers alike were dismayed at noticing how the Party, fearful of the loss of power resulting from the overhaul of the system, attempted to sabotage reform. This mobilised technocrats to come out in support of ever more radical reform, and eventually forced them to acknowledge the political impediments to economic rationality.³⁸

³⁵ Hockenos (1993), 168-9.

³⁶ By the late 70's, of Romania's population of some 23 million, 1.7 million were ethnic Magyars, two million Gypsies, and 300,000 Germans (although the later figure decreased dramatically through emigration).

³⁷ Cf. Dean (1973).

³⁸ Schöpflin (1993), 153-4.

Paying Tribute: Hundreds of Czechs filed past the pall of Jan Palach, the student who committed self-immolation in Prague's Wenceslas Square on 16 January 1968. Beside the coffin stand professors from the Prague University



PRESSFOTO-AP

The nomination of Alexander Dubcek as new leader in January 1968 was welcomed by both hard-liners and reform-minded forces within the Party. While he firmly believed in the leading role of the party, he also wanted to revitalise the system with the introduction of Czech humanism. Dubcek was a Slovak, but had spent many years of his life in the Soviet Union.

Dubcek's programme for reform encompassed both the economic and political spheres. He proposed a real federalisation of the state, with the implied loosening of central Party control. An 'Action Programme' published in April declared the goal of building 'a new profoundly democratic form of socialism conforming to Czechoslovak conditions', summed up by his slogan 'Socialism with a human face'. While the specific proposals were not all that radical (as for the economy, they centred on strengthening direct worker control at the expense of the bureaucracy), the discussion which was let free to evaluate them created a snow-ball effect. With the introduction, for all practical purposes, of free speech, the debate could not for long be contained so as not to include the single-party system and the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism. Indeed, demands were soon voiced for political pluralism and an end to limitations to legitimate political opposition.

In June a group of young intellectuals published the 'Two Thousand Words' manifesto, intended to strengthen the reformist grouping within the ruling party. By the conservatives as well as by the Warsaw Pact allies—who had warned the Czechoslovaks as early as in March—it was nevertheless seen as a dangerous call to action from below: 'The object [of the Action Programme] was not a destruction of socialism, but its transformation was so to be so drastic that it appeared revolutionary. That is how the leaders of East Germany, Poland and the Soviet Union perceived it.'³⁹ They feared a repetition of the Hungarian events, where cautious reform had been overtaken by popular demands for ever more radical change,

³⁹ Wandycz (1993), 256-7.

including a rejection of Soviet domination. This apprehension was indeed well founded and borne out by subsequent events, but also acknowledged by Dubcek, who throughout was careful to stress that there was no question of Czechoslovakia leaving the Warsaw Pact or Comecon. But after stern warnings from the Warsaw Pact allies in early August, the Czechoslovak Communist Party was forced to reverse a decision to formalise its departure from Leninist principles, and agreed to suppress the newly-established social democratic party and other mass organisations working outside the framework of the National Front.



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New Doctrine:
Soviet leader
Leonid Brezhnev
signing the
Bratislava joint
declaration of six
communist
parties, 5 August
1968. Next to the
Secretary-
General are
Podgornyi and
Shelest



PRESSFOTO-AP

*Breaking
Resistance:*
Soviet tanks
slamming into a
vehicle barricade
in Prague, 21
August 1968

This was still not enough. On the night of 20–21 August, troops from the USSR, Poland, the GDR, Hungary and Bulgaria invaded, providing ‘internationalist help’ against the ‘right-wing and opportunistic’ forces. Dubcek finally resigned in April 1969 and a loyalist faction in the Party, led by Gustáv Husák, another Slovak, took full control of the Party. Half a million Party members were eventually purged when the new leadership embarked on a course of ‘normalisation’.⁴⁰

There are obvious similarities between the Czechoslovak and the earlier Hungarian attempts at liberalisation: one can point at the radicalisation of the Party and its gradual loss of control over reform, at Soviet fears of a domino effect, and at the external interventions themselves. Conversely, the main difference lies in the extent to which reforms progressed. In Hungary, the end result was a full-blown insurrection and a ‘grand retreat’ led by the Party leadership itself. In Czechoslovakia the intervention came well before that stage, even though Dubcek’s plans envisaged a continuing and institutionalised hegemony for the Communist Party within the National Front. The Czechoslovak events were also strongly spiced by the national Czech–Slovak issue, the parallel of which was absent in Hungary. Indeed, the federalisation of the state in 1969 into its two main constituent national parts remained the most visible legacy of the Prague Spring reforms.

Another difference can be discerned in long-term Party reactions. The Husák government did not resort to the amount and even nature of revenge and repression seen in Hungary immediately after 1956, but its policy of ‘forgetting’ froze society into an static state. Husák, who stayed in power until 1988, can be described as a ‘doctrinaire Leninist’, and the years of his rule have been summed up as an ‘era of motionless and spiritual death’.⁴¹ For two decades after 1968, there were practically no attempts at reform, political or economic. In 1972, the word ‘reform’ itself was officially outlawed from public vocabulary when the Academy of Sciences ideologically repudiated reform economics. Even discussing ‘improvements’ in the economic system became grounds for accusations of ‘fomenting counter-revolution’.⁴²

This stagnation not only created passivity and alienation, but led to a continuing slide in relative economic performance: Czechoslovak GDP per capita in 1960 equalled 90 per cent of Austria’s, but by 1985, after several years with zero growth rates, it had fallen to 60 per cent.⁴³ Foreign trade was diverted to the Comecon bloc, which in the 1970’s represented some 80 per cent of Czechoslovakia’s imports and exports. Although Slovakia was given a boost of investment, it was largely put into heavy industry, machine-building and armament plants. Yet the strict central planning, at least in comparison to Hungary and Poland, enabled the Czechoslovak régime to redistribute material welfare according to political criteria, so as to ensure full employment, keep prices stable and sustain the semblance of a welfare state. Combined with strict censorship, efficient internal security and a *nomenklatura* system applying Czech bureaucratic discipline, containment of dissent proved possible for a surprisingly long time.

The aftermath of 1956 marked a shift in the balance between the populist and the urbanist traditions of the Hungarian Party. Rákosi and his closest allies—and to some extent Nagy as

⁴⁰ Tismaneanu (1993), 101–3.

⁴¹ Bankowicz (1994), 154.

⁴² Batt (1991), 18.

⁴³ Both figures are from Swain and Swain (1993), 172, quoting Włodzimierz Brus, ‘1966 to 1975: Normalisation and Conflict’, in Kaser, M. C. and E. A. Radice (Eds), *The Economic History of Eastern Europe 1919–1975*, Vol. III, Oxford 1986. The normal caveat for economic data on the Socialist countries applies here: if anything, they seem to be on the high side. Nevertheless, the trend is illuminating.

well—were internationalists who strongly identified with the October revolution and had an urban, often Jewish background. In contrast, Kádár, despite being put in power by the Soviets, was an exponent of the more national and populist wing of the Party, which stressed the importance of incorporating aspects of the national spirit into state ideology. This nationally-oriented Party faction, 'through a more plebeian notion of class struggle which incorporated all forms of historical resistance to the ruling classes, drew a line of continuity from early anti-Habsburg independence movements to the ruling communist régime. The urban, European-oriented Marxists, such as Erik Molnár or the philosopher Lukács, considered such historical conceptions primitive, relying instead on the more classical arguments of the Marxist traditions.'⁴⁴

With these semi-populist inclinations in store the Kádár leadership chose to embark on a policy of continued reform, after the initial phase of harsh repression. This had much to do with personalities: Kádár has often been described as benevolently paternalistic dictator, who 'had a vision of a largely egalitarian modern socialist society which he set out to achieve through a series of gradual economic reform.'⁴⁵ He was not averse to increased participation (albeit very gradually and in tightly controlled forms) to broaden the social and political base of the régime, and de-politicised everyday life. From 1967, multiple-candidate elections were allowed and in 1983 they became mandatory. The rule of law was strengthened, i.e. through the introduction of pseudo-independent institutions to monitor conformity with the constitution. Nevertheless, one limit remained: the final authority of the Party could not be challenged.

In the field of economic policy, a thorough analysis led the Party leadership to conclude that Hungary could not rely solely on the Comecon markets and mechanisms, but had to become competitive in the open world markets. The process started in the early 1960's and was formulated in the 1968 New Economic Mechanism. It outlined a decentralisation of decision-making, the abandoning of central planning with compulsory targets in every sphere, and a freeing of some prices. It was a long-winded process with repeated setbacks, but by the early 1970's Hungary was commonly described as the 'happiest barrack in the camp', both with reference to the level of individual freedom and to the availability and quality of consumer goods. Between 1970 and 1978 national income rose by an average of 6 per cent per year, and personal consumption by 4 per cent annually—albeit fuelled by a huge increase in hard-currency debt. Shortages in the food supply, the overriding problem of nearly all socialist countries, were all but eliminated as a result of an agricultural policy which stressed incentives to farmers in the form of higher prices and increased freedom of decision. The flip side of this was, however, a shortage of money to buy the goods. After a halting of reform in the mid-70's, a new phase was initiated which included even stronger market elements: there was a cutback in subsidies, further decentralisation of economic decision-making, and even break-ups of large state monopolies and enterprises.

On the whole, the Hungarian government's attempts at co-opting intellectuals and technocrats through decentralisation and de-politicisation proved successful. The loyalty of the working class was bought with price stability, full employment and generous social benefits, the provision of which became the overriding aim of economic policy. But by the mid-1980's all this could no longer be accomplished, as inflation had eroded purchasing power and forced an ever larger proportion of the work force to take second jobs in the grey or black sectors of the economy, 'exploiting themselves', as the saying went.

Informal networks were tolerated in most Eastern and Central European countries as a means to overcome rigidity and bottlenecks, but in Hungary the process led to an increasing

⁴⁴ Hockenos (1993), 319-20.

⁴⁵ Grzybowski (1994b), 181.

diversification of organisational forms.⁴⁶ For ideological reasons, it was not a path the government and Party were happy to take, and even less, particularly compared to Gierek's Poland, a conscious exploitation of populism. But with the Kádárist strategy hinging so much on delivering decent material conditions, the step-by-step privatisation of ever-larger sectors of the economy had to be tolerated. Although the legal private sector employed only 5 per cent of the Hungarian work force in the late 70's, according to official estimates two thirds of households earned additional income in the 'second sector',⁴⁷ mainly by providing services on the market. The transformation of informal neighbourhood-based subsistence production into formally recognised production exchanged in market-like relations was only reluctantly allowed by the authorities in the 1970's. By the 1980's, however, the domain of the second economy was no longer restricted to providing agricultural products, building or services beyond the state sector, but extended into the very industrial core of the economy.

The Polish Crisis, Solidarity and Martial Law

The main legacy for the Socialist Bloc as a whole of the Prague Spring was the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine, which essentially stated that a country that had once gone socialist could never be freed from the common interests of other states in the socialist commonwealth. This served as an overt threat that the USSR reserved for itself the freedom to intervene in Eastern Europe whenever it felt that socialism, as interpreted in Moscow, was threatened. For good reason, Western passivity in such a situation was taken for granted.

The Brezhnev doctrine was the backdrop against which the new round of political turbulence in Poland was played out. In December 1970 Gomulka was finally forced out as a result of widespread worker unrest, caused by new radical increases in the prices of foods and fuels, which he ordered the police and army to suppress. In the unravelling of the fragile political balance that followed, Edward Gierek, a former mine-worker known as a pragmatic and able manager, became Party leader. Not surprisingly, given both his background and the events surrounding his ascendance, Gierek chose to appeal directly to industrial workers, by denouncing Gomulka's harsh reprisals and with promises of expansionist economic growth. In exchange for providing decent material conditions—'stuffing sausages in the workers' mouths'⁴⁸—there were to be no overt protests against the way the Party ran society, and the demands for free trade unions and a lifting of censorship were disregarded.

Gierek's strategy demanded production levels on par with promised consumption levels, and in the longer run the Polish economy was not able to accomplish that. After failing to co-opt workers to increase tempo and working hours, a programme was initiated to finance industrial expansion and modernisation with capital borrowed abroad; money was easily forthcoming due to *détente* and the petrodollars flowing over in Western banks. Simultaneously, Gomulka's policy of autarky was replaced by a drive to increase trade with the market economies of the West. During 1970–75, the stock of Western machinery in industry rose twenty-fold, salaries were up by 40 per cent in real terms, and Poland clocked in the highest economic growth rates in Europe, more than 10 per cent annually.

It was, however, a pipe dream. If the scheme to finance expansion with foreign capital ever was feasible, it was soon rendered impossible by the constant social unrest: a major proportion of the borrowing had to be channelled to consumption in order to protect social peace. Of the more than \$20 billion Poland borrowed abroad in the 1970's, \$6 billion went

⁴⁶ Grabher (1994), 6–9.

⁴⁷ Deppe and Hoss (1989), 40.

⁴⁸ Stokes (1993), 20.

directly to the importation of foodstuffs.⁴⁹ A large part of the rest was squandered on unprofitable investment projects, channelled to the Comecon trading partners in the form of imported input in goods exported for soft currency⁵⁰, or frittered away in widespread graft and corruption. During all of the 70's, Poland's trade balance remained negative.

Despite huge imports, shortages of foodstuffs remained endemic. This was not so much a result of government intervention in agriculture, as, paradoxically, of the absence of it. Although Polish farming had not been collectivised, neither had the bulk of the peasantry developed into an entrepreneurial class, but remained locked in inefficient small-plot cultivation. The Gierek government did introduce incentives to encourage specialisation and larger units in agriculture, but the main method used to stimulate food output was to lift the prices paid to farmers for produce. Fiscal prudence would have demanded a simultaneous raising of consumer prices or reducing subsidies, but these measures were invariably withdrawn when industrial strikes erupted. The inevitable result of this overheating was, of course, accelerated inflation and pressures to tighten fiscal policy even more, all of which only generated new bouts of unrest. By 1978 the state was in effect bankrupt and shortages of foodstuffs, medicine and fuels became desperate.

In the process of this gigantic loan-financed Ponzi scheme, the Party for all practical purposes gave up its pretensions of ideological consistency for populist technocratism. It could, however, not escape its claims to omniscience, as its hegemonic political position was internally and externally motivated in exactly those terms. When things went wrong, there was nobody else to blame, and no other way to contain dissent than coercion. The great lesson to be learned from the Polish events, the GDR leader Erich Honecker told the Czechoslovak Politburo in the spring of 1981, was to see that 'the foreign debt did not reach that dangerous level'⁵¹—a somewhat superfluous caveat, as Czechoslovakia had been more restrained than any other Comecon country in accumulating foreign debt; in 1988 outstanding hard-currency loans amounted to only \$3 billion–\$4 billion.⁵² As for the Polish comrades, lacking the resolve and means to resort to Czechoslovak-style repression, Honecker's warning was by then a difficult one to heed, as it had been shown again and again that political stability was equal to food price stability and that food price stability could be financed only by borrowing.

Gierek's problems were exacerbated by his weakened credentials as a patriot. Among Party hard-liners he was widely seen as toadying to the West. They were particularly incensed when he in 1975 negotiated the emigration to the Federal Republic of 125,000 ethnic Germans in exchange for DM2.3 billion in grants and loans. Before, no ethnic Germans had officially been acknowledged as remaining in the country, and hard-liners also believed the German credits created a dangerous dependency. His handling of the relationship with the Soviet Union was equally disastrous: also in 1975, Gierek decorated Leonid Brezhnev, the very author of the Doctrine of Limited Sovereignty, with the *Virtuti Militari*, an order instituted during the war with Russia in 1792 and normally given only for extraordinary courage shown on the battlefield. Soon after this gaffe he proposed introducing into the constitution a statute on 'unbreakable brotherly alliance' with the USSR. This created an even bigger public uproar, and although the clause subsequently was changed to a more non-committal 'strengthening the friendship and co-operation' with the Soviet Union, Gierek had been fatally discredited among broad sections of the Polish population.⁵³ When the next big crisis came, Gierek and the technocrats had few favours to call in from any quarters.

⁴⁹ Myant (1982), 18; also Blazyca (1992).

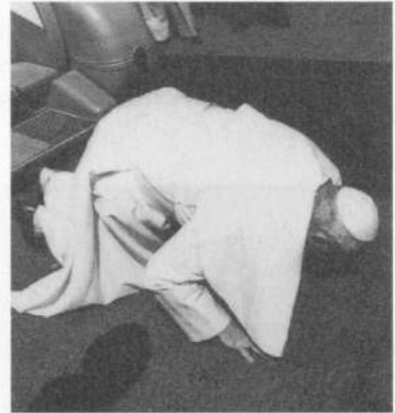
⁵⁰ Krzeminski (1994), 145–6.

⁵¹ Garton Ash (1994), 157.

⁵² Tismaneanu (1993), 149.

⁵³ Krzeminski (1994), 151.

HUFVUDSTADSBLADET ARCHIVES



Coming Home: Pope John Paul's 1979 visit to Poland demonstrated the superior power of the Catholic Church to energise the masses

The problem for the Party was all the greater as the intellectual opposition and shop-floor leaders of the working class had by then found each other, and this alliance was openly supported by an increasingly politically active and radical Catholic Church. In addition, the period of *détente* between the superpowers and the Helsinki Final Act put new external limits on repression.

In June 1976 workers struck in Radom after yet another round of price hikes; serious bloodletting ensued, something Gierek had promised he would never allow. The strikers were supported by a rudimentary pseudo-union, the Committee for the Defence of Workers (KOR), created by intellectuals from the 1968 anti-political movement. In April 1978 the formation of an independent, but still illegal, trade union was announced in Gdansk; among the activists was the Lenin Shipyard electrician Lech Walesa.

The peculiar historical and social circumstances in Poland go a long way to explain the events of 1980–81. One fact that deserves particular attention is the huge influence enjoyed by the Catholic Church. During the 70's it had an extraordinarily charismatic and politically astute leader in its Primate, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, and gained the heaviest possible external back-up when Karol Wojtyła, the former Archbishop of Cracow, was elected Pope John Paul II in 1978. It is almost impossible to overstate the importance of his papal grand tour of Poland in 1979: it allowed millions of people to collectively show their support of something outside, and fundamentally opposed to, the communist belief system; proved the weakness of the Party in comparison with support for the Church and 'the other Poland'; and generally demonstrated to everybody the power of the masses.

In August the same year, soon after a second papal visit and following new price hikes, cutbacks in subsidies and the dismissal of a worker on political grounds, the Gdansk activists organised new strikes that now swept both the Baltic coast and the Silesian mining and industrial areas. This time, the government felt it had to negotiate—if only because several high-ranking military leaders declared their refusal to order their troops to shoot on the strikers. When talks started it became clear that the demands had escalated to include the right to free trade unions, a lifting of censorship and the release of political prisoners. By the end of the month, when the massive popular support for the protests was clear for everybody to see, the Party Central Committee evicted its hard-liners⁵⁴ and thus opened the way for a dialogue on not only economic, but also political concessions. On the last day of August,

⁵⁴ Gierek officially exited on 5 September, and was replaced as Party leader by Stanisław Kania, a cautious man widely seen as a compromise candidate.

Walesa signed the documents legalising the *Solidarity* trade union. Within months it developed into a mass movement with some ten million members from all strata of society—every third Party member joined. For the next eighteen months, Poland was in fact governed by an uneasy tripartite constellation of Party, *Solidarity*, and Church.



PRESSFOTO-AP

Behind Dark Glasses: General Wojciech Jaruzelski reviewing troops after the introduction of Martial Law in December 1981. 'During these days, I often held onto the cold handle of my pistol', he later told



PRESSFOTO-AP

On the March: A troop convoy passing the United Workers Party headquarters in Warsaw, a week after Martial Law was introduced. Even then, the party could not bring itself together to assume the initiative

Among many quarters of the étatist-oriented élite, however, *Solidarity* was seen not only as a mortal danger to the Party, but as a threat to the very existence of the Polish state. With its radicalism and lack of moderation and self-discipline, Party ideologues argued, *Solidarity*

threatened to create an 'anarchy' similar to the one which had led to the 18th Century partitions. They clearly referred to Soviet worries and may have had a point: in 1980–81, the Cold War was at a new height, and the Soviet Union had demonstrated with the invasion of Afghanistan that the Brezhnev doctrine was very much in force. With this hyperrealist interpretation of the nature of the relationship between Poland and the USSR (as well as having a deeply distrustful attitude towards Germany), powerful elements in the Party and armed forces continued to see the Soviet Union as 'the only guarantor of Poland's sovereignty, albeit a limited one.'⁵⁵

The need to preclude a looming Soviet intervention was the rationale given by the military leadership when it proclaimed martial law on 13 December 1981. It could back up the claim with strong rhetoric from Moscow and hard information on Soviet troop movements. Whether that was just posturing is, however, as of yet unclear: there certainly was not any visible involvement of Soviet personnel during any stage of the actual imposition of martial law. Nevertheless, the Polish military leadership had held extensive talks with the Soviet High Command throughout the previous autumn, and it is clear that the core of the communist establishment, in and out of uniform, owed allegiance to the Soviet agencies which had given them their positions in the first place.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, the coup leader, himself probably thought he had saved Poland from a Soviet invasion, 'the abyss' it had been standing on the edge of.⁵⁷ A paradoxical effect of the military take-over was also that the Polish army, for the first time since the Second World War, had gained the ability to put up a serious fight against a possible Soviet invasion.

Jaruzelski had become Prime Minister already in February 1981 and Party First Secretary the following October, but the régime installed by the martial law had little support in Marxist-Leninist theory—in fact, it strongly resembled traditional authoritarian military rule of a Latin American type. Indeed, the coup itself was proof that the Party had lost its ability to govern. During 1980–81 the Party had 'collapsed at the culmination of a long process of decay, which had been sapping respect for its corrupt leaders, its failed policies, and its irrelevant ideology for years.'⁵⁸ The paralysis went so deep that even during martial law, the Party could not pull itself together to consolidate its reassumed power. During the policy of 'normalisation' instituted under martial law, Poland did not experience anything on the scale of the purges and the social terror seen in Hungary after 1956 and in Czechoslovakia after 1968. What the régime managed, though, was a stabilisation of the economy; a series of radical price hikes meant that the average standard of living dropped by a quarter during 1982 alone, and foreign trade was diverted towards the Comecon Bloc.

Power was assumed by a Military Council for National Salvation (*WRON*)—the name chosen was symbolic, as it did not include words such as 'socialist' or 'worker' which had been applied to the interim post-crisis régimes earlier in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Jaruzelski had been a member of the communist party since the war, but he nevertheless managed to project himself as first and foremost a Polish patriot: the general could indeed point to his background as a member of the gentry and a career officer, and it was no secret that he had lost both parents during the family's war-time deportation to the USSR. The Jaruzelski government was also eager to take advantage of the possibilities for demure populist anti-Russian posturing created by Gorbachev's *perestroika*. In 1987, the Jaruzelski government persuaded the Soviets to agree to a joint investigation into some of the most blatant cases of Soviet interference in Polish affairs, such as the massacre of some 23,000

⁵⁵ Krzeminski (1994), 163.

⁵⁶ Davies (1986), 22.

⁵⁷ Andrew and Gordievsky (1990), 486; this is a recurrent theme in practically all interviews Jaruzelski has given since.

⁵⁸ Davies (1986), 20.

Polish officers in Katyn and two other localities in 1940, the liquidation of the pre-war Communist Party, and the deportations to the east of Poles from territories occupied by the USSR after the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact.

Yet efforts to generate institutionalised mass support, as through the Patriotic Movement for National Rebirth (*PRON*) or the official trade union (*OPZZ*), failed miserably. So did, by and large, half-hearted endeavours to present the Soviet Union as the only possible protector of Poland's frontiers against German revanchism.⁵⁹ Among hard-liners in the Party, however, xenophobia and nationalism gained increased prominence. Its prime outlet became the Patriotic Association *Grunwald*, founded in 1980, which continued the anti-Semitic, anti-German and covertly anti-Soviet nationalist tradition of the Partisans, whose leader Moczar was a member of the Politburo during 1980–81.⁶⁰ Though it was always officially disavowed by the Party leadership, many consider *Grunwald* a vehicle created by forces inside the security apparatus and enjoying the patronage of high-ranking, but anonymous communist officials.⁶¹ If that is indeed the case, it says a lot about attitudes among the communist hard-line élite: by way of illustration, during one demonstration staged by *Grunwald* in Warsaw in 1981 to counter a student anti-government meeting, demonstrators carried banners denouncing 'the terror of the Jewish clique', and marched on the former secret police headquarters, where the crowd proceeded to commemorate 'Polish communists persecuted by Jews during 1949–53'.⁶² Bizarre as it seems, *Grunwald's* pet theory was the existence of a 'continuum stretching from the security service interrogators of the 1950's to *Solidarity* activists in the 1980's'.⁶³

Grunwald, whose actual base of popular support remains unclear and in any case consisted mainly of older folk, went into hibernation in 1983. Nevertheless, its nationalist-xenophobic agenda was prominently represented in the martial law régime. Thus, when members of the *KOR* Workers' Self-Defence Committee were tried in 1984 for 'conspiring against the state', they were accused by the prosecution for, among other things, being in the service of 'international Zionist freemasonry'.⁶⁴ All in all, during martial law, the chauvinist-communists' influence was probably stronger than at any other time during communist rule.

Ethnicity as a Structural Factor

The preceding analysis has indicated that ethnicity and nationalism have been important, even crucial determinants of political behaviour in modern-era Central Europe. Communal tension and irredentism were major destabilising forces during the first half of the 20th century, and simmered under the surface during communist rule, occasionally being exploited by the régimes themselves or erupting as anti-communist protest. Yet the context

⁵⁹ Garton Ash (1989), 239, quotes sociological studies which show that, in 1980, 10.7 per cent of respondents saw a threat to Polish independence from the Federal Republic of Germany, while no less than 49.6 perceived the Soviet Union as constituting such a threat. By 1984 the proportions had fallen to 4.7 and 23 per cent, respectively—the last figure indicates that martial law, for all its drawbacks, was interpreted as having diminished the possibility of a Soviet intervention.

⁶⁰ Tellingly, the still-existing association takes its name from the great 1410 battle in which a Polish–Lithuanian army defeated the Teutonic Knights, stopping and eventually reversing German expansion in the East. In Germany, the event is known as the Battle of Tannenberg.

⁶¹ Cf. Vinton (1991b).

⁶² Cf. Ruge and Ruge (1990), 45.

⁶³ Sabbat-Swidlicka (1982). Several *Solidarity* leaders, including Michnik, Kuron and Geremek, were of Jewish descent.

⁶⁴ Cf. Ruge and Ruge (1990), 45.

has changed dramatically since the inter-war period. The demographics of Central Europe have been altered almost beyond recognition by the worst two disasters to hit European socio-cultural diversity in modern times: the all but complete destruction of Eastern European Jewry, and the expulsion of nearly all the German communities east of the Oder and in the Danube basin. During the murderous and barbaric 1940's, the ancient Eastern European identity which Jacques LeRider has described as an 'inter-cultural *koine*',⁶⁵ was all but eradicated in the name of social engineering.

The killings and population transfers during and shortly after the Second World War created the ethnically most homogenous macro-political units that have ever existed in the area. Even so, the communist governments made it policy to implement ambitious programmes of assimilation, including tight controls on ethnic-minority organisation, education and cultural autonomy.⁶⁶ The degree of homogeneity accomplished by 1960 is indicated by the ethno-linguistic fractionalisation index in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: *Ethno-Linguistic Fractionalisation Index, 1960*⁶⁷

Poland	28
Hungary	98
Czechoslovakia	490
<i>Albania</i>	93
<i>Bulgaria</i>	220
<i>East Germany</i>	17
<i>West Germany</i>	26
<i>Romania</i>	252
<i>USSR</i>	666
<i>Yugoslavia</i>	754

These figures should certainly be treated with caution. For one, the ethno-linguistic diversity calculations are based on official or semi-official head-counts which may be biased. What the indices nevertheless point to is the fact that the three Central European communist countries were remarkably ethnically homogenous in comparison with other countries of the Socialist Bloc. Czechoslovakia is of course an exception, the main reason being the Czech-Slovak duality within the federation.

Ethnic and linguistic boundaries were not, however, completely congruent with the state delineations in 1960, and have not become so since. The starting-point for the following discussion is a compilation of conflicting estimates of Central Europe's minority populations at the time of the transition.

⁶⁵ LeRider (1994), 106.

⁶⁶ Cf. McQuaid (1991), 19; Reisch (1991), 14-15; Obrman (1991).

⁶⁷ *The World Handbook of Social and Political Indicators* (1975), database; formula $F = I - \text{SUM} (N/N) * (N-I/N-I)$.

*Table 5.3: Estimates of the Sizes of Central European Minorities, circa 1990*⁶⁸

	<i>Lowest available figure; generally not credible</i>	<i>Official or semi- official figure; of variable credibility</i>	<i>Highest credible figure</i>	<i>Highest available figure; generally not credible</i>
Poland (pop. 39,000,000)				
Byelorussians	200,000			400,000
Ukrainians	150,000			400,000
Germans	4,000	100,000	1,000,000	2,000,000
Roma (Gypsies)	16,000			45,000
Jews	3,000		15,000	
Czechoslovakia (pop. 15,600,000)				
Roma (Gypsies)	400,000		800,000	
Hungarians		590,000	700,000	
Ukrainians (Ruthenians)	45,000		300,000	
Germans	55,000			150,000
Hungary (pop. 10,500,000)				
Roma (Gypsies)		35,000	400,000	1,000,000
Germans		35,000	175,000	200,000
Slovaks		30,000	120,000	
Southern Slavs		40,000		
Jews			80,000	100,000
Romania (pop. 23,000,000)				
Hungarians		1,700,000		2,500,000
Germans	30,000	60,000		200,000
Roma (Gypsies)	200,000	230,000	760,000	7,000,000
Ukrainians	60,000	350,000		600,000
Bulgarians	12,000	30,000		130,000
Lipovans	12,000			100,000

Table 5.3 raises two interesting points. First, a comparison with Table 3.1 above makes abundantly clear the dramatic homogenisation that has taken place since the 1930's. Catholic Polish-speakers accounted for less than 70 per cent of the Polish pre-war population of some 30 million, but by the late 1980's minorities comprised less than 8 per cent of a total head-count of 38 million—indeed, using a more conservative estimate particularly of the ethnic German presence, minorities may have accounted for only 3–4 per cent. In Czechoslovakia the development has been almost equally dramatic. The ethnic German minority, which until 1939 accounted for almost one fourth of the republic's population, is by and large gone, and so is the Ukrainian-Ruthenian minority. The numbers of ethnic Germans and Jews in Hungary have in absolute terms declined by, respectively, more than 50 per cent and 80–90 per cent.

All the same, that some ethnic relationships are virtually unchanged since the 1930's. A major Magyar *Diaspora* remains in Hungary's neighbouring countries, and the Czech–

⁶⁸ Liebich (1992), 38.

Slovak relationship emerged so antagonistic from the era of communist hegemony that the Czechoslovak federation split up almost immediately after transition from communism. After that, some half a million Slovak-speakers are reported to have chosen to take up Czech citizenship. The number of native Czech-speakers opting for Slovak passports has, however, been almost negligible.⁶⁹

In any case, many of the question marks that surrounded the inter-war ethnic tallies have disappeared, as the post-communist governments in Central Europe have seemed to be more forthright about minority head-counts than their communist and pre-war predecessors. The strategies of amalgamation (e.g. the creation of a 'Czechoslovak' nationality), and of fragmentation, (i.e. splitting minority groups into sub-groups) were by and large abandoned after 1989 in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, at least as an instrument to prop up the ethnic majority's status. The Romanian government, however, still splits the country's ethnic Hungarian and German minorities into three more or less artificial sub-groups each (Hungarians, Szeklers, and Changos; Germans, Schwabs, and Saxons)⁷⁰, and in the former Yugoslavia facts on the ground are obviously even more obscured.

Estimates of minority numbers have tended to be revised upwards after the transformations of 1989–90. This is partly an effect of the opportunities for emigration or 'repatriation' that have opened up for members of certain ethnic communities, but it also reflects a relaxation of pressures to conform. Anti-Semitism was a powerful force during the entire communist era, prompting many Jews to hide or suppress their ethnic, cultural and religious identity. Even during the later days of communist rule, ethnic Germans in Eastern Europe were branded *en masse* as 'fascists', providing a powerful incentive for self-concealment of ethnic identity. After 1989, however, the incentive structure was reversed: proof of, in particular, German ancestry then suddenly became a ticket to the prosperous West; many of the recently self-declared *Volksdeutsche* are indeed derided as *Volkswagendeutsche*. It appears to be the case that a substantial number of Poles, Romanians and Russians have declared themselves ethnic German mainly for economic reasons, and that there has been widespread use of falsified documentation.

The Germans

Almost 40 per cent of Poland's present territory was within the 1937 borders of Germany. From 1944 to 1949, most of the inhabitants of these areas either fled or were deported to the far side of the Oder-Neisse line. The same went for many of the 1.7 million inhabitants of Central Poland who had declared themselves, or been declared, German by nationality during the occupation⁷¹—in yet another indication of how fluid ethnic identification and self-identification can be in these areas. The Polish government, however, let or forced some to stay, primarily in order to man mines, industry and shipping in the so-called Recovered Territories. A quarter of a million Germans were permitted to emigrate between 1956 and 1959, and another 100,000 during the 1960's. Those who stayed behind were generally classified as 'autochtones', i.e. Germanised Poles, and became the subjects of intensive Polonisation.

By 1970 the Polish government denied the existence of any substantial ethnic German minority in Poland: those self-identified ethnic Germans who remained, it argued, had forfeited any claim to German nationality either passively by choosing to remain within Poland's new post-war borders, or actively by declaring themselves Poles. This policy was undermined in 1975 when the Polish authorities granted 125,000 exit visas to Germany in

⁶⁹ Cf. Pehe (1993).

⁷⁰ Cf. Liebich (1992), 32.

⁷¹ Garton Ash (1994), 236.

exchange for credits from the Federal Republic. According to the Polish government, the deal did not, however, imply an admission of the existence of a German minority, and up until 1989 it maintained that both the Greek and Macedonian minorities were larger (4,500 each) than the German (2,500).⁷²

The German Red Cross, on its part, in the 1970's estimated that the number of Poles entitled to German citizenship could exceed one million, and that some 400,000 of them were willing to leave.⁷³ Even after the post-1989 swell of emigration, hundreds of thousands of ethnic Germans remain in Poland, with major pockets of German-speakers in the Opole, Katowice and Czystochowa regions of Upper Silesia. In the 1991 general elections, the German list won 1.5 per cent of the vote; if this is used as an indication of the size of the minority, the reckoning would add up to some 600,000.⁷⁴ This figure may seem high, being equivalent to the size of the German minority in 1939; the correct point of reference should, however, be the 10–12 million people that lived in the German provinces annexed to Poland as a result of Yalta and Potsdam.

From a Polish nationalist point of view, the situation became even more problematic as the 'Silesians' or *Slonzaks*, an ethnic group not heard of since the inter-war period, began to reassert their ethno-cultural identity. From 1990, a bi-lingual newspaper, the *Gazeta Gornoslaska–Oberschlesische Zeitung*, has catered to the Slonzaks in Upper Silesia. The Silesians straddle the Germanic-Slav fault line, and have since the 1920's been considered more or less overtly pro-German by nationalist Poles.⁷⁵

Only some 200,000 ethnic Germans were allowed to stay in Czechoslovakia after the expulsions of 1945–48, and various forms of discrimination, including the denial of any formal minority rights until 1968, prompted many to emigrate in the following decades. Those remaining are scattered throughout the Czech republic and Slovakia. This has led to strong assimilation, and many formerly ethnic Germans appear to have changed their self-declared nationality to Czech or Slovak in government surveys.⁷⁶ The improvement of relations between Czechoslovakia (and both its successor states) and Germany have contributed to the coming-out of some ethnic Germans, but the number is nevertheless certain to be substantially lower than 100,000 in the Czech lands. In Slovakia, 5,629 citizens declared themselves German in the March 1991 census; the actual number of Carpathian Germans may however be even three times higher.⁷⁷

⁷² McQuaid (1991), 20.

⁷³ Garton Ash (1994), 237. It should be noted that the record of ethnic German minorities is complicated by the *ius sanguinis* citizenship principle applied in the Federal Republic's legislation. According to this, anybody (in Eastern Europe) who shows proof of German ancestry, can claim to have considered herself or himself as mainly German by culture, or even has a father or grandfather who fought in the German armed forces, is entitled to German citizenship and—implicitly—enjoys the protection of the Federal Republic.

⁷⁴ During those elections, German minority candidates took 26 per cent of the vote in the Opole district, and an activist declared that he had collected the signatures of 260,000 people who declared themselves of German descent. After the ban on education in the German language was lifted in 1989, the number of schools in the Opole area offering courses in German jumped to 184. Cf. McQuaid (1991), 20. This may, however, reflect the increased opportunity value that knowledge of German is perceived to have: representatives of the German minority in Silesia have complained that teachers financed by the Federal Republic under a minority protection agreement with Poland are instead assigned to schools in Central Poland, thus catering mainly to students learning German as a foreign language.

⁷⁵ Gerner et al. (1995), 242.

⁷⁶ Obrman (1991), 11.

⁷⁷ Kohler (1994), 3.

In Hungary, the Germans remain the largest national minority bar the Gypsies, numbering 200,000 to 220,000 according to estimates provided by the minorities and accepted by the government.⁷⁸ Some 150 villages and towns have officially been designed bilingual, in stark contrast to the situation in the 1950's when the use of German language in public was outlawed.⁷⁹ The ethnic Germans in Hungary have, however, a tradition of assimilation into the Magyar majority, and identification with Germany proper is weak: few speak fluent German, and then it is usually Schwabian dialects, not *Hochdeutsch*.

As in the Czech republic and Slovakia, Hungary's German community has not established any political party, but, as seven other ethnic minority groups, it gained representation by quota in the first freely-elected parliament. Moreover, in the December 1994 municipal elections candidates from the electoral list of the League of Hungarian Germans won cumulatively some 680,000 votes, i.e. three to four times more than even the highest estimate of the number ethnic Germans in the country.⁸⁰

The Jews

The Jewish element in Central Europe is small in absolute terms, particularly in relation to the inter-war period, but in Hungary as in Poland Jews have been more prominent in political and cultural life than their numbers would suggest. Throughout Central Europe, Jews are fully integrated and only anti-Semites consider them 'national minorities'.

The largest Jewish community is found in Hungary, estimated to number 80,000 to 100,000 people. In Czechoslovakia, two thirds of the 45,000 Jews who survived the Holocaust or returned from exile had emigrated by 1950; most went to Israel with which Czechoslovakia at that time entertained cordial relations. A second wave of emigration occurred in the aftermath of the Prague Spring, after which only 5,000 to 6,000 members of the Jewish religious community is estimated to have remained.⁸¹ Definition poses some problems here as well. The communist authorities in Czechoslovakia, as their counterparts in other Soviet Bloc countries (but in contrast to the Soviet Union), regarded Jews not as an ethnic minority but as members of a religious denomination. Non-religious Jews were thus not necessarily accounted for. Slovakia's Jewish community is now estimated to number 3,000.⁸²

Poland's Jewish community currently equals only a third of a per cent of its pre-war strength. There seems to be a clear dichotomy between identification and self-identification: Jews who have opted to stay in Poland despite continued discrimination tend to identify themselves as Poles, while the public tends to identify them as Jews. According to media reports a Jewish revival has been under way in Poland since 1989: the community is reported to have grown from an estimated 4,000 to over 10,000 members, as many parents have told their children of a heritage they have kept hidden since the 1940's. Some say this trend may eventually swell the Jewish community to 50,000 people.⁸³

The Magyars

Magyars form the largest extra-territorial ethnic communities in Central Europe. Even according to conservative estimates, some 1.7 million ethnic Magyars live in Romania, at

⁷⁸ Reisch (1991), 15.

⁷⁹ Kalnoky (1995).

⁸⁰ Kalnoky (1995).

⁸¹ Obrman (1991), 12.

⁸² Hockenos (1993), 235.

⁸³ Cf. Brzezinski (1995).

least 600,000 in Slovakia (comprising 12 per cent of the total population), 400,000 in Serbia, and 160,000 in the Ukraine. The Magyars tend to form majorities or solid minorities in the areas where they are settled; this is the case particularly in the south and the east of Slovakia where they constitute up to 90 per cent of the population, and in some areas in Romanian Transylvania.

Although not subjected to quite the same extent of maltreatment in the immediate aftermath of the war as the Germans, Slovakian Magyars were considered a hostile national element and subjected to various forms of official discrimination.⁸⁴ In a compulsory population exchange in 1945–48, some 75,000 Magyars were forcibly moved from Slovakia and 87,000 Slovaks from Hungary,⁸⁵ an operation for which the post-transition Hungarian government has demanded a formal apology from Bratislava.⁸⁶ This is but one expression of the lingering tension between Hungary and Slovakia, arguably the most serious inter-ethnic conflict with international implications in Central Europe. It appears to be the case that the inter-communal strife has been exploited and even fomented by political leaders in both Slovakia and Hungary.

The Gypsies

The size of Eastern Europe's Gypsy community is hotly disputed. Before the Second World War, official censuses did not even record Gypsies as a community. The communist-era authorities either followed the same policy, refusing 'to recognise the legitimacy of the Gypsies as a distinctive ethnic group'⁸⁷, or, if they acknowledged the existence of a Gypsy community, tended to grossly underestimate it.

Attitudes towards families attempting to hold on to their traditional nomadic life-styles varied from tolerant neglect to forced assimilation and resettlement, but in any case it was far from opportune to identify oneself as Gypsy. In 1958 Czechoslovakia outlawed 'nomadism' outright, effectively branding many Gypsies as criminals. Special identity cards were issued, and substantial cash rewards given to Gypsy women who agreed to be sterilised.⁸⁸ In 1961, the Political Committee of the Hungarian communist party declined to acknowledge Gypsies as a distinctive ethnic minority because 'they had no common language or identifiable country of origin.'⁸⁹ This decree in turn served to legitimise the continued absence of education in Roma and other Gypsy languages. Gypsy languages have not been used in and for education, and the bulk of the Gypsies have been assimilated linguistically into the majority: 70 per cent of Hungarian Gypsies speak only Hungarian. Moreover, as the mother tongue has been used as the criterion for determining nationality, they have not shown up as Gypsies in official censuses.⁹⁰ In addition, census offices have difficulties listing many Gypsies because they lack fixed addresses.

After the collapse of the communism, governments have brought less power to bear on non-conformist individuals and social groups. Even so, many Gypsies continue to identify with the majority ethnic group—be it because of self-perceived assimilation or for fear of discrimination.

⁸⁴ Obrman (1991), 9.

⁸⁵ Reisch (1991), 14.

⁸⁶ *Der Spiegel*, 39/1994, 161.

⁸⁷ Barany (1992), 42.

⁸⁸ Barany (1992), 42–3.

⁸⁹ Barany (1990), 28.

⁹⁰ Liebich (1992), 36.

In any case, recent estimates put the numbers at 600,000 in Hungary, at 800,000 in Czechoslovakia, and at 50,000 in Poland.⁹¹ This represents a major revision that cannot be accounted for solely by the higher than average birth-rates in Gypsy families. The 1971 Hungarian census recorded 320,000 Gypsies, while the numbers quoted by Czechoslovak and Polish officials in 1990 were, respectively, 380,000 and 15,000.⁹²

Before the break-up of Czechoslovakia, most of the federation's Gypsy population lived in the eastern half of the country. Indeed, as most Gypsies in what is now the Czech Republic were killed by the Nazis during the Second World War, the majority of Bohemian and Moravian Gypsies now have their roots in Slovakia or Ruthenia, from where many families were resettled to areas vacated by Sudeten Germans.

The Slavs

The USSR's annexation of the 180,000 square kilometres east of the Curzon Line in 1945 all but cleared Poland of its previously so numerous Ukrainian and Byelorussian minorities. About half a million Ukrainians from within Poland's new borders were also expelled immediately after the war, in exchange for about 1.5 million ethnic Poles driven out from the Soviet acquisitions in Byelorussia, Ukraine and Lithuania.⁹³

In 1947, a further 150,000 ethnic Ukrainians were transferred to the annexed formerly German territories in the west and north-east. This was part of the 'Operation Vistula', designed to break the back of the then ongoing Ukrainian insurrection; as a result East Prussia and Pomerania now in fact have much more numerous Ukrainian than German communities. Even after the expulsions and resettlement campaigns, some 300,000 ethnic Ukrainians remain in Poland's south-east corner around the city of Przemyśl. On the other side of the border, in the eastern part of Galicia now part of the Ukraine, an estimated 210,000 ethnic Poles remain.⁹⁴ As ever, multi-lingualism and conflicting religious and linguistic affiliations makes clear-cut ethnic identification and self-identification problematic.

Some 60,000 ethnic Poles also live within the borders of the Czech Republic, concentrated to the Tesin (Cieszyn) area in Upper Silesia.⁹⁵ The most volatile and politically vocal Polish community abroad is, however, found in Lithuania. The approximately 300,000 ethnic Poles make up seven per cent of Lithuania's total population, forming strong majorities in the rural areas surrounding the capital Vilnius (Vilna). Since the war, Lithuanian Poles have been a disadvantaged and poverty-stricken group with limited access to higher education and mainly working on the land.⁹⁶

Czechoslovakia lost its Ukrainian-Ruthenian minority in much the same way as Poland lost its Byelorussian and Ukrainian ones; when Carpatho-Ruthenia was ceded to the USSR in 1945 only a tenth of the previously 600,000 Ruthenians remained within the new borders. The Uniate Church was disbanded and Ruthenians forced to join the pro-Moscow Orthodox Church. Moscow also pressed the Czechoslovak authorities to identify Ruthenians as Ukrainians, and as a consequence many of them instead opted to identify themselves as Slovaks. This process was accelerated by farm collectivisation, which disrupted the social structure of the areas in Slovakia inhabited mainly by Ruthenians. In 1991, after the Ruthenian nationality was reintroduced as a heading in official statistics, some 19,000

⁹¹ Cf. Barany (1992), 41-2.

⁹² Barany (1990), 26; Barany (1992), 41-2.

⁹³ Davies (1986), 82.

⁹⁴ Cf. *Der Spiegel*, 44/1994, 182-4.

⁹⁵ Obrman (1991), 11.

⁹⁶ Cf. Burant (1991).

individuals chose to list themselves as such; about half of those had previously been recorded as ethnic Ukrainians.⁹⁷

Modernisation as a Structural Factor

A macro-level examination of the socio-economic structure under 'mature' socialism makes clear how successful the régimes really were in transforming and modernising the Central European societies, both in absolute terms and in comparison with Western Europe—in Table 5.4 Austria is used as a point of reference.

*Table 5.4: Socio-Economic Indicators for Central Europe*⁹⁸

		Poland	CSSR	Hungary	Austria	Highest*
<i>Urban population, % (in cities 100,000+)</i>	1950	23	14	20	38	71 (UK)
	1960	27	14	22	38	72 (UK)
	1976	20	17	28	31	72 (US)
<i>Labour force in industry, %</i>	1960	29	46	35	46	44 (FRG)
	1977	38	49	58	41	Hungary
<i>GDP, % in industry in agriculture</i>	1960	51	65	58	49	56 (Lux)
	1978	52	60	47	33	62 (GDR)
	1960	23	13	20	11	n/m
	1978	16	9	15	5	18 (Bulg)
<i>Energy consumption, kg per capita</i>	1965	3,504	5,676	2,812	2,630	9,201 (US)
<i>GDP per capita, \$</i>	1978	3,650	4,730	3,480	7,520	12,990 (Swi)
<i>average growth rate, % annually</i>	1960–75	4.0	2.7	3.1	4.3	6.6 (Gre)
	1970–78	5.9	4.3	5.1	3.6	Poland
<i>Literacy rate, %</i>	1960	98	99	98	98	100
	1970	98	n/a	99	99	100
<i>Students per one million inhabitants</i>	1967	8,000	10,110	5,030	6,810	28,400 (US)
<i>Telephones per 1,000 pop.</i>	1960	41	105	56	139	481 (US)
	1975	76	177	100	283	697 (US)
<i>Newspaper circulation Per 1,000 population</i>	1960	145	236	143	208	477 (Swe)
	1975	248	300	233	320	572 (Swe)
<i>Television receivers per 1,000 population</i>	1965	66	149	81	98	362 (US)
	1975	180	249	223	246	571 (US)
<i>Infant mortality per 1,000 live births</i>	1965	42	25	39	28	13 (Swe)
<i>Doctors per one million inhabitants</i>	1964	1,211	1,754	1,795	1,772	2,393 (USSR)

Dates may be approximate; * European or North American countries quoted in the *World Handbook* n/m: Not meaningful

⁹⁷ Obrman (1991), 12.

⁹⁸ *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators* (1972) and (1983b).

The story these indicators tell, especially when contrasted with the figures for the pre-war and immediate post-war period, is one of rapid and dramatic industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation. Already by the 1960's, the predominance of agriculture in the economy was a thing of the past and its place taken by industry. This translates into a huge socio-economic transformation. By 1977, 58 per cent of the Hungarian labour force was employed in industry, the highest proportion given for any country in the world; as noted in Chapter 3 above, in 1936 the figure had been 21.8 per cent,⁹⁹ and even in 1960 only 35 per cent. In Poland and Czechoslovakia industrialisation was somewhat less dramatic, but still very impressive.

Yet these indicators point to the problems of initiating a transformation to post-industrialism, normally characterised by growth in the service sector. Whereas most Western European countries noted a steep decline in the share of industrial production of total output by the late 1960's, industry retained a dominant position in the communist economies. By the mid-1970's, industry accounted for a larger proportion of GDP, and services for a smaller proportion, in *every* East European socialist economy than in *any* Western European or North American country.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the era up to the 1970's can be described as 'growth without development'.

The level of urbanisation also remained below the median value for Western Europe. Here the present statistics may be somewhat misleading by only accounting for residents of cities with 100,000 inhabitants or more. Much of urban growth in Central Europe, particularly that associated with greenfield industrial development, took place in somewhat smaller towns or agglomerations of administratively separate municipal units, as in Polish Silesia or in the rust belt of northern Bohemia and Moravia.

The socialist countries' continued investment in industrial development paid dividends in the form of accelerated output growth during the 70's—particularly in relation to the oil crisis-ridden West—but it is doubtful to what extent that contributed to a corresponding rise in standards of living; Poland certainly is a case where consumers saw a fall in living standards after the mid 1970's, despite seemingly robust GDP growth. As pointed out earlier, GDP and GDP per capita figures are in the case of the Socialist Bloc inherently unreliable and in presumably on the high side. But even the figures given by the World Bank show the socialist economies lagging way behind the developed Western economies, rather being on par with Mediterranean European economies such as Greece or Portugal. The relatively high levels of infant mortality seem to reflect the governments priorities on industry instead of services. All socialist countries could report a relatively high number of physicians, but this did not result in a correspondingly high level of quality of health care. Ordinary doctors enjoyed both relatively low salaries and not a particularly high status in the socialist societies.

What the figures show, nevertheless, is the steady albeit slow emergence of a modern consumerist society. Full adult literacy was accomplished by the late 50's, and by the following two decades media outlets and consumption—with programming, of course, strictly controlled by the régimes—proliferated to almost Western levels.

Yet objective indicators of the standard of living are one thing, the perception is quite another. 'Growth without development' meant, as pointed out above, a cementing of the industrial-era economic structure, but also that product quality and incremental innovation—the very backbone of modern capitalist development—took a back seat. This is hard to capture with hard data, but here is how an Anglo-American satirist saw the scope for 1970's Bulgarian consumerism:

⁹⁹ Wandycz (1992), 208.

¹⁰⁰ Albania and Yugoslavia are excluded from this comparison. *World Handbook* (1983b), Table 6.5, 210; Table 6.6, 223-5

Sofia had a dark and enormous department store called TSUM, at least as big as Selfridges in London, spread over five floors and containing not a single product that appeared to have been produced more recently than 1938—chunky Bakelite radios, big stubby black fountain pens that looked like something Lord Grade would try to smoke, steam-powered washing machines, that sort of thing. I remember standing in the television and radio department in a crowd of people watching some sort of historical drama in which two actors wearing beards that were hooked over their ears sat talking in a study, the walls of which were clearly painted on canvas. The television had—no exaggeration—a four-inch circular black and white screen and *this* was attracting a crowd. I spent almost a whole day in TSUM, wandering in amazement, not just because the products were so wondrously old-fashioned but because whole families visited it as if it were some sort of marvellous museum of science and technology.¹⁰¹

Measuring Stability: Objective Indicators

Turning to the question of political stability, the indicators of political protest and government sanctions quoted in Table 5.5 may be of interest, if somewhat inconclusive and diffuse. The chosen points of reference here are Portugal and Spain: both these countries were on approximately the same level of socio-economic development, and ruled by authoritarian governments until the 70's. Portugal has roughly the same population as Czechoslovakia and Hungary, while Spain is comparable with Poland.

Table 5.5: Indicators of Political Stability

		Poland	CSSR	Hungary	Portugal	Spain
<i>Protest</i>	1948–77	97	282	28	246	358
<i>demonstrations</i>	1970–77	22	20	1	215	264
<i>Political strikes</i>	1948–77	19	39	24	35	173
	1970–77	9	1	0	23	121
<i>Riots</i>	1948–77	82	68	32	187	265
	1970–77	6	3	1	146	191
<i>Deaths from</i>	1948–77	575	101	40,010	66	216
<i>Political violence</i>	1970–77	22	2	0	40	159
<i>Government</i>	1948–77	663	1043	2,258	525	1,102
<i>sanctions *</i>	1970–77	34	96	5	326	632
<i>Régime support</i>	1948–77	65	54	29	43	42
<i>demonstrations</i>	1970–77	9	21	12	22	14
<i>Political</i>	1948–77	31,131	57	2,943	0	35
<i>executions</i>	1970–77	0	0	0	0	6

Source: *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators* (1983) * 'Action taken by the authorities to neutralise, suppress, or eliminate a perceived threat to the security of the government, the régime, or the state itself'

¹⁰¹ Bryson (1992), 218.

When contrasted with Spain and Portugal, the Central European countries seem relatively stable, particularly if the upheavals during the formative years of 1948–53 are discounted. The source material clearly shows that protest and repression was on a quantitatively higher level during particularly that period, as demonstrated by the high number of political executions in Poland (31,082 in 1953–56), and in Hungary (2,587 during the same period), and the many deaths from political violence in Hungary (40,007 in 1953–56, i.e. associated with the 1956 uprising). In Spain and Portugal, the authoritarian régimes had been set up a decade earlier; they also collapsed in the 1970's, some 15 years before Eastern and Central Europe were plunged into political transition. In the case of Spain, it should also be noted, many protests were not directed at the Franco régime alone, but were motivated by regional separatism and continued after the introduction of monarchy and democratic rule.

The figures should obviously be treated with some caution. In the case of Eastern and Central Europe, more so than for Spain and Portugal, underreporting of events was a major problem, due to censorship and not all-encompassing monitoring by the Western media sources on which the *World Handbook* chiefly depends. Another problematic aspect is that quantitative and even qualitative variations within the same categories of events are not always noted. Thus the *World Handbook* notes only one political strike in Poland in 1976; this apparently refers to the Radom strike which mobilised tens of thousands of workers and rocked the whole government. The same figure—one political strike—is also given for Czechoslovakia that year. This obviously does not prove that the Czechoslovak labour force would have been even remotely as militant, nor as influential, as the Polish.

But even so, Table 5.5 indicates a consolidation of the Central European régimes during the 1970's, as seen both by a falling level of protests and by a scaling-down of overt repressive measures. The figures above seem to indicate that of the three, Hungary was politically the most tranquil country in the 70's. During that period, Poland appears to be somewhat more turbulent than Czechoslovakia, but then again one should remember that Czechoslovakia's population less than half that of Poland's. The Czechoslovak régime also appears to have been the most repressive, as indicated by the relatively high number of government sanctions introduced.

The Emergence of Civil Society

The fifteen months of *Solidarity* has been called the only revolution in history organised, led and made by the working class itself. That may be a slight exaggeration, but it certainly is true that neither the Party leadership, any Party factions, nor an oppositional élite were the driving forces behind the systemic change of 1980. The demands for change were also not, as earlier in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, formulated in Leninist, Marxist or even broadly leftist terms. The protests were not directed against the Party's current interpretation of Marxist-Leninist theory, or against particular abuses and mistakes made in the implementation of Party hegemony, as had been the case in the initial stages of the 1956 and 1968 Eastern European turmoil. From the very beginning, *Solidarity* instead questioned the communist system as such and disputed all aspects of its legitimacy.

Did it also mean a triumph, however temporary, of the civil society? Notwithstanding the reservations in Chapter 2 about the concept of 'civil society' as a determinant for democracy, it is still a useful analytical tool. It would seem profitable to investigate how the ultimately triumphant oppositional political forces—call it 'civil society' or 'autonomous self-organisation in society'—could come about in an environment dominated by régimes with authoritarian and even totalitarian ambitions.

Indeed, in the case of the socialist states, the concept of civil society has generally been used as an euphemism for autonomous structures, for the anti-systemic opposition, or even as the

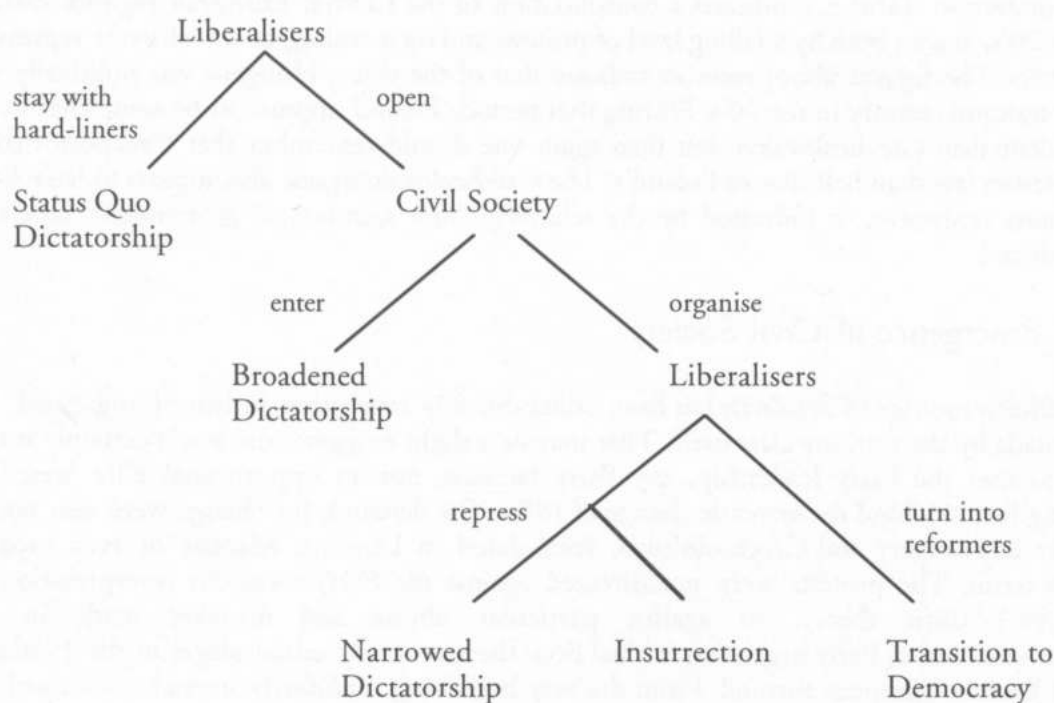
very goal for parts of the opposition. As one observer put it: 'The democratic opposition [in Eastern Europe] argued its commitment to democracy on the grounds that it was seeking to re-establish civil society.'¹⁰² Here, the argument is turned inside out: the strengthening of democracy is seen as furthering the emergence of a civil society, not the other way around.

The organisation of the opposition movements can be analysed by traditional methods, either logical or empirical. Even if some elements in the opposition to communist rule in the Central European countries portrayed themselves as 'anti-political', it can also be described as a classical case of an opposition building mass support by gradually creating quasi-political structures outside the framework which the ruling régime has defined as political, and continuously attempting to push that boundary.

More important than 'civil society' is thus modernity; the analysis of the inter-war era indicated that the best prospects for democratic survival are found in societies with strong traditions of statehood and advanced secularisation—this can be, but is not necessarily the same as is meant by 'civil society'. The extent to which the democratic opposition could gain and hold mass support was thus paradoxically dependent on the extent to which the communists had succeeded in their ambitions to modernise.

Before moving on to a discussion of the last decade of communist rule, some attention should be focused on the mechanics of liberalisation. 'Liberalisation' here does not primarily mean the introduction of democracy, but a loosening of the régime's grip.

Figure 5.1: The Game of Liberalising Dictatorships



Source: Przeworski (1991), 62

Adam Przeworski has made the perceptive observation that it is not the lack of legitimacy, but the presence of an opposition that threatens a dictatorship. When the régime starts to tolerate some form of opposition, it indicates that it is divided between reformers who want to broaden the power-base, and hard-liners who want to crush the opposition. With the help of game theory, Przeworski demonstrates how a process, started by forces in the régime who

¹⁰² Schöpflin (1993), 207.

advocate a broader dictatorship, can generate a set of different outcomes.¹⁰³ The scheme is shown by the figure above.

The starting-point is that the opposition has politically significant support, but lacks an institutional framework in which to present its views and negotiate interests. At this point, a liberalising 'reform wing' of the dictatorship's élite may act to integrate the opposition by tolerating some autonomous action inside a 'National Front', essentially broadening the dictatorship.

The process may stop here, but it can also continue with the opposition (Przeworski, incidentally, uses the term 'civil society' as synonymous for it) continuing to organise autonomously. Now the régime liberalisers face the alternatives of either turning back the clock on reform and agreeing to repress popular mobilisation, or of continuing towards a transition to democracy. Repression, if successful, generates a once-again narrowed dictatorship. If unsuccessful, it leads to an insurrection, the outcome of which is uncertain: it can be democracy, a victory for the old dictatorship or the establishment of a new dictatorship. Behind this analysis lies the assumption that the opposition, too, is divided between moderates and radicals. A successful extrication to democracy thus depends on the ability of reformers and moderates to forge an alliance.

One possible assumption behind an eventual transition to democracy is that at least some liberalisers are in fact proto-reformers, i.e. they prefer a democracy over everything except a broadened dictatorship, their initial goal. This, of course, also implies that liberalisers all along deceive the hard-liners within the dictatorial régime. In another conceivable scenario, liberalisers—who are assumed being dominant in the régime—may initially calculate that repression of opposition organisations would be successful; this calculation is, however, not shared by the (presumably radical-dominated) opposition, which continues to mobilise, wrongly believing that the liberalisers share their estimate of the low potential for successful repression. If organisation is allowed to be carried far enough, liberalisers gradually have to downgrade their estimates of successful repression. In that case, and if they prefer a transition to democracy over a full-blown insurrection, reformers may end up supporting a transition.

These modes of behaviour are not as paradoxical as they sound, Przeworski notes. First, as civil society (i.e., the opposition) develops, leaders within the dictatorial régime may get to know its leaders personally, and come to the conclusion that the opposition is not all that threatening. Second, liberalisers in the régime may be irrational; in a situation of increasing pressure—generated by unstoppable popular mobilisation, external blockades, economic crises, and the like—liberalisers may persuade themselves that an opening will end in a successful outcome for themselves, even that they will win competitive elections if they proceed all the way to democracy. This was in fact exactly the reasoning of Jaruzelski and his reform-oriented followers in the Polish government and Party élite, when they in 1987–88 chose to opt for negotiations with the moderate opposition. The formula, which ultimately failed miserably, was 'designed to divide the opposition by excluding the outspoken anti-communists, but it was wide enough to attract large segments of the opposition to regular round-table negotiations with the government.'¹⁰⁴ What came as a surprise to many Party reformers was that the subsequent elections turned into a plebiscite against the system which they could not win.

Thus, if the outcome is a transition to democracy, liberalisers were either actually prepared to go all the way, but had to hide their intentions from hard-liners; discovered in mid-course that repression was unlikely to succeed; found that they did not have as much to lose as initially thought; or, finally, had no choice and just put a good face on it.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Przeworski (1991), 45–66; for an appreciating review, see Steinel (1992).

¹⁰⁴ Grzybowski (1994), 57.

¹⁰⁵ Przeworski (1991), 65.

This logical exercise seems to be supported by the chain of actual events in the Socialist Bloc. The Hungarian uprising in 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968, and the Polish events of 1980–81 had different outcomes partly for the very reason that the measures of repression against the opposition were instituted in different phases.

In all cases, it started with liberalisers opening up to accommodate at least parts of the opposition within a broadened dictatorship. In Hungary, when the highest party leadership emerged as proto-oppositionals, hard-liners supported by external forces decided on repression, which led to an insurrection. This insurrection, however, ended with the establishment of a new dictatorship founded on a the same base as the pre-reform one. In Czechoslovakia, when hard-liners in the régime saw that the reformists' attempts at broadening the dictatorship—even Dubcek did not question the communist party's leading role—threatened to generate ever more organisation and mobilisation of the opposition, they defeated the liberalisers and opted for a status quo dictatorship. In Poland, opposition organisation forced the régime to attempt to broaden its base, but when faced with the alternative of turning to genuine reform ending in a transition to democracy, hard-liners opted for repression quickly enough to be able avoid an outright insurrection, successfully installing a narrowed dictatorship.

In these three cases, the character of the opposition also varied. In Hungary, two main forces were at work. One consisted of 'liberalisers', intra-party factions opposed to residual Stalinism, whose aims were a reform of the system. The other force, which emerged only once infighting within the party had opened the floodgates, was decidedly anti-systemic and built around the remnants of the institutionalised political forces repressed by the communists after 1945. But while the anti-systemic opposition obviously resented communist hegemony and totalitarian ambitions, they were not all *per se* anti-communist, and there was broad consensus—soon embraced also by liberalising communists—about a return to the 1945–48 political constellation, in which the communist party indeed had played an important, if not hegemonic role. The centrifugal forces of mass mobilisation, however, swept away the rekindled institutions and replaced them with entirely new organisations, often with strong elements of direct democracy and fuelled by nationalism. These then became the driving force behind the insurrection.

In Czechoslovakia, the process did not go as far in 1968; the intermediate level of mass mobilisation, compared to earlier in Hungary, allowed the political game to be played mainly at an élite level. When the hard-line clampdown came, the opening-up of the political system had not progressed so far as to having had permitted significant radically anti-systemic forces to emerge on the political arena. The politically visible and significant oppositionals by and large remained committed to some form of socialism, and voiced their concerns in Marxist terms. The catch-phrase 'Socialism with a human face' neatly sums up the fact that the Prague Spring was essentially a struggle between, respectively, supporters of the reformist and authoritarian–radical schools of Marxism.

One result of 1968 was as total reconfiguration of the main opposition throughout Central Europe. Leftist idealists were both discredited and disillusioned by the outcome, which had shown both the inability of the Party to generate change from within and the extremely limited leeway Czechoslovakia at the time had as an ally of the Soviet Union. The crushing of the Prague Spring and Brezhnev's subsequent declaration that 'the triumph of the socialist system in a country can be regarded as final' could lead to only one logical conclusion: to create an alternative to the existing system—however socialist that alternative would be—depended on the present system collapsing first. It also, as events showed, depended on the Soviet Union giving up its ambitions of hegemony.

Whatever theoretical groundwork for orderly change was laid by the élites, intra-systemic and oppositional, one may conclude that the main impetus for the transition from

authoritarian communism came from the disaffection among the masses with absolute and relative economic inefficiency. As this chapter has indicated, strikes and other disturbances tended to occur in strong conjunction with economic crises: price hikes, withdrawals of subsidies, increases in work norms or bouts of inflation, particularly when they generated or coincided with conflicts in the highest leadership structures. Given the claims to omniscience, hegemony in decision-making and their ideological hang-ups, the ruling parties tended to be at a loss for quick remedies for the true problems in the socialist-style economy. Many, if not all, communist leaders realised that Marxism-Leninism provided less than a perfect road-map for the actual handling of ever more complex economies, but they also were aware that their hold onto power was dependent on applying that theory's legitimization of dictatorship. Hungary was almost alone in introducing market elements in the economy, while most other régimes preferred merging traditional, generic strong-man authoritarian elements into the Marxist-Leninist prescripts for the political sphere.

The implicit realisation that communism already by the 1960's had fulfilled its historic role as a brutal but expedient agent of modernising change forced the ruling parties to retreat into the antediluvian, pre-modern ideals which had opened up the path to power for them. Shaking hands with the past, they increasingly gave up their ambitions to serve as agents for cautious change. Once a Soviet-style socio-political and economic structure had been put into place, the communist parties turned into conservatives without capacity for dynamic renewal of their internal belief structure. During the three main crises of Real Existing Socialism, in 1956, 1968 and 1980–81, one could thus see a paradox at work. Structural modernisation led to the development of civil societies with increased socio-political awareness and demands for modernisation beyond the communist model, but the rulers, who originally had built their claims to power on the promise of modernisation, withdrew into increasingly archaic and non-materialistic systems of belief and argumentation inherited even from before the glory days of their ascent to power. What sounded the death-knell for Real Existing Socialism was thus the absolute success, but relative failure of its modernisation project.

*Toilers' Faces:
Workers at the
Wujek coal mine
in Katowice, the
scene of some of
heaviest fighting
when martial
law was
declared in
Poland in
December 1981*



TOMAS HELLÉN

Table 5.6: Structural Factors in the 1980's

	Poland	Czechoslovakia	Hungary
Ruling Party Cohesion	Low	High	Medium
Party Hegemony	Attempts at negotiation, then dependent on Martial Law	Dependent on bureaucracy, internal security	Legitimacy through economic performance
Reform Orientation	Vacillating	Low	High
Repression	High ability, low resolve	High ability, high resolve	Used in moderation
Main 80's Bases of Opposition Forces	Trade unionism, Catholic Church	Human-rights activism, Slovak nationalism	Nationalism, environmentalism
Opposition Strength, early to mid-1980's	Very high	Very low	Low
Opposition Strength, 1988–90	Very high, all extra-party	Explosive emergence	Medium; intra- and extra-party
Mode of Transition	Round-table	Régime collapse	Round-table

By 1968, experience had persuaded many cautiously oppositional Czechoslovak Marxists that a democratisation of the communist régimes was impossible, as every attempt at reform would appropriate some aspect of the total control that the régimes would not be prepared to relinquish. This realisation was gloomy, but it also freed oppositional thinking to take new paths, beyond pure reformism. In Poland, the development followed similar lines. The 1965–68 protests there had been driven by a reformist socialist ideology similar to the one in Czechoslovakia (i.e. leftist social democracy), but thereafter Marxism lost most of its appeal. There was an increasing sense among leftist intellectuals that Marxism not only did not work, but actually could not work.

The post-1968 democratic oppositionals in Eastern Central Europe came to pin their hopes on a gradual, and in their view inevitable, erosion of the régimes' cohesion, depriving the systems both of their capabilities to act decisively and of whatever legitimacy remained. In the meantime, leading oppositional thinkers such as Václav Havel, György Konrád, János Kis, Leszek Kolakowski, Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuron advocated the establishment of an ever-wider sphere of life free from the ideologisation imposed by the régimes. The essence of this 'anti-political platform' was the call to the individual to lead an 'ethical and decent' life. During the indefinite period of waiting for the communist system to implode, forming an opposition on the basis of a particular programme carried the risk of substituting one form of utopianism for another, they claimed.¹⁰⁶ As Konrád outlined his strategy of opposition:

What I have in mind is not some kind of anarchic, romantic rising; the time for that is long past [...] The most effective way to influence policy is by changing a society's customary thinking patterns and tacit compacts.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Stokes (1993), Ch. 1.

¹⁰⁷ Konrád (1984).

Despite its intellectualism and traces of sophistry, the anti-political movement did indeed succeed in depriving the communists of the moral high ground by exposing their hollow pretensions of being the champions of the oppressed. The anti-politicians did, however, not want to—and could not—present an alternative model of societal organisation, not to mention creating an organisational framework capable of bringing an action programme to the masses. In the longer run, this obviously created frustrations. So by the mid-1970's, leading anti-politicals in Poland had gravitated to increased activity in the form of trade unionism, worker self-help, and underground publishing and education. The Czechoslovak oppositional movement, lacking any such outlets because of more intensive government control and repression, became increasingly dispirited, with many leading figures, including Milan Kundera, giving up all hope of change and choosing emigration.

It was the notion of universal human rights which eventually formed the common ground for the Church and the non- or even anti-clerical opposition. Human rights was a profitable strategy, as the régimes in Poland, as well as in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, had accepted the broad-based definition of human rights of the so-called Third Basket of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. For the secular democratic opposition, 'the concept of human rights became the most effective weapon [in its fight against the totalising régimes], one that wrought devastation in the intellectual coherence of the system.' The protection of human rights had also been elevated to a prime moral obligation by the socially interventionist and activist Second Vatican Council—where John Paul II, then still Cardinal, was a driving force. Yet human rights in themselves presented no comprehensive political programme, only an instrument to demolish the régimes' self-legitimation. In fact, democracy was conceptualised very differently by leading post-1968 oppositionals in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.¹⁰⁸

What set 1970's Poland apart were the resources and enormous mass appeal of the Catholic Church. The Polish Church, if any, could present a clear ideological alternative to communism; it did not, as the Orthodox Churches in Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia (not to mention Russia), have strong traditions of subservience to and symbiosis with the state; it did not, as the Catholic Churches of Croatia and Slovenia, carry the stigma of war-time collaboration with the Germans; and it had not been even nearly as subjugated by the authorities as the Hungarian or Czechoslovak Catholic Churches. In the 70's, some two-thirds of Poles regularly attended Mass.

Although the Polish Church did oppose communist hegemony, was supportive of *Solidarity* and advocated pluralism, its political message was somewhat blurred, in particular split between radical parish priests and a more cautious leadership. From 1945, Church and Party had entertained an uneasy relationship with recurring swings between repression and accommodation: the Church was 'always attacked and wounded, but still basically recognised by the communist authorities.'¹⁰⁹ In effect, the compromise eventually arranged by Cardinal Wyszyński was that the state promised a low level of interference in Church matters, while the Church declared itself satisfied with a limited autonomy that promised a continuation of religious service and autonomous church-sponsored kindergartens, schools, seminaries and monasteries. Even during the tumultuous summer of 1980, the highest Church leadership tried to exercise a moderating role towards both Party and *Solidarity*.¹¹⁰ Still, many clerics saw an obligation to protect national values against Sovietisation, and Catholic-oriented intellectuals even assumed leading positions in *Solidarity*. Meanwhile, Walesa and many other union leaders went out of their way to show their—certainly genuine—piety, and the opposition's use of religious symbols was abundant.

¹⁰⁸ Schöpflin (1993), 207-8.

¹⁰⁹ Michnik (1993), 66.

¹¹⁰ Davies (1986), 58.



PRESSFOTO-AP

Tight Union: Cardinal Primate Stefan Wyszyński embracing Lech Wałęsa, September 1980. To the left is Kazimierz Kluz, Assistant Bishop of Gdansk

The introduction of martial law strengthened the Catholic Church's social and political influence: it then became the only significant remaining outlet for mass frustration, and in parallel could act as an intermediary between state and society. After martial law was declared, church attendance soared to an amazing ninety-five per cent¹¹¹ and there was a wave of adult baptism, vocations and church building. During his June 1983 tour of Poland, the Pope told the crowds that the world must continue to bear witness to the truth, as 'when the Polish worker stood up for himself with the gospel in his hands and a prayer on his lips'. To Jaruzelski, his message was even blunter: the basis for 'social renewal' or *Odnowa* (a term the opposition had hijacked from the communists), John Paul II stressed, could only be the social accord that had ended the 1980 strikes and legalised *Solidarity*.¹¹²

Yet the political influence of the Church, in terms of organisational capabilities and moral authority, carried ambiguities. It threatened to politicise yet another sphere of life, the religious, and also brought religion—or at least religious institutions—into day-to-day politics. As the re-Catholicisation of social life was largely a result of political discontent, it also diluted the density of Roman Catholicism, inasmuch as the Church was not and could not be a political institution: 'The fact that Roman Catholicism became one of the principal expressions of the aspirations of Polish society in the 1980's meant that both religion and the political aspirations expressed through it were given an awkward, intermediate expression. Neither the political nor religious aims could be expressed.'¹¹³

This perceived danger was one reason why Cardinal Józef Glemp, who became Primate after Wyszyński (who died a few weeks before martial law was proclaimed), was more inclined to collaboration with the régime than his predecessor, the Pope or the lesser clergy.

¹¹¹ Garton Ash (1989), 48.

¹¹² Garton Ash (1989), 45-7.

¹¹³ Schöpflin (1993), 265.

Glemp concentrated his efforts on protecting and consolidating the Church's position through increased access to the media, securing state financing for church construction, and gaining guarantees for a continuation of religious education on all levels. He sought to strengthen the Church through pastoral work, and clearly opposed the romantic idealisation of insurrection and resistance common among many parish priests which he feared could only bring misfortune on Poland.

Glemp's étatist, anti-insurrectionist way of thinking was in many respects quite similar to that of Jaruzelski and other leading military figures. Indeed, it has been noted that 'the primate's 'personal politics were those of *Endecja*'. He was deeply suspicious of the leftist origins of *Solidarity*; in a 1984 interview he declared that Walesa had lost control of *Solidarity* because the union 'was a sack into which everything had been thrown, all the opposition Marxists, Trotskyites, and then all the careerists and Party members.'¹¹⁴ True to his nationalist leanings, Glemp also agreed with Jaruzelski on the need for a tougher stance towards Germany—both were in unison that no German minority existed in Poland—and made some statements that were interpreted as being, and also as meant to be, anti-Jewish.¹¹⁵ But although the Catholic-nationalist ideology voiced by Glemp was a strong force in Poland, large segments of the opposition movement was as opposed to the Catholic-nationalist ethos as they were to communism. This division was later to be manifested in the break-up of the *Solidarity* movement in the run-up to the presidential elections of 1990.¹¹⁶

It is worthwhile to quote what General Jaruzelski has had to say about Glemp's personal political biography. According to the General, 'Glemp came from a socialist worker family and was a member of the communist youth before he discovered his Catholic calling. By contrast, I went to a Church school and was a member of the Catholic youth,' he noted, adding that 'Such paradoxes are found only in Poland'.¹¹⁷ This somewhat sarcastic but pertinent observation indeed summarises what the present study is all about.

*Prophetic
Slogan:
Demonstrators
in Budapest,
organised by the
Socialist Party
and opposition
parties,
expressing
support for
Pastor László
Tökés in
Timisoara,
Romania*



PRESSFOTO-AP

¹¹⁴ Stokes (1993), 113; interview quotation from Maya Latynski, 'The Church: Between State and Society', *Poland Watch*, 5, 1984.

¹¹⁵ Garton Ash (1994), 239-40.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Michnik (1993) and below.

¹¹⁷ Kogelfranz (1996), 175-6.

In Czechoslovakia, the opposition scene was long dominated by Václav Havel's idealistic assessment, which stressed the obligation of individuals to take responsibility for their own actions, implying that there would be no need for institutions, interest aggregation or the assumption of state power. Havel's genuinely idiosyncratic project was marked by moralism and anti-utopianism, and was directed as much against the West as against communism. This fact greatly confounded the Prague régime, which also expected the opposition to behave like a system-loyal party opposite, trying to organise itself and appealing to the masses in a conventional fashion. Of course, given the repressive ambitions of the régime, the reluctance of the democratic opposition to organise on a particular platform was understandable.

The signatories of the path-breaking document Charter 77—half movement, half manifesto—included not only Havel and anti-politicians, but also Trotskyites, Catholics, and populists, among others. The Chartists did shrewdly choose not to openly dispute the legitimacy of the régime, but only called upon the régime to honour the constitutional and international obligations to which Czechoslovak law specifically subscribed. By this, the drafters could hope to attract support from much wider quarters than the Dubcek-inspired communist party opposition. As the philosopher Jan Patočka put it: 'Our rulers can now never be quite sure who its they are dealing with. They must ask themselves whether those who still obey them today will be willing to do so tomorrow.'¹¹⁸

The government's response to the signatories of Charter 77 and other petitions was extremely harsh by the standards at the time—this was, it should be pointed out, during the heyday of détente. Indeed, the reaction drove home the extraordinary repressive ambitions and capabilities of the Czechoslovak government: 'Prominent Chartists were stripped of their identity documents and were issued with slips of paper with which they could not even post a registered letter. Their driving licences, marriage certificates and other official papers necessary for daily function in an authoritarian state were withdrawn. Their telephones were cut off and they no longer received normal postal deliveries. Some lost their flats and their children were expelled from classes.'¹¹⁹ Workers were asked to sign an anti-Charter condemning a document most had not seen—and indeed were forbidden to read.

There is no doubt that the government took Charter 77 very seriously, and foreign observers tended to see it as the most important expression of resistance in Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, the régime is likely to have considered religious revival an even more serious long-term challenge. Especially in Slovakia, Catholicism remained strongly fused with nationalism, often also inspired by nostalgia for the parochial ideology of the pre-war Hlinka Slovak People's Party and the 1939–44 Republic of Slovakia. In 1984, 70 per cent of Slovak children were baptised, as opposed to only 30 per cent in the Czech lands.¹²⁰ By the early 1980's, the Czechoslovak Catholic Church was reinvigorated by the Second Vatican Council, the social dynamism of John Paul II, the Polish events, and by the increasingly activist local Cardinal, the octogenarian Frantisek Tomásek. In 1987 Catholic activists circulated a petition calling for freedom of religion and the separation of church and state; it was signed by 600,000 people.

With all this in mind, it was hardly a coincidence that only four of some 1,000 signatories of Charter 77 were Slovaks. Many Slovaks did in fact see the pro-democracy movement as an attempt to discredit Gustáv Husák simply because of his nationality. Events after 1989 also seem to confirm the theory that anti-communism had a much less fertile ground in Slovakia than in the Czech part of the federation, with about 80 per cent of Slovaks reporting

¹¹⁸ Patočka (1977).

¹¹⁹ Pilger (1987), 433.

¹²⁰ Ramet (1987), 78.

misgivings about a market economy and preferring what soon was dubbed 'national socialism'.¹²¹

In Poland, the secular and Catholicism-inspired parts of the opposition were more closely linked. This was perhaps one reason why the secular faction lacked as clear a figure-head as Havel. The events of 1980–81 also showed that political activism on a mass level was both possible and potentially profitable. Nevertheless, Adam Michnik, one of the most visible and eloquent ideologues of *Solidarity*, long remained a staunch anti-politician who shared Havel's deep suspicion of utopianism, which he feared would lead to a new terror. Up until the mid-1970's, Michnik had, or at least espoused, few ideas about the nature of an alternative power: in a famous essay, he wrote that 'the leading idea of *Solidarity* is to achieve a Self-Governing Republic and not to seize power'.¹²² Like Havel's, Michnik's political philosophy strongly stressed the importance of reason for tolerance. Both sought inspiration in history, but wanted to see it as a guide to action rather than as a mythical source for passion or ideology.

Not all Polish oppositionals agreed with these 'legitimists', and many argued that a more confrontational resistance was needed. After martial law Jacek Kuron all but abandoned anti-politics, and called for disciplined organisation and even the use of force to overthrow the 'occupation'. Some fringe groups advocated sabotage against Soviet installations and the disrupting of the armaments industry, but many also held onto their anti-political beliefs: Zbigniew Bujak, a working-class *Solidarity* leader, saw Havel's anti-political essay 'The Power and the Powerless' as the theoretical foundation for his political activity and argued that the hope for *Solidarity* after it was forced underground lay in a long-term project of 'continuing self-limiting revolution by constructing an independent society outside the parameters of ordinary politics'.¹²³

In Hungary, the long-running Kádárist strategy for strengthening the Party's legitimacy and ability to rule had been 'constant economic reform, a pragmatic approach, and the virtually open admission that 'the present system was full of defects, but also the best that Hungary can hope to have'.¹²⁴ But even if the Hungarian economy was successful by Socialist Bloc standards, by the mid-80's the level of foreign debt was approaching a debilitating level—on a per capita base it was higher than for any other Comecon member and a national default appeared as a real possibility. With the acknowledgement that the era of rising prosperity was over and that the standard of living was to fall for an indeterminate period of time, the main pillar of Kádárism was collapsing. Another, the relative liberalism in comparison with neighbouring communist systems, then crumbled with the general opening-up brought about by Gorbachev's *glasnost*.¹²⁵

The Polish events of 1980–81 activated the Hungarian opposition and broadened it beyond the minuscule, even in comparison with Czechoslovakia, circle of intellectuals who could take in the fairly sophisticated message.¹²⁶ The Hungarian anti-political movement—if

¹²¹ Ulc (1992), 28–9.

¹²² Michnik (1985), 90; an overview of the anti-political movement in Poland is found in Ascherson (1982)

¹²³ Stokes (1993), 105.

¹²⁴ Schöpflin (1991), 61–2.

¹²⁵ Haraszti (1990), 72–3.

¹²⁶ Dessewffy and Hammer (1995), 17. György Konrád was the leading Hungarian proponent of the Havel–Michnik ideal of anti-politics: his position was, in essence, that the attainment of power was undesirable; what was important was the individual's gradual enlargement of his sphere of autonomy and freedom. Anti-politics, Konrád argued, meant concentrating on ignoring official hierarchies and on developing the small freedoms which already existed with the eventual objective of pushing the state into the margins of life. This rather extreme ideal of

that term is justified—also drew from a wide variety of ideological strands, from Trotskyism to agrarian populism. Many members of the democratic opposition had been students and admirers of the Marxist philosopher György Lukács, but the Polish events of 1980–81 caused the majority of the circle to break with Marxism even in its most revisionist forms. From then on the opposition's world view was overwhelmingly inspired by Western liberalism, individualism and the concept of the free market.¹²⁷ At this point, however, the intellectual opposition movement was not perceived as a threat to the existing order: a confidential Politburo resolution described it as a relatively harmless phenomenon. Nevertheless, repressive practices were resorted to in order to curtail the so-called enemy opposition at home and abroad¹²⁸, in parallel with a subtle co-optation of and limited concessions given to the critics who operated on a populist-national platform.

In fact, the first opposition groupings to gain substantial mass appeal and real political influence were concerned with singular issues such as environmental degradation (particularly the gigantic Danube Dam project¹²⁹); the position of Magyars abroad, particularly in Romania; and with rehabilitating national symbols of the past. In mid-1987 there were huge anti-Ceausescu demonstrations in Budapest, organised by the Hungarian Democratic Forum, a pressure group formed by populist-nationalist intellectuals. The government was not particularly keen on clamping down on anti-Romanian protests. In fact, it actively tried to present itself as an effective protector of Magyar minorities abroad, to the extent that relations with Bucharest were brought to a new post-war low.

*Moderniser and Patriarch:
Prime Minister
Károly Grósz
chatting with
Party Secretary-
General János
Kádár in 1988,
when the ageing
and ailing
leader was
about to be
deposed after
almost 32 years
in power*



PRESSFOTO-MTI-LAJOS SOÓS

actively withering away the state was, however, not shared by all Hungarian anti-politicians, particularly not after the impact of *Solidarity*. János Kis, for instance, came to argue that some form of a *Rechtsstaat* and competitive parliamentary framework had to be established in order to ensure that any openings created by displays of civil courage could be made permanent. Kis envisaged a liberal, parliamentary and democratic societal order where there would be independent legal institutions to guarantee individual freedoms, but where the Party would continue to rule in order to accommodate Soviet demands.

¹²⁷ Cf. Hockenos (1993), 108.

¹²⁸ Grzybowski (1994b), 187.

¹²⁹ The protests against the project are chronicled in some detail in Haraszti (1990), 76–83

At the time, the advent of Soviet *perestroika* and *glasnost* had fundamentally changed the rules of the game and propelled the radical reform wing of the party, led by Rezső Nyers and Imre Pozsgay, into prominence. Already in the early 1980's they had turned the whole issue around and argued that political reform and increased pluralism was a precondition for solving the economic problems. It was in many respects an attempted re-run of the Prague Spring programme. When the ageing and ailing János Kádár was deposed in May 1988, alliance-building with various outside forces was well under way among Party leaders.

The more reluctant Party reformers were led by Károly Grósz, who eventually became new First Secretary. In the 70's he had been affiliated with a populist-orthodox Party grouping known as the 'workers' opposition', and 'essentially looked toward some kind of authoritarian model combining economic performance with high levels of coercion'.¹³⁰ Nyers and Pozsgay, the leaders of the reform-minded party faction, were on their part increasingly attracted to a radically opened, democratic system. Pozsgay had, however, already in 1986 felt strong enough—particularly after unambiguous signals that the Kremlin was in the process of withdrawing support from the increasingly senile Kádár¹³¹—to establish contacts with the populist, conservative and nationalist non-Party opposition, in order to prepare for a future 'centrist coalition' against hard-line communists and the democratic opposition. Pozsgay's participation in 1987 in the annual Lakitelek meeting of national-populist poets was not only a dramatic pluralist opening on behalf of the reformists in the Party, but also clarified the difference between the democratic and populist currents in the non-Party opposition.¹³² The latter was prepared to seek accommodation and compromise with the ruling party, the former was not.

The Lakitelek circle was inspired by the national-romanticist world view espoused by prominent communist-era *népi-nemzeti*, or folkish, writers such as István Csúrk, Sándor Csoóri and Sándor Lezsák. The *népi* literary movement had originally emerged in the 1920's as a reaction to the traumatic experience of the Trianon settlement. Trianon, the early *népi* writers argued, was but one expression of foreign intrusion into the Hungarian soul. Modernisation and Western influence was seen as a plot by foreign protagonists—mainly Germans and Jews—to erode 'true Hungarian consciousness', which had its repository in the traditional small-farm peasantry and their folkish and autarkic way of life. The national-populist movement which the *népi* writers inspired opposed both capitalism and socialism and advocated a 'Third Way' in between.¹³³ The *népi* emphasis on the 'nation' and 'real Hungarians' carries anti-modern connotations, and the anti-urbanism and anti-capitalism has a strong undercurrent of anti-Semitism. The essence of *népi* thinking remains the idealised, folkish vision of traditional rural and small-town Hungary with its roots in the inter-war Horthyite Christian Course.

By the early months of 1988, rudimentary opposition parties began to form, and by the summer and fall of 1989 a plethora of fully-fledged political parties had sprung up. The Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF) was clearly the strongest of the new opposition parties. Founded by an unholy alliance of Lakitelekians, hard-core dissenters, nationalist populists, and reform-oriented former ruling party members, it soon evolved into a catch-all party with broad nation-wide appeal, dominated by intellectuals, entrepreneurs and white-collar workers.¹³⁴ The election of József Antall, the son of a National Liberal minister in one of Horthy's governments, as new party leader in October 1989 finalised the HDF's move away from the founding fathers' moral anti-capitalism into a more moderate, Western-style

¹³⁰ Schöpflin (1991), 62.

¹³¹ Grzybowski (1994b), 187.

¹³² Stokes (1993), 93.

¹³³ Hockenos (1993), 114.

¹³⁴ Grzybowski (1994b), 189-90; Tóka (1995), 32-3; see chapter 6.

conservative-liberal position. Although the party mainstream was not outspokenly anti-capitalist and came out in support of large-scale privatisation in 1989, HDF moderates too advocated a strong state and a gradualist approach to economic reform. The HDF of 1989–90 has been described as 'slightly right-of-centre', but that has to be seen in the context of a political spectrum which in Hungary at that time was heavily tilted to the right. Even after the elevation of Antall to party leader, the *népi-nemzeti* leaders remained in the presidium, and 'the right-wing writers began to campaign for a thoroughgoing change of the guard in the civil service, the media, and so on.'¹³⁵

To the left—i.e., applying a less nationalist, more Western and market-oriented stance—of the HDF emerged the Alliance of Free Democrats. It counted among its founders and leaders prominent members of the former anti-political movement, such as Kónrad and Kis. The HDF and the AFD clearly had different social constituencies. If the populists primarily had a provincial, humble, non-Jewish, and non- or anti-communist background, the leadership core of the AFD was heavily drawn from the urban, Budapest and Jewish middle class and intelligentsia; many were children of established communist figures or had even been communists before being drawn into the human rights and democracy movement.¹³⁶ The AFD economic programme published in the spring of 1989 advocated full-scale and preferably quick privatisation.¹³⁷

An offshoot of the AFD was the Federation of Young Democrats, best known under the acronym FIDESZ. That formation shared the AFD's anti-political traditions but adopted even more radical neo-liberalism. FIDESZ, with its strong youth appeal, clearly demonstrated the generation cleavage in Hungarian politics—until 1993 it restricted membership to under 35-year-olds.¹³⁸ In the final stages of the 1990 election campaign FIDESZ, using classical monetarist arguments, distanced itself from the AFD, whose economic programme and positions on social welfare were criticised as too optimistic.¹³⁹

During late 1988, the pre-war parties also re-emerged on the political map: the Smallholders Party, the Social Democratic Party, and the Christian Democratic Party, the successor to the 1930's Democratic People's Party. These 'nostalgia parties' were, as soon became clear, rather amateurishly run and lacked clear, comprehensive ideological platforms.

The transformation to real pluralism also ripped apart the formerly ruling Socialist Party. The formal split came in October 1989, when the conservative wing under Grósz established a new Marxist-Leninist party, while Nyers, Pozsgay, Gyula Horn and the reform wing of the old ruling party formed the Socialist Party. The latter attempted to make a clean break with both Marxism-Leninism and the past; already in February 1989, Pozsgay and his fellow radical reformers had rehabilitated the 1956 uprising and even declared the socialist path 'wrong in its entirety'.

The so-called Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia does go a long way to prove Tingsten's thesis that political system changes are more motivated by a legitimacy crisis of the old system than by the appeal of a new, alternative system.¹⁴⁰ By 1988, encouraged by the rapid openings in Poland and Hungary, the anti-political oppositionals in Czechoslovakia began to turn from human rights monitoring into full-blown political activism. They were certainly inspired by the government's vocal endorsement of Gorbachev's policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. That, however, was only lip service: the régime continued to react to any

¹³⁵ Tóka (1995), 33.

¹³⁶ Schöpflin (1991), 62.

¹³⁷ Tóka (1995), 33.

¹³⁸ The social composition and bases of support of the various parties is discussed in Tókes (1990).

¹³⁹ Tóka (1995), 35.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Tingsten (1945).

confrontation with harsh repression. When the communist régime finally collapsed, during the course of ten days in November 1989, it was only under the external pressure from the events in Poland, Hungary and the German Democratic Republic which left Czechoslovakia a lone bastion of Leninist orthodoxy in Central Europe. The régime's successes in keeping down the opposition for long meant, however, that not even a rudimentary oppositional party system existed to assume the power that then lay in the streets.

In fact, the only opposition in place to assume state power were the loose associations which had organised the demonstrations and strikes that toppled the régime; just like Poland's *Solidarity*, they were movement-parties which with a broad-coalition form, a vague, non- or anti-ideological and strongly moralistic form, and an informal internal organisational structure.¹⁴¹ They were largely centred on well-known personalities, such as Havel, Dubcek, Jiri Dienstbier or Václav Maly; Cardinal Tomášek also moved in the background.¹⁴² The opposition was not only diffuse; it was also split between the two parts of the federation: in the Czech lands, the anti-system opposition was called the Civic Forum (*Občanské fórum*), in Slovakia, Public Against Violence (*Verenaj proti násilu*, VPN).

¹⁴¹ Batt (1991), 55.

¹⁴² Garton Ash (1990), 78-130, is the definitive eye-witness account of the chaotic days in Prague in November 1989.

6

The Politics of Transition

Exoriare aliquis nostris
ex ossibus ultor
— *Virgil*

The Founding Elections

The competitive electoral politics after 1989 proved untenable the assumptions of social harmony and unity which had influenced both the old *nomenklatura* élite and its anti-political or nationalist-populist opponents. Instead, competitive, adversarial, Western-style politics was to carry the day.

By late 1990, both the Czechoslovak and the Polish political system were moving into extreme multi-partism. The Polish party-political configuration was similar to the Czechoslovak, but because of the drawn-out transition it had a much stronger institutional base. After the round-table negotiations which the Jaruzelski government initiated in February 1989, *Solidarity* acted as a coalition which swept the polls in the semi-free elections the following June, winning 99 of 100 seats in the Senate, and 160 of the 161 contested seats in the first round of the elections to the lower house. After this brutal exposure of the government's unpopularity, the 'allied parties' immediately moved to distance themselves even more from the ever-less-ruling Polish United Workers Party, and in January 1990 the PUWP itself split into two competing leftist parties. The gradual normalisation of politics and the receding threat of a communist backlash soon also led to the collapse of the *Solidarity* coalition: the parliamentary party fragmented into what has been derided as 'couch parties' because their membership could allegedly fit onto a large sofa. Polish multi-partism was exacerbated by the election legislation introduced before the 1991 polls, which not only introduced strict proportional representation, but also left the nomination of candidates to loose electoral committees.

In Czechoslovakia, the broad Civic Forum and Public Against Violence coalitions also split soon after the founding elections, albeit with relatively strong core elements remaining under the campaigning umbrella. In the run-up to the first free elections in June 1990, the Civic Forum voiced the slogan 'Parties are for party members, the Civic Forum is for everyone', and defined itself as 'a democratic civic force, protecting autonomous groups from possible attempts by the state to co-opt them'.¹ But at the same time a more differentiated, if not necessarily clearer, party system was emerging. The communist party split into three new parties; the former 'allied parties' reformulated their positions; many of the pre-war parties were re-constituted; along with new ones formed on the basis of mainstream ideologies such

¹ Batt (1991), 61.

as liberalism, social democracy, Christian Democracy, or agrarianism. Already by January 1990, some 200 parties or political organisations had registered.²

Hungary, however, had a somewhat different experience of immediate post-transition party politics. The widespread acceptance of the constitutional arrangements generated by the round-table discussions and referendum of 1989 'lent an initial normalcy to Hungarian politics'.³ Well before the founding elections, the party system had consolidated along fairly conventional lines, avoiding both the extreme diversity and the turbulence of its Polish and Czechoslovak counterparts. This more mature state of the party system was mainly a result of the extended process of relatively unobstructed political pluralisation since 1987, which had fostered the development of more differentiated, coherent, party-like structures.⁴ Another important reason for this was the electoral system, a mix of single-seat constituencies and multiple-member constituencies for which a nation-wide following of at least 4 per cent was required for a party to gain representation in the Diet.

One indication of Hungarian normality was the moderate turnout in the first free elections: 63.2 per cent in the first round and 45.9 per cent in the second. In contrast, voter turnout in the June 1990 general election in Czechoslovakia was an astonishing 96 per cent, a clear indication of hyper-mobilisation.

The June 1989 general election in Poland, where some seats were pre-apportioned, generated a turnout of 62 per cent in the first round and only 25 per cent in the second; in the wholly free local elections in May 1990, turnout was 42.2 per cent, and in the presidential elections the following November, 60 per cent in the first round and 53.4 per cent in the second.⁵ In the Polish case, however, the explanation for the relatively low voter turnout appears to be less a sense of a return to normalcy than electoral fatigue after a decade of social and political turmoil. Similar indications of voter fatigue could be indeed be observed in Czechoslovakia and Hungary by 1991–92. A rising tide of anti-Europeanism, anti-intellectualism and anti-democratic feelings followed growing discontent with what was widely seen as the politicians' petty bickering in the face of a huge economic crisis. The communists' politicisation of society also appears to have resulted in the discrediting of politics as such.⁶ Given the fact that élite and mass socialisation had taken place during communism when all real antagonisms were deliberately obscured, it is not surprising that it proved difficult for many to face up to the fact that the market economy and parliamentarism necessarily manifested themselves through conflict, and all the techniques for handling these conflicts were not in place at the time of the transition. These tendencies were, nevertheless, less marked in Poland with its long and turbulent transition period than in Hungary, which had been ruled by the paternalistic Kádár régime—or in Czechoslovakia, only just emerged from two decades of very heavy-handed 'normalisation' which had allowed almost no scope for voluntary participation.⁷

The almost identical showings of the communist parties or their immediate successors stands out as an interesting fact—in all three countries, they fell within the 13 to 15 per cent range. The outcome in all cases was certainly decisive defeats, i.e. the loss of power, but the elections nevertheless reflected a solid ability of the former ruling parties to attract groups threatened by economic reform—particularly old-age pensioners—in addition to the loyal *apparatchiki* who probably formed the core base of support. The successor parties benefited from the inability of other leftist parties to put forward programmes attractive to groups

² Bankowicz (1994), 159.

³ Stokes (1993), 171.

⁴ Batt (1991), 55.

⁵ Batt (1991), 119–129.

⁶ Schöpflin (1993), 261.

⁷ Cf. Kolosi (1995), 117.

feeling threatened by the changes,⁸ and also enjoyed a substantial campaigning advantage in terms of financial resources, manpower and country-wide organisations.

Table 6.1: The Founding Elections

	Poland		Czechoslovakia	Hungary
Date	June 1989	October 1991	June 1990	Mar–Apr 1990
Electoral System	Multiple-member constituencies <i>Sejm</i> : 161 of 460 seats contested <i>Senate</i> : all 100 seats contested	Proportional Representation	Multiple-member constituencies; 5 % threshold in Czech lands, 3 % in Slovakia	(a) Single-member constituencies (b) County constituencies with 4 % national threshold
Ballots ¹	n/m	117	22	19
Parties represented	7	29	8 ²	7
Largest Party	<i>Solidarity</i>	Democratic Union	Civic Forum; Public Against Violence	Democratic Forum
Share of Vote, %	<i>Sejm</i> : 161 seats <i>Senate</i> : 99 seats	13.5	48.0	24.7
Communist Vote ³	n/m	13 %	13.6 %	14.6 %

¹ Registered for election ² Federal Assembly; two additional in Slovak National Council ³ Former ruling party or successor(s) thereof; n/m: Not meaningful

Yet the successor parties varied considerably in terms of programmatic goals, attitudes towards the past, unity and coherence. The dominant successor party in Poland, the Alliance of the Democratic Left, eventually came out in tacit support of the fundamentals of the radical market-oriented economic transition programme. In Hungary too the formerly ruling party split: the radically reformist successor party, essentially social democrat in character, fared best despite internal conflicts within the leadership; the competing hard-line party failed to clear the 4 per cent national threshold for the 1990 Diet. The Czechoslovak party retained elements of its Marxist-Leninist programme and, notably, its name. But like its counterparts in Poland and Hungary it strove to project a radically renewed character, almost unconditionally endorsing every political change and economic reform (although calling it 'constructive opposition').⁹ The entire leadership was renewed and most KSC candidates standing for office were political newcomers on the national scene—some were not even party members.¹⁰

Aside from the former ruling parties, which fall somewhat in between, two major party meta-families can be discerned throughout post-transition Eastern Europe: the 'programmatic', and the 'socio-cultural'. The programme parties operate within the framework of ideological platforms such as socialism, liberalism, conservatism or ecologism. The socio-cultural parties, on the other hand, are driven by religion, nationalism, ethnicism

⁸ Cf. Boguszak et al. (1995), 93.

⁹ Boguszak et al. (1995), 93.

¹⁰ Ulc (1992), 20.

or agrarianism, or oriented towards particular socio-economic groups.¹¹ This distinction was, however, by no means clear-cut from the beginning. Up until the founding elections and for some time thereafter, the largest anti-communist parties in all three countries contained factions from both party meta-families.

Most of the former allied parties can nevertheless be classified as being of the socio-cultural variety. This was only natural. Already during the period of communist dominance, their express assignment had been to provide for the controlled expression of the particularist interests of farmers, the urban middle strata or national minorities; to serve as 'transmission belts'. During 1989 the allied parties in Czechoslovakia and Poland cut their remaining ties to Marxism-Leninism and appealed directly to their core support groups, usually reinstating the programmes and symbols they had used before their subordination to the communists in the late 1940's and early 1950's. The advantage the former allied parties had in the form of intact organisational structures and what nostalgic feelings their ancient history inspired did not, however, compensate for the stigma of long-term co-operation with the communists. Their success in the founding elections was moderate at best, but the situation later changed—in fact already during the 1991 Polish elections, by which time the Peasants Party had managed to reclaim command of its natural constituency with promises of cheap credits and price control for agricultural input goods and products.

The majority of the parties from the immediate post-war era also reconstituted themselves. These 'nostalgia parties' did not bear the stigma of co-operation; indeed they were martyred as victims of repression. Most of them nevertheless failed to build up sufficiently strong organisations or electoral platforms in time for the founding elections: programmes written in the 1940's or even earlier were obviously of limited relevance to the actual problems facing Central Europe after 1989. The most conspicuous exceptions to this general observation were the Slovak National Party and the Smallholders and Christian Democratic parties in Hungary; all three firmly rooted in distinct socio-cultural constituencies.

Thus, entirely new party formations mastered the founding elections. Dominant among the programmatic parties were outfits—not all of them can seriously be called 'parties'—advocating a clean break not only with communism, but also with the pre-war authoritarianism-spiced traditions. They have been called 'liberal' or 'neo-liberal', but the proper label for their world view and ideals would be 'Western', as they included social democrats, some Christian democrats and even some successor formations of the former ruling parties. Even so, outright liberal or neo-liberal parties were more successful than any current Western European party of that denomination. The Civic Forum won an outright majority in Bohemia and Moravia, its then still liberal-moderate ally PAV became Slovakia's by far largest formation, while the assemblage of Free Democrats and Young Democrats constituted the second-strongest parliamentary grouping in Hungary.

The Party System on the Right

Modernist, Western-oriented ideologies did not totally dominate the non-communist side of the political spectrum. The forces rallying behind Lech Walesa's 1990 presidential bid; the populist phalanx of the Democratic Forum in Hungary; the Slovak National Party (SNP) and the Christian Democratic Movement (CDM); and a range of parties catering primarily to the agrarian population in all three countries represented another blend. They had much more in common with pre-war Eastern European paternalistic conservatism than with the individualistic, free-marketeering brand dominating in modern Western European

¹¹ Klingemann (1994) makes this distinction.

conservatism. Instead of placing the emphasis on the free market and the individual's freedom from state interference, as most current Western European conservatives do, 'the conservative traditions to which [Eastern European] right-wing or "moderate" parties hark back to are those appropriate to a pre-modern polity and society, that of the 1930's, nationhood and religion.'¹² While staunchly anti-communist, they often appear as pseudo-leftist, with their stress on egalitarianism, community and state-sponsored welfare. Of course the collectivism of traditionalist conservatism is not—as in the case for Marxist collectivism—universalistic and inclusive, but rather particularistic and exclusive.

Yet even when taking into account the radical fringe, the Central European right-wing has not by far been as militant, or influential, as similarly motivated parties and movements in the Balkans, not to speak of Russia. By all accounts, very little in the way of the 'conspiratology', ethnic mysticism and historical falsification energising the Russian or Yugoslav nationalist extreme right could be discerned in Central Europe in the years immediately following the transition.

Poland: Parties of Christ and President

The Polish party system remained weakly differentiated for some two years after the conclusion of the round-table talks in 1989. An initial reason for this was the need to present a united front against the then still communist-dominated government, as a 1981-style backlash could not totally be ruled out for some time. As was the case in Czechoslovakia, there were also widespread fears that agents of the former ruling bodies would attempt to hijack the opposition movements if they evolved into more disciplined, hierarchical organisations. These anxieties were, however, gradually laid to rest as it became clear—at the very latest during the collapse of the GDR—that the Soviet leadership was prepared to tolerate pluralism and even a roll-back of its sphere of interest.

Solidarity's assemblage in the 1989 *Sejm* was indeed extremely diverse, spanning 'social democrats, workers' self-management activists, liberal adherents of the free market, agrarians, centrist unionists, Christian democrats and right-wing conservatives.'¹³ This broad coalition did not, unsurprisingly, survive competitive electoral politics for long. The strains increased between the movement's leaders in government and parliament who continued to see *Solidarity* as a force for instituting political and social change, and union activists wanting it to be a defender of direct workers' interests (not least in the face of increasing competition from the invigorated 'official' *OPZZ* unions). Even with *Solidarity* dominating the post-round-table government, a wave of strikes and peasant blockades rocked the country in 1990.

By the summer of 1990 proto-party formation was under way within the *Solidarity* coalition. Walesa increasingly distanced himself from the government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki which many parliamentarians, activists and voters increasingly saw as élitist and too technocratic. The cracks within the *Solidarity* élite widened dramatically when Lech Walesa announced he would stand in the presidential election in November and December 1990. As the first fully free parliamentary elections did not follow until late 1991, the presidential polls may indeed be interpreted as a surrogate founding election.

Walesa and his supporters in the Centre Alliance (*PC*) chose to stand on a more Catholic and populist platform than the government mainstream. Mazowiecki, who subsequently decided to compete for the presidency, emerged as the leader of the other main grouping to emerge from *Solidarity*, the Citizens' Movement Democratic Action (*ROAD*). The schisms during the 1990 presidential elections exposed cleavages in the Polish political culture which

¹² Schöpflin (1993), 259.

¹³ Vinton and Barany (1990), 197.

had previously been obscured by the communist vs. anti-communist dichotomy. If Mazowiecki represented Western-style intra-élite consensualism and low-key reform, the charismatic and self-reliant Walesa symbolised a somewhat anachronistic strong-man, quick-fix style of politics. This conflict dimension soon superseded the pro- vs. anti-communist cleavage as the dominant one in Polish politics. Notably, the Catholic Church came out in support of Walesa, even though Mazowiecki had risen through the ranks of Church-sponsored institutions. Mazowiecki, however, advocated the separation of Church and State into their singular spiritual and temporal domains, while Walesa held the Catholic Church to be an inseparable part of the Polish nation and state. *ROAD* was branded left-of-centre by Walesa and his supporters, but Zbigniew Bujak, the former anti-politician activist mentioned earlier who became one of its leaders, rather pertinently qualified its orientation rather as 'West-of-centre', 'projecting a liberal, progressive, secular and "Westernising" self-image', in contrast to the Centre Alliance's 'alleged primitive, inward-looking, traditionalist nationalism and anti-Semitic tendencies'.¹⁴

The division obviously also had much to do with economic policies: Mazowiecki was strongly identified with the successful, but increasingly unpopular austerity measures that had been introduced, while Walesa, with no formal government position, could afford to make broader promises with stronger electoral appeal. In 1991, 60 per cent of the Polish population had incomes at or under the existence minimum, and in September that year unemployment hit 1.9 million. In comparison with Hungary and particularly with Czechoslovakia, where unemployment was unheard of at the time, Poland's economy experienced a much more painful transition from plan to market.

As Adam Michnik later noted, Walesa won the presidential elections because he was an idol of the masses, promising them 'a miracle and a quick route to prosperity, the elimination of corruption and unemployment and other equally empty promises'.¹⁵ After Walesa's victory in the presidential election, the *Solidarity* split was formalised: Mazowiecki walked out both of the government and of *Solidarity*'s parliamentary group to form the Democratic Union. He was replaced in office by Jan Bielecki, while Leszek Balcerowicz remained Finance Minister.



PRESSFOTO-AP—WITOLD SZULECKI

Allies Becoming Rivals: Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Lech Walesa during the run-up to the Presidential Elections in 1990.

¹⁴ Batt (1991), 59.

¹⁵ Michnik (1995), 6.

The Polish constitution provides the president with fairly strong powers: legislative initiative, veto power over legislation, the right to dissolve parliament¹⁶, influence over the formation of government and the capacity to nominate high public officials such as the central bank governor and the commander of the armed forces. During 1991, Walesa set out to expand the influence of the Head of State over day-to-day politics to a maximum. He created a parallel system of governmental power centred on the Belweder presidential palace, employing some 200 personal advisors. After the return of the former ruling party to power late in 1993, Walesa challenged the very constitutional order of the state by dismissing the Prime Minister and subordinating the army and special forces to presidential powers. All in all, Walesa's five-year term in office (1991–96) can be described as one of almost chronic constitutional crisis.

In the 1991 *Sejm* elections the electoral attractiveness of political Catholicism was demonstrated anew by the success of the Catholic Electoral Alliance (CNU, in Polish: *ZChN*) which won 10.7 per cent of the vote and emerged as the third strongest single force. The dominant element in the Alliance was the Christian-National Union, which has been said to run on a 'Catholic supremacist platform',¹⁷ and can indeed be described as a fundamentalist party. In 1991 it campaigned on a semi-populist, welfareist platform, opposing the influx of foreign capital, warning of a threat to vital national interests by a subordination to supra-national EC structures, and criticising the austerity policies of the Balcerowicz stabilisation plan.

The CNU also identifies a dangerous threat to the Polish state from without, in the rather predictable form of a combined German-Russian menace. The party is thus strongly hostile to Poland's German minority, which it sees as a transmission belt for Germany's supposedly hegemonic ambitions. That does not refrain the CNU from, on its part, promoting the defence of Roman Catholicism and the Polish *Diaspora* in the territories lost to the Soviet Union.¹⁸ In many respects the CNU carries on the legacy of the pre-war National Democrats, although Dmowski's movement was mainly energised by secular nationalism and assimilative ethnocentrism rather than by Catholic missionary zeal.

Yet the CNU's main message is moral. It envisions a Poland thoroughly steeped in Christian values, a national Catholic state prepared to combat both the residual legacy of communism and the Western evils of consumerism and moral permissiveness. Its world view is openly anti-modern and anti-Western: the CNU journal, *Polish Matters*, identifies 'Christianity, Church, Fatherland and Honour' as the foundation for a Polish renaissance.¹⁹ In line with the Vatican the CNU condemns divorce, the use of contraception, abortion, and premarital sex, while coyly propagating eugenicist ideas. It also has a bent for conspiratology: the responsibility for social and economic failure is laid on ubiquitous 'enemies' of the nation: the overtly tolerant liberals and élites intoxicated by false Western values.

Catholic or otherwise denominational parties exist in most European countries, but in most cases political Christianity is either marginal or subordinated to more secularised formations. The success of the CNU arguably reflects the unique Polish experience, with the Catholic Church enjoying exceptionally strong authority and being willing to serve as a

¹⁶ The president can dissolve parliament against the will of the cabinet only if parliament cannot agree on a budget within three months, or if parliament passes a vote of non-confidence in the Prime Minister without nominating a new candidate for head of government. The modalities of what constitutes a 'non-constructive' vote of non-confidence was, however, hotly disputed during Lech Walesa's term of office in the Belweder Palace.

¹⁷ Grzybowski (1994), 68.

¹⁸ Hockenos (1993), 252.

¹⁹ Hockenos 81993), 250–251.

higher moral and political authority in the regulation of any worldly matters. The CNU is particularly loyal to the Church, but the Church exerts strong influence over a large portion of the Polish party system: 'few parties seem willing to consider the strictly secular position of the socialist and liberal parties who want to restrict the influence of the Church to religious matters only and to ban religious instruction from the compulsory school system.'²⁰ It appears to be the case that the Polish party system in this respect manifestly failed to reflect broader society, which certainly was overwhelmingly pious but also politically secular. One particularly germane indication of the rupture between the electorate and their representatives was the *Sejm* decision to drastically tighten abortion legislation. The new rules followed the strongly worded wishes of the Church, ignoring the fact that the majority of Poles accept it to be either available on demand or after a medical and ethical consultation process.²¹

The 1991 presidential campaign brought out some anti-Semitic rhetoric on the part of Walesa. After being asked if he considered the *ROAD* and the Democratic Union being a 'Jewish party'—the question was prompted by some ambiguous remarks he had made earlier—Walesa inquired why Michnik and Geremek, two of the leaders of the liberal movement, were 'concealing their origins' and stated that he was proud to be a Pole, and would be equally proud to be a Jew if he happened to have that ancestry. Although Michnik, among many others, has said he is convinced that Walesa personally is not an anti-Semite—a view supported by the fact that he refrained from making statements that could be interpreted as being anti-Semitic as soon as the campaign was over—it is equally true that Walesa was not averse to stress his '100 per cent Polishness', especially after rumours were put into circulation that Mazowiecki, the lifelong Catholic scholar and activist, would in fact be Jewish. It was also only after the election that the Catholic Church issued a pastoral letter condemning anti-Semitism, although it then did it in unprecedentedly strong words.²²

Walesa's position in the ideological spectrum is indeed somewhat puzzling in the light of the pre-war legacy. He certainly proved to share the étatist philosophy of the *Endecja*, but simultaneously expressed his admiration for Marshal Pilsudski, whose portrait is said to be prominently displayed in his study. Indeed, he seems to have attempted to stitch together the two main ideological heritages from the 1920's and 1930's; the precedent is the gradual turn to the right made by the *Sanacja* after Pilsudski's death. What united Pilsudski and his opponents was, as pointed out earlier, their common urge to secure a strong government above party politics.

The true significance of the anti-Semitic overtones during the campaign does not, however, lie in what they may tell about Lech Walesa, but in what they tell about the electorate. With one third of Poles feeling that the few thousand remaining Jews 'have too much power' in the country, and 47 per cent opposing the right for Jews to stand for parliament,²³ votes could be certainly be won by subtle anti-Semitic posturing. The brandishing of Mazowiecki and his liberal associates as cosmopolitan crypto-Jews also fitted neatly into the traditional Polish dichotomy between Western-oriented modernists and Catholic-nationalist traditionalists. This was further demonstrated by the surprising success of another presidential candidate: Stanislaw Tyminski, a virtually unknown Peruvian-Canadian businessman of Polish extraction, finished second in the first round with almost a quarter of the vote and ahead of Mazowiecki. Tyminski's campaign was built on crude demagoguery, promising even quicker fixes than Walesa to the reform-fatigued population

²⁰ Grzybowski (1994), 68.

²¹ Cf. Table 6.8 below.

²² Hockenos (1993), 292-3.

²³ Hockenos (1993), 289-90.

and appealing to anti-establishmentarian sentiments by then directed as much at the 'Solidatura' as against the former ruling structures.

The presidential elections were the first fully free polls in Poland, and clarified many of the cleavages that were to dominate the parliamentary elections in the autumn of 1991. By then, the communists had been out of power for some two years and reform was well underway. This meant that a significant constituency for protest votes had assembled, reacting to the economic changes and expressing nostalgia for the mythical image of the security they had under communism. This nostalgia was, somewhat paradoxically, often blended with virulent anti-communism. But at the same time many of the parties and movements which tried to exploit it were heavily infiltrated or even organised by former middle-ranking *apparachiki* and secret policemen.

That was, however, not the case with the most successful force on the extreme right, the Confederation for an Independent Poland (*KPN*). The party was formed as early as in 1979 on a programme of non-compromising opposition to the communist régime and Soviet influence, which had bestowed upon it substantial legitimacy and credibility. Having scorned the 1989 round-table talks, it went to the 1991 polls on a platform of radical anti-establishmentarianism, directed both at the former system and at *Solidarity*, and collected 7.5 per cent of the vote. The *KPN*'s undisputed leader Leszek Moczulski has been ridiculed—rather than feared—for his fondness for paramilitary charades, internal discipline and militaristic paraphernalia. The party is also nationalist, but rather inspired by Pilsudski's vision of a multi-ethnic Poland than by ethnocentrism; one of its main themes is the sponsorship of an East Central European federation. In line with this, the party has never advocated anti-Semitism and is supportive of the rights of Poland's national minorities. But despite its fierce anti-communism, it has been called the 'most consistent advocate of state-socialist measures' in the 1991 parliament.²⁴

This sets the *KPN* apart from another radical-liberal party with its roots in the final years of the communist period. The Conservative-Liberal Party (*UPR*), founded as the 'Movement for Real Politics' (*RPR*) in 1987—70 years to the day after the Regent's Council's declaration of Poland's independence—is probably the foremost expression of modernist conservatism in Poland. The party programme, largely modelled on the British Conservative Party's, advocates capitalism based on private ownership and a free market economy; the decentralisation of state powers and their limitation to the fields of foreign affairs, defence (based on a strong, professional army), internal order, environmental protection and the administration of justice; the abolition of publicly-administered social welfare; the abolition of all restrictions on the free movement of goods, services and people. The *UPR* has also demanded the lustration of all leading political figures and the criminalisation of pornography.

Like the *KPN*, the *UPR* is very much a one-man show, run by the quintessential political entrepreneur Janusz Korwin-Mikke. He did not manage to gather the 100,000 signatures required to stand in the 1990 presidential elections,²⁵ but in the 1991 *Sejm* elections the *UPR* won 2.26 per cent of the votes and three seats; later the group was augmented by the defection of one *CNU* parliamentarian. In the 1993 parliamentary elections the *UPR* increased its share of votes to 3.4 per cent, but did not clear the 5 per cent threshold. The party has its strongest base of support in Warsaw and other major cities.

Even if the *KPN* is strongly populist and has shown little willingness to compromise in parliament, it is still operating within a broadly defined political mainstream. This sets it apart from the truly extremist fringe, which comprises of the Party X, Self-Defence, Polish

²⁴ Vinton (1994), 17-18; Vinton (1991).

²⁵ Korwin-Mikke stood, however, in the 1995 presidential elections, winning 2.4 per cent of the votes in the first round.

National Community, and the National Fatherland Party. An evaluation of these should be quoted at some length, as it illustrates the truly eclectic ideologies and anti-rational world views of the populist-nationalist extreme fringe throughout the region.

They perceive Poland's current tribulations as the result of a criminal conspiracy, usually involving collusion between government officials and international organisations such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund. Implicit to this outlook is the notion that the barriers to prosperity are artificial and political rather than objective and economic. Exhortations from the government for patience and sacrifice are in fact a giant swindle meant to lull the public into sacrificing the prosperity it is rightfully owed by the state. Wrapped up in this notion is the idea that the new economic élites are just as bad or worse than the old communist régime, or that the two are really one and the same. In appealing to the public these 'outsider' forces thus boast that they have had no part in the 'establishment' and no desire to join it. Most problematic, they depict the current effort to build a market economy as an exercise in deliberate destruction rather than a long-overdue attempt to construct a workable economy from the ruins of a failed system.²⁶

'Party X', was created early in 1991 on the back of the astonishing electoral success of Tyminski, for whom 3.8 million Poles had voted in the previous presidential elections. The party dismissed democracy as an even worse form of government than communism, and openly espoused radical ethnic nationalism. As foreign brethren like the Czech Republicans or the misnamed Russian Liberal-Democratic Party of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Party X 'drew on a sinister underworld of former communist activists and secret police functionaries' to build its organisation, and 'the driving force behind the party seemed to come not from popular demand, but rather from subversive figures with some association with the communist system'.

Indeed, the party set up headquarters in offices provided by the *Grunwald* Patriotic Association, while Józef Kossecki, a *Grunwald* member and professor of 'social cybernetics', became its deputy chairman. Not surprisingly, the *Grunwald* Association's long-running interest in revealing 'Zionist plots' and general anti-Semitic rhetoric was vigorously taken up by Party X. The blame for Poland's current problems were squarely placed on various foreign powers, whose conspiracies were propagated as the root of the country's misfortunes. The party's electoral success was, however, dismal, and the three elected deputies soon defected to other groups in the *Sejm*.²⁷

By the 1993 general elections the Party X was joined in the polling booths by two other ethnocentric-extremist parties, the Self-Defence farmers' union and the Polish National Community. Both had been in operation at least since 1991 and, like Party X, built their public profiles on overt anti-Semitism, strong criticism of the Church and the Pope, and the equation of the democratic system with the former communist one. Though aiming for representation in the *Sejm*, the two parties devoted the most part of their energies at extra-parliamentary activities which often took violent forms.²⁸ Self-Defence's leadership also included several well-known figures from the *Grunwald* Association and the former communist party's nationalist hard-line—notably Edward Kowalczyk, who had been a deputy premier in the martial law government. The Polish National Community mainly catered to skinheads and the truly extremist fringe.

²⁶ Vinton (1994), 18.

²⁷ Vinton (1991b); Vinton (1994).

²⁸ Vinton (1994), 16-19.

In 1992, the National Fatherland Party emerged as a radical splinter group from Christian-National Union. It campaigned on a platform opposing foreign ownership and defining Polishness in ethnic-racial terms, particularly excluding Jews, whom its chairman publicly has accused of 'using the Germans to destroy the Polish people during the war'.²⁹ The party leader is Stanislaw Rybicki, a factory manager expelled from the PUWP in 1971 for 'undermining the party's prestige', and who had been active in Tyminski's presidential campaign.

In any case, openly extremist parties enjoyed little electoral support before and immediately after the 1990 presidential and 1991 *Sejm* founding elections; even surprisingly so considering the extent of social and political turbulence and economic hardship the population experienced. It appears as—and many surveys confirm this—the vast bulk of the public at the time was primarily concerned with electing governments with the competence to pull through economic reforms. The true protest vote materialised only somewhat later, when these reforms were consolidated.

Hungary: Liberals, Moderates and Populists

Not even in Poland has traditional conservatism been even remotely as successful as in Hungary's 1990 founding elections, which were resoundingly won by the Hungarian Democratic Forum together with its junior partners, the Independent Smallholders Party (ISP) and the Christian Democrats. After a bitter and divisive campaign the three won a total of 42.9 per cent of the votes given to parties that cleared the 4 per cent threshold. Given their particularly strong showing in rural single-seat constituencies, this translated into over 60 per cent of the parliamentary seats.

The Democratic Forum, while split between populists and moderates, typifies an Eastern European conservatism largely unaffected by ideological modernisation. It voiced some of the same pet themes as the Polish Christian-National Union, albeit not that party's fervent clericalism. The Forum's express ideological foundation is the ethnic Hungarian nation and its traditions, values, culture and past. While not anti-market *per se*, the HDF chose to highlight the state's role in providing security for the individual as part of the national community. Consequently its economic programme was in a sense leftist, advocating state intervention and spending to shore up family economic security.

The Christian Democratic Party articulated similar themes, but put even more emphasis on religion as a binding force in society. Its programme was explicitly based on the Ten Commandments, and the main campaign topic was the introduction of compulsory religious instruction in schools.³⁰ The HDF and Christian Democrats were eventually joined in government coalition by the Independent Smallholders Party, despite the fact that the ISP's demands for rapid re-privatisation, particularly the redistribution to peasants of collectivised land, were not in harmony with the overall aims of its partners.³¹ But otherwise the Smallholders by and large subscribed to the traditionalist agenda, as demonstrated by the slogans of 'God, Fatherland, Family' and 'Wine, Bread, Peace' it adopted from its pre-1948 predecessor.

The founding elections were decided on bread-and-butter rather than socio-cultural issues, and the HDF's gradualist approach eventually went down better among the electorate than the radical liberalism of the Free and Young Democrats. The radical traditionalism espoused by some visible HDF personas seems to have been of marginal relevance for the outcome, and the HDF ministers were indeed drawn from the moderate faction of the party,

²⁹ Luoma (1995).

³⁰ Hockenos (1993), 112-3; also Schöpflin (1991).

³¹ Kolosi (1995), 115.

which attempted to present itself as modelled on mainstream Western European Christian Democracy.³²

That the relationship between the two main anti-communist parties was in fact not all that antagonistic was subsequently demonstrated by the semi-secret deal that the HDF and AFD made during the coalition negotiations. It settled a wide range of issues, including the election of a new president (the Free Democrat Árpád Göncz) and the rules for the running of parliament.³³ This agreement essentially side-stepped the HDF's coalition partners, gave the AFD a consultative role in government, and transformed the populist faction of the HDF into a *de facto* opposition force.

At the same time, the centrists of the HDF did not once and for all distance themselves from the extremist views propagated by the party's populist faction. When the poet and Forum co-founder István Csurka published pamphlets during the election campaign claiming, i.a., that the 'pursuit of self-interest' by a 'dwarf minority' blocked Hungarians from realising their true national aspirations, it provoked protests from all other major parties, but was not publicly condemned by moderates within the ranks of the HDF.³⁴ Even if the moderates did not share all of Csurka's views, they appreciated the coherent, complete and concise ideological mind-set that the populists presented to the electorate—pointing to the nation as the pivotal category from which the party's popular appeal, legitimation and concept of democracy flowed. Indeed, HDF moderates as well stressed that the party was an incarnation of a mythical link between the Magyar people and the Magyar nation's historical destiny.

The folkish-ethnic concept of a nation transcending the state is not wholly unproblematic given that the Hungarian state, though more ethnically homogenous than ever before in its history, contains several substantial national minorities, and that several million ethnic Magyars live outside Hungary's present borders. As might be expected, the Democratic Forum's self-identification as a supra-political voice of the nation generated a sceptical approach to representative and competitive democracy. It was embodied in the authoritarian style and low level of tolerance of critique during the first two years of the HDF-dominated Antall government in 1990–92, and reached something of a high point when one deputy leader openly declared as his opinion that it was necessary to suspend democracy for the period of the transition.³⁵ Indeed, for many within the Democratic Forum, 'the notion of a fatalistic, spiritual mission implies recourse to a morality above such temporal matters as electoral mandates, state law or economic policy.'³⁶

The HDF politicians see themselves as more than ordinary people who were elected as politicians. They behave as if they were ordained with the task of the nation's salvation from an authority much higher than the majority of voters. In parliament, they behave as if they simply can't understand why the opposition is there. They don't seem to understand that just because they received 1.5 million votes and the opposition 1.2 million, they aren't free to exercise power as they please.³⁷

Whatever its intentions, the HDF-led government in practice adopted a middle-of-the-road stance. The Third Way, a soft landing from communism into a socially conscious market economy proved impassable given the sorry state of public finances. The HDF and its

³² Schöpflin (1991), 64–5.

³³ Schöpflin (1991), 64.

³⁴ Hockenos (1993), 111–2.

³⁵ Kolosi (1995), 120.

³⁶ Hockenos (1993), 118.

³⁷ Hockenos (1993), 119–20, quoting an interview with the Hungarian political scientist András Bozóni

coalition allies, while long on public support, also proved embarrassingly short on administrative talent; they came to rely heavily on initiatives and support in parliament from the liberal, market-oriented opposition. And despite promises to carry through a thorough lustration, the government also was forced to retain much of the communist-era élite within the bureaucracy, industry and finance simply to keep things going. It should also be noted that the Antall government introduced the probably most liberal and tolerant minority legislation in Central and Eastern Europe to date.

The diminishing popular appeal of symbolic, ideological-cultural politics among the electorate was demonstrated anew during the local elections held in the autumn of 1990. The outcome was strongly asymmetric to the results of the parliamentary polls: the clear majority of the national-conservative parties was lost to the liberal parties—the AFD and FIDESZ—in the larger cities, while many the rural areas were carried by former communist functionaries standing as independents.³⁸

Czechoslovakia: A Tale of Two Nations

Of all parties successful in the 1990 Czechoslovak elections, only the Communist Party had a federal organisation which throughout the federal territory nominated candidates for all legislative bodies. All other parties with a federal structure failed to win seats either in the federal or in the republican assemblies.³⁹ The main regionalist party in the Czech lands was the Movement for Autonomous Democracy–Movement for Moravia and Silesia (*HSD-SMS*). It ran on an autonomist, Catholicist agenda and had its main base of support in the area around the Moravian capital Brno. In Slovakia, regionalism was much more conspicuous. The Slovak National Party immediately campaigned for full independence for Slovakia, and was soon joined in this by the Christian Democratic Movement. Among the major parties in Slovakia was also the *Együttélés* (Coexistence)–Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement alliance, which catered to the Magyar community. It won outright majorities in five southern districts with a large Hungarian-speaking population; its successes and failures ‘more or less duplicates the map of the ethnic composition of the population’.⁴⁰

The clear winners in the June 1990 Czechoslovak founding elections were, however, the twin coalitions. Civic Forum won 53 per cent of the vote in Bohemia and Moravia, and Public Against Violence 32 per cent of the vote in Slovakia—the latter somewhat surprisingly since a landslide for the Slovak Christian Democratic Movement had been taken almost for granted.⁴¹ Together the CF and PAV commanded a majority of the seats in the federal assembly.

Throughout the election campaign, the CF and PAV remained amorphous, American-style party organisations, dominated by personalities rather than by any programmatic agendas. But almost immediately after the polls they fragmented into more party-like organisations with more distinct political-ideological platforms. The Civic Forum split into three main groupings. The Civic Movement gathered the majority of left-oriented members, many of whom were rooted in the 1968 ‘Socialism with a human face’ ideals; the Civic Democratic Alliance had a clearly non-socialist orientation; as did, to an even greater extent, the strongest and most popular of the trio, the Civic Democratic Party.⁴² Under the leadership of its chairman, the then Finance Minister Václav Klaus, it adopted a radical neo-liberal, free-

³⁸ Márkus (1993), 1172–3.

³⁹ Kostecky, (1995), 120.

⁴⁰ Kostecky (1995), 124.

⁴¹ Gabal (1995), 111.

⁴² Ulc (1992), 27.

market stance inspired by Klaus's ideological role models Friedrich von Hayek, Milton Friedman and Margaret Thatcher.

The outstanding success of hard-core liberalism in the Czech lands appears somewhat puzzling, considering the failure of similar movements in other parts of Eastern Europe to consolidate the positions many of them won immediately after the transition. One may point to several possible explanations. The Klaus government could start out with favourable internal and external conditions: Czechoslovakia had the most stable economy in the former Socialist Bloc, with no significant foreign debt, a very favourable geographical location encouraging the inflow of capital, and timid trade unions. The historical traditions of moderation and tolerance in Bohemia—from the Hussites through Masaryk's First Republic—also played in.

Most stunning, particularly in a Central and Eastern European context, was the cool attitude the Czech élites and masses took to Slovak secessionism, in effect greeting the victory of the separatists in the other half of the federation with a sigh of 'good riddance'. The break-up of the federation certainly took an economic burden of the Czech shoulders, but the granting of independence for Slovakia is still the only peaceful partitioning of a state recorded in modern Europe bar the dismantling of the Swedish-Norwegian union in 1905. If the break-up of Czechoslovakia testified to the strength of nationalism in Slovakia, it also pointed to the absence by and large of it in the Czech lands.

Instead, what Czech nationalism there is has rather been directed at Germany. The issue of the expelled Sudeten Germans' property and right to return, coupled with demands from both sides for apologies for historical wrongs, have remained a permanent thorn in the side of Czech-German relations. Even the modest calls for reconciliation with the expellees and with Germany made by President Havel created a deep rift between him and Prime Minister Klaus, who was backed by all parliamentary parties and by the bulk of public opinion.



PRESSFOTO-AP-PAVEL HOREJSI

*Peaceful
Divorce: 20 June
1992: Slovak
leader Vladimír
Mečiar shaking
hands with Civic
Democratic
Party leader and
then Finance
Minister Václav
Klaus after
having agreed on
the break-up of
the Czechoslovak
federation.*

Post-1990 events seem to confirm that Slovak public opinion was not only broadly supportive of full independence and 'a strongly nationalistic political culture'⁴³, but also

⁴³ Bankowicz (1994), 166.

markedly less anti-communist than Czech voters. Nevertheless, the separatist issue for some time remained overshadowed by the economic and political transformation. It exploded fully onto the scene only in 1991, both in the form of outspoken Slovak separatism and in the ascent of the xenophobic but federalist Republican Party in Bohemia and Moravia. Public Against Violence, previously moderately liberal and clearly pro-Western, then 'shifted to a more assertively autonomist position' under pressure from the outspokenly separatist parties.⁴⁴ In 1991 it finally disintegrated into a string of mainly anti-federalist parties. The first democratically elected Slovak premier, the demagogic and somewhat brutish PAV leader Vladimír Mečiar, started to argue the case of independence in 'unequivocal and uncompromising terms'.⁴⁵ Mečiar, a former member of the Communist Party with strong links to the heavy-industry lobby in Slovakia, 'succeeded in winning widespread support as a populist and a nationalist' and went on to found the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) which subsequently became the country's strongest party.

The break-up of PAV took place against the backdrop of the growing support for the Slovak National Party, which was the most distinctly nationalist party to gain national representation in the 1990 polls.⁴⁶ The SNP, building on the traditions of the pre-war Hlinka Slovak National Party, openly admires the clericalist and semi-fascist war-time Republic of Slovakia. It has demonstrated open hostility towards Magyars, Jews and Gypsies, whom its leaders has described as 'dark forces'; the three Slovak Magyar parties have been branded as 'satanic' vehicles for Hungarian revisionist ambitions.⁴⁷ By 1993–4, also Mečiar and the HZDS had developed a strongly authoritarian style of government, and particularly the scandalous news emanating from the conflict with President Michal Kováč generated much badwill for Slovakia abroad.⁴⁸ As a result, Bratislava has even been dubbed a 'Gangsters' Capital'; George Soros, the US billionaire of Hungarian descent who has given huge sums in aid to Eastern Europe, argued in 1994 that the 'combination of nationalist ideology and

⁴⁴ Batt (1991), 98–100.

⁴⁵ Bankowicz (1994), 163.

⁴⁶ Ulc (1992), 29.

⁴⁷ Mather (1994).

⁴⁸ The conflict between the heads of state and government culminated in August 1994 when the president's son, Michal junior, was assaulted, inebriated with liquor and transported over the border to Austria where he, after an anonymous tip from Slovakia, was arrested on suspicion of economic crimes. Opposition politicians immediately accused professionals from the communist-era secret police of having handled the operation; the opposition leader Jan Carnogursky even called upon Mečiar to present an alibi for the night of the abduction. The same month police officers also searched the living quarters of Rudolf Balaz, the chairman of the Conference of Bishops and a vocal supporter of the president, professedly looking for proof of the bishop having smuggled abroad national art treasures. Reaction abroad was also extremely critical towards the 1995 minority legislation, which, i.a., the Council of Europe found to be at odds with Slovakia's treaty obligations. In March 1996, the parliament in Bratislava ratified a Basic Treaty on relations with Hungary, encompassing guarantees for the rights of the Magyar minority. Although Hungary ratified already in the summer of 1995, the three Magyar parties found it unsatisfactory and voted against, particularly as parliament simultaneously added a clause on the Right of Interpretation which defined minority rights as individual instead of as collective. In conjunction with the ratification and prompted by demands of the Slovak National Party, parliament also passed a Law on the Protection of the Republic, which criminalised the organisation of public gatherings with the intent of overturning the constitutional order of the state, its territorial integrity, its capacity for defence or its sovereignty. The spread of 'incorrect' information about the state abroad was also criminalised; a 'general clause' interpreted as opening the door for future political trials. Cf. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 28 March 1996, 6.

commercial interests' prevailing in Slovakia is 'the classic recipe for the rise of Fascism and National Socialism'.⁴⁹

The three ethnic-Hungarian parties in Slovakia have gathered 10–12 per cent of vote in the post-transition elections, or about equal to minority's proportional strength. The Slovak Magyar parties have been the most vociferous minority movements in Central Europe, campaigning for greater local autonomy, proposing the establishment of provinces along ethnic lines throughout Slovakia's Magyar southern belt (*fszakmagyarország*, or 'Northern Hungary', as it is sometimes called), and demanding compensation for property confiscated from Magyars during 1945–48. They can indeed point to some real discrimination: until 1993 Slovakia retained the strict Czechoslovak language laws, i.a. banning street signs in Hungarian in mixed areas and requiring ethnic Hungarian women to add the Slovak suffix 'ova' to their names when they married.⁵⁰ During his second term of office, from June 1992 to March 1994, Slovak Prime Minister Vladimír Meciar rejected plans for the establishment of a Magyar-language university, instead demanding that schools in the Magyar areas increase their education in the Slovak language. Notably, the constitution of Slovakia points out that the state is one of 'the Slovak people'.

Prime Minister Meciar has rejected demands for a minority treaty with Hungary and the application of the principle of reciprocity in minority policies: his argument has been that Slovak Magyars should not be subjected to the same maltreatment as ethnic Slovaks living in Hungary. However, no serious conflicts between Hungarian Slovaks and official authorities have been reported.⁵¹

The only substantial radical-right movement operating in the Czech lands is the Republican Party. It is a typical exponent of the Eastern European variety of post-transition beer-hall extremism, combining populism with contempt for democracy. It is vociferously anti-communist, despite the fact that many of its functionaries have *apparat* backgrounds—the Republicans' founder and leader Miroslav Sládek worked as an official in the communist-era central censorship office, and a number of former secret police officers have been among its most prominent media advocates. Nevertheless, the Republicans demanded a complete purge of all members of the Communist Party, and even accused Havel of clandestinely having been a Communist Party member and *StB* informer. The Republicans also opposed the split-up of the federation, and continues presenting itself as a 'Czechoslovak' party; in fact, it even demands the return of Carpatho-Ruthenia to a reconstituted Czechoslovakia.

In the elections held after the split-up of the federation the Republicans received 600,000 votes and captured eleven of the 200 seats in the Czech National Council. This success is likely to have been mainly a result of its vocal anti-immigrant stance: it is overtly racist in its attitudes towards the Gypsy minority and resident immigrants, demanding the 'resettling'—i.e. expulsion—of both groups.⁵² Despite their fierce anti-German rhetoric, the Republicans have established close contacts with Franz Schönhuber's Republicans in Germany, and even adopted their logo as their own.

The Truly Extreme Fringe

Despite its insignificance in a parliamentary context, an overview of the Central European extreme right would be incomplete without a discussion of the thuggish ultra-right fringe.

⁴⁹ Stehle (1995b), 10.

⁵⁰ Mather (1994).

⁵¹ Gerner et al. (1995), 252.

⁵² Ulc (1992), 28.

This refers to expressive, often violent, groupings without a clear leadership structure, articulated ideology or comprehensive political aims.

The skinhead movement started out as a style fad—green bomber jackets, heavy high-top boots, shaved heads—associated with punk-rock music and football in the late 1970's, first in Britain but quickly spreading to other European countries. The subculture found its greatest appeal among urban working-class and lower middle class youth fearing downward social mobility. Although they were at first apolitical bordering on the anomic, by the mid-1980's skinheads increasingly started displaying fascist and racist symbols, slogans and attitudes, initially as pure provocation but gradually as more of an adopted ideology. Since then, skinhead gangs have been used as storm troopers and a pool for recruitment by established extreme right-wing parties such as the British National Front, the West German National Democratic Party or *Deutsche Alternative*, and *Sverigedemokraterna* in Sweden.⁵³

The appeal of the skinhead identity is easy to comprehend. It provides an outlet for masculinity and aggression, while the gangs' uniform dress, hierarchical internal structure and discipline provide a sense of community, order and purpose in a society where socio-economic transformation is challenging the established social order and wiping out traditional working class jobs. Immigrants are an obvious target when skinheads vent their frustration.

Skinheads started appearing in Eastern and Central Europe around 1982, first in the German Democratic Republic, directly inspired by the West German skinhead scene, and later in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, where there also was a great deal of fraternisation with Austrian and German skinheads. As the subculture was inspired by Western models, skinheads obviously were hostile to the communist system, and their use of Nazi imagery were of course the ultimate provocation. Yet the communist authorities did not interpret the use of fascist symbols as political statements, but rather as signs of asocial behaviour, which indeed largely was the case. However, the interpretation of the skinhead subculture as primarily a Western aberration and a law-and-order problem led to a failure to address the domestic social roots of the emergence of violent youth gangs. In this the Eastern European authorities were, of course, as much at loss as their Western counterparts.

It has been noted that a large pool of the early East German skinheads were young male workers from socially secure families, and that youths with parents associated with the core of the state—bureaucrats, party *apparatchiki*, *Stasi* or military personnel—were strongly over-represented in the gangs. Many were children of orthodox communists and brought up with authoritarian values; they had taken in the rules of the authoritarian society, if not its ideological content. The skinhead personality type tends to covet the thrill of weapons and battle, and eagerly signed up to the voluntary paramilitary training the communist states so eagerly provided, beginning with the Pioneer pre-teen squads which had all the trappings of a paramilitary force: hierarchy, uniforms, drill, and decorations. In the GDR, skinheads could hone their fighting skills in the pre- and proto-military *Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik*, and the armed forces themselves served as a prime arena for skinhead recruitment and training. Skinheads were also eager to participate in the communist youth organisation *Freie Deutsche Jugend's* 'Ordner' squads, which had the task of keeping the order at *FDJ* and party events. A 1989 study showed that one right-wing criminal offender in four surveyed had been a member of *FDJ Ordner* details.⁵⁴

By 1988, the East German skinhead subculture had adopted a more articulated political ideology, beginning to see itself as a continuation of the National Socialist movement, complete with convictions of racial supremacy, demands for the reunification of Germany

⁵³ Buford (1991) gives valuable insight into the British National Front's recruitment drives among football hooligans and skinheads.

⁵⁴ Hockenos (1993), 69-103.

and hostility to deviants from their image of true Germanness. The aim was, ridiculous as it may sound, to overthrow the GDR state by violence, just as German neo-Nazis to this day dream of toppling the Federal Republic. Some skinhead leaders eventually graduated from street thuggery into more organised pseudo-politics, and established contacts with the older generation of GDR ultra-rightists.

Apart from the GDR, the skinhead scene is markedly less vibrant in the former communist countries than it is in Britain, Sweden, Austria or Germany. Indeed, Eastern European skinheads' use of Nazi insignia and symbols appears even more bizarre, particularly as it is commonly combined with the fierce xenophobic nationalism. While far removed from institutionalised politics, Czech skins often mention the pre-war anti-German fascist party as their inspiration; they have also expressed support for the Republican party. This is not surprising given the fact that the skinheads have directed much energy at the persecution of non-European immigrants and the Gypsy community. During the spring of 1990, a wave of riots swept northern Bohemia, whose grim industrial towns presented the country's largest concentration of Vietnamese 'guest workers' and ethnic Gypsies. The rioters found a strong resonance among normally law-abiding citizens who appear to have shared many of the skinheads' views on the causes of criminality and of the threat to employment from immigration.⁵⁵

One estimate in 1995 put the number of Gypsies in the Czech Republic at about two per cent of the total population, or some 200,000.⁵⁶ This may be on the low side, as Czech authorities have refused to grant citizenship to a large number of Gypsies: after the break-up. Czechoslovak citizens could choose freely between taking a Czech or a Slovak passport—but only provided the applicant did not have a criminal record from the past two years, which many Gypsies had due to the communist-era vagrancy legislation. Ten per cent of Czech Gypsies have not been able to acquire citizenship since 1993, thus being barred from public office, elections, restitution of confiscated property, participating in the privatisation programme and, frequently, the social security system. Some human rights movements indeed consider the Czech citizenship legislation 'the most discriminating since the Second World War'. Observers from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe have also pointed to 'grave deficiencies' in the nationality legislation.⁵⁷

In Hungary, a skinhead subculture emerged in the early 1980's, coalescing around the underground music scene and a leading Budapest football team. When it developed from drunken brawling into pseudo-political activism, its main targets were immigrants, Gypsies and Jews. In 1992, Hungarian skinheads were estimated to number between 1,500 and 2,500, with a fifth constituting a truly neo-Nazi core. Neo-Nazi groupings in Hungary have established close contacts with Arrow Cross revivalists among the Hungarian *Diaspora*, as well as with German and Austrian neo-Nazi groups. Hungarian right-radicalism also falls back on the domestic tradition with its Arrow Cross symbols, insignia and pet themes. This constitutes a difference in comparison with Poland and Czechoslovakia, where native fascist traditions are weaker and identified with foreign occupation.⁵⁸ Indeed, the Polish skinheads have distinguished themselves by harassing members of the German minority. Some Polish neo-Nazis adhere to a peculiar brand of slavono-fascism and cultivate contacts to the Russian ultra-right, where the Russian Nazi Party under former wrestling champion Yuri Vlasov brandishes swastikas and openly idolises the Third Reich variety of rightist radicalism.

⁵⁵ Cf. Knox (1994).

⁵⁶ Hockenos (1993), 220; Perlez (1995), B9.

⁵⁷ Perlez (1995), B9, with reference to the Czech ministry of Internal Affairs; the figure of Slovaks having acquired Czech citizenship is quoted as 360,000.

⁵⁸ Hockenos (1993), 153-159.

The Structure of Conflicts and the Voting Pattern

With this sub-chapter, the analysis moves to the aggregate mass level. It presents a macro-level analysis of the voting pattern in the founding elections, with the aim of identifying the structuring cleavages determining party formation, the degree of popular support for free elections and institutionalised multi-party systems, and the relationship between social structure and party politics.

The obvious 'super-issue' during the run-up to the founding elections was system change in general and communism vs. anti-communism in particular. The interests of various social groups were only weakly articulated, and insofar as they were, they confronted not other legitimate actors on the electoral scene but rather the communist-era ideology or what was perceived as the élites' vested interests.⁵⁹ The dominant cleavage was thus one between reformed or orthodox communist parties on the one hand, and all other parties on the other. This is demonstrated by the fact that very broad opposition coalitions fought and won both the semi-free Polish general election in 1989 and the fully free elections in Czechoslovakia the following year.

In all three Central European countries this super-issue was resolved by the victory of the former opposition; yet the cleavage remained reflected in the subsequent roles of government and opposition. The former hegemonic parties were widely perceived as the main opposition regardless of the intensity of conflicts within the anti-communist bloc.

Bernhard Wessels and Hans-Dieter Klingemann have, on the basis of country-specific surveys conducted in late 1990 and early 1991, tracked system preferences in a range of former communist countries.⁶⁰ As Table 6.2 shows, these register a fairly large variation in public support for political systems allowing for political opposition: it ranges from some 60 per cent to well over 90 per cent. By reference to Dahl's two-dimensional differentiation of political systems on the basis of inclusiveness and free competition as the starting point, one may still note a very high level of popular support—in fact, clear majorities—for polyarchy, i.e. the combination of free elections and multi-party competition.

*Table 6.2: System Preference by Country*⁶¹

	Closed hegemony	Inclusive Hegemony	Competitive Oligarchy	Polyarchy
Czechoslovakia	2.4	16.5	6.0	75.1
Hungary	1.3	4.2	10.8	83.7
Bulgaria	0.7	2.1	6.1	91.1
Romania	0.9	4.6	12.9	81.5
Estonia	0.9	2.8	9.9	86.4
Lithuania	2.4	8.9	12.3	76.4
Ukraine	5.2	16.2	18.3	60.3
Krasznoyarsk region	5.7	11.9	13.6	68.8
Slovenia	5.2	5.9	12.8	76.1
East Germany *	1.2	13.2	3.4	82.2
Poland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

n/a: Not available; * Survey made in November 1992

⁵⁹ Tóka (1995b), 79.

⁶⁰ Wessels and Klingemann (1994), 12-22; N=522-1165. The paper and the computations therein are quoted extensively below.

⁶¹ Wessels and Klingemann (1994), 19.

It appears difficult to reach conclusive systematic explanations for these country-by-country differences. For instance, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, which supposedly enjoyed the highest degree of a civil society in the sample (possibly excepting Slovenia) do not, perplexingly, show a markedly high level of support for pluralist competitive democracy—in the case of Czechoslovakia in fact quite the opposite. Support for polyarchy was weakest in the Ukraine and in the Krasnoyarsk region of Russia, which would point to the particular Soviet experience being a factor; on the other hand public support for multi-party systems and free elections was high in Estonia and Lithuania, at the time of the surveys both still formally part of the Soviet Union (although Lithuania had by then unilaterally declared independence).

Differentiation by voters' party family sympathies provides some additional insights. Supporters of the reformed communist parties were—as would indeed be expected—the most sceptical of multi-party democracy and freely contested elections. Voters for the programme parties (conservative, liberal, socialist, ecological) were the most supportive, while the attitude towards polyarchy ranged between the two former groups among supporters of the socio-cultural parties. On average, support for polyarchy among supporters of the three party meta-families was 64 per cent, 80 per cent, and 75 per cent, respectively.

Democracy thus commanded the support of a majority voters in early 1991, but not overwhelmingly so: in five of the nine countries (in the case of Russia, the Krasnoyarsk region) covered by the surveys, a considerable part of the population opposed a democratic development, and 'cautiously speaking, one could state that the proportion is large enough to be regarded as a critical mass challenging democratisation'.⁶² It is, however, important to note that opposition to democracy was not clustered around any particular party or party group, if tilted towards the former communist parties. The exception is the Ukraine, where more than 40 per cent of communist party voters preferred competitive oligarchy, and an additional 23 per cent expressed a preference for either closed or inclusive hegemony.

*Table 6.3: System Preference of Voters by Party Family*⁶³

	Closed Hegemony	Inclusive Hegemony	Competitive Oligarchy	Polyarchy
Communist	5.8	8.7	21.8	63.6
Socialist	1.4	10.8	3.6	84.1
Ecological	0.8	10.0	4.6	84.6
Liberal	1.4	9.9	5.9	82.9
Christian	0.8	12.2	5.8	81.2
Conservative	1.6	3.1	9.0	86.3
Farmer	3.3	11.7	10.0	75.0
Nationalist	2.7	13.1	9.5	74.7
Ethnic	2.2	20.9	1.1	75.8
Others	4.7	7.4	10.1	77.7

Given that the majority of voters for both government and opposition parties (be they either reformed communist or non- or anti-communist)⁶⁴ expressed a preference for democracy, at

⁶² Wessels and Klingemann (1994), 20.

⁶³ Wessels and Klingemann (1994), 20; the country set as in the table above. Party classification from Ibid. 34-35.

the time of the surveys there seem to have been limited prospects for a ruling party or potentially ruling party to abolish multi-partism and the system of free elections. Yet it is equally conspicuous that the system of closed hegemony, which was practised during the period of communist domination, enjoyed only marginal, even minimal, support in all sampled polities. Criticism of competitive multi-party politics was, as one could assume, concentrated to supporters of the former ruling parties: more than one fifth of voters for the reformed communist parties supported competitive hegemony, i.e. an electoral system resembling the one applied in the first semi-free elections held in the USSR, where voters could choose among candidates on a single Communist Party list. Voters for ethnic parties were also more sceptical of democracy than average, although their second choice after democracy was inclusive hegemony, i.e. multi-party systems without competitive elections. That appears to reflect a fear of majority dictatorship, founded on uncertainty about constitutional guarantees for minority interests and rights.

One may thus conclude that the attitude towards democracy was a major political cleavage, but that it did not dominate voters' party choice. The reform wings of the communist parties had indeed come out in favour of competitive democracy well before the founding elections, which thus no longer explicitly were about the preferred political system *per se*. Even so, the former ruling parties' commitment to change was doubted in many quarters, contributing to the persistence of the communism-pluralism 'super-cleavage'.

Other cleavages influencing voter behaviour in the founding elections are less easy to identify, but the dimension of religion vs. secularism was present to varying extents throughout Eastern Europe. As has been elaborated in detail above, the Polish presidential elections of 1990—when Walesa's election bloc was pitted against Mazowiecki's Democratic Union, the reformed communists and the formerly allied Peasants Party—indicated a clear and important cleavage pattern between Social Catholicism and secularism. Nevertheless, the Democratic Union participated in the new government formed by Bielecki after Walesa was elected president. This indeed seems to confirm that the government-opposition constellation at that time was more influenced by the communism-liberalism cleavage than by other issues, including the role of religion in society and politics.

In the case of Hungary one may also point to an urban-rural cleavage demonstrated in the party structure, 'but after examining the programmatic profile [of the Smallholders party, which finished third in the founding elections] which places heavy emphasis on reprivatisation of land, low taxation to encourage entrepreneurship and adherence to Christian values, one might doubt whether the urban-rural dimension is strong enough to create conflicts.'⁶⁵

In the founding elections, voters had a wide range of choices between parties offering programmes with differing aims and goals. This should have provided a basis for sociostructural alliances and coalitions between social groups and political parties. Yet the question remains whether 'these political "supplies" were only created by élites and that the degree of differentiation of élite political positions is dissimilar to the degree of differentiation of political "demands" of the electorate'?⁶⁶

The numerals in the cells in Table 6.4 represent scale point differences from the mean position of the population on a ten-point left-right self-anchoring scale. Negative values indicate a deviation to the 'left', and positive values a deviation to the 'right'. Empty cells indicate that the party group was not existent or insignificant at the time of the elections or surveys.

⁶⁴As non-, but not anti-communist parties one may classify some of the allied parties in Eastern and Central Europe and, e.g., the Agrarian Party in Russia.

⁶⁵Wessels and Klingemann (1994), 7.

⁶⁶Wessels and Klingemann (1994), 9.

*Table 6.4: Voter Left–Right Self-Placement: Deviation of Party Voters from Left–Right Mean of Population*⁶⁷

<i>Deviation from Left–Right Mean</i>	Voters of:									
	COM	SOC	ECO	LIB	REL	CONS	AGR	NAT	ETH	OTH
Poland	–1.1	+0.5		–0.1			–0.2			–0.4
Czechoslovakia	–2.5	–1.0	–0.5	+0.6	+0.6		–0.9	–0.6	+1.0	
Hungary	–1.2			+0.1	+0.5	+0.1	+0.1			–0.2
Romania	–0.5		+0.3	+0.9			+1.3	+0.9	+0.8	
Slovenia	–0.5		–0.2	+0.2			+1.6	+0.7		–0.2
GDR	–1.5	–0.3	–0.8	+0.4	+0.6					
Estonia	–0.7		+1.1	+0.3						–0.5
Ukraine	+0.5		–0.4	–1.5	+0.4		–0.7	–0.4		+0.0
Krasznoyarsk	+1.1	–0.8		–0.2						

The observations are intuitively interesting, but it should also be pointed out here that the validity of the survey is somewhat dubious. Although respondents may have understood the questions posed, responses given in an Eastern European, post-communist context are not necessarily functionally equivalent to West European or North American ones. There is another predicament in this particular case, and—possibly even more so—as regards the surveys particularised further below. Many of the questions posed in the surveys were of such a nature that they only a few months or even weeks earlier would have been perceived as politically incorrect and risky to the polled. Even after the relaxation of political control, some respondents in the sample may have preferred to give non-committal answers in order to escape an awkward situation.

Given these reservations, a general observation pertaining to Table 6.4 is that voters of different parties do seem to differ with respect to their general political position. Voter left–right self-placement also seems to have been in line with the normal Western European gist already by 1991. The two exceptions are the Russian region of Krasznoyarsk and the Ukraine, where the political co-ordinates appear to have been reversed: communist party voters placed themselves to the right of the mean population's right–left position, while voters of most reform-oriented parties conversely placed themselves to the left. This inverted self-placement was particularly strong for Ukrainian voters for liberal parties, and for Russian supporters of the Communist Party. Despite the difference in meaning of the left–right dichotomy, even in Russia and the Ukraine one can nevertheless discern differences between political positions of voters of different parties.⁶⁸

The classification by voters' party family of choice is, however, not altogether clear-cut. For example, Wessels and Klingemann categorise the Hungarian Democratic Forum as conservative, although it contained a sizeable nationalist wing, as well as factions gravitating towards social or Christian democracy. Walesa's supporters in the presidential elections are classified as 'socialists', although a label of 'Christian democratic' or even conservative would be equally justified.⁶⁹ In Czechoslovakia both the Civic Forum and Public Against Violence

⁶⁷ Wessels and Klingemann (1994), 10.

⁶⁸ Wessels and Klingemann (1994), 11.

⁶⁹ Poland is not, however, included in the computations in Table 6.3 above.

are classified as liberal, despite their broad coalition character: PAV in particular, as later became clear, was supported by a great many nationalist-oriented Slovaks.

The most conspicuous difference in self-placement along the right-left scale was between voters of communist parties and those of other parties. This indicates a manifest cleavage between communism on the one hand and other ideological positions on the other. It also lends credence to the view that the communist parties and their supporters had the clearest and most coherent ideological position. A computation of the mean difference on the left-right scale shows that the communist party voters' differentiation from voters of other party families was strongest in Czechoslovakia and weakest in Hungary. This may simply illustrate that the Hungarian Socialist Party (i.e. the largest successor party, led by Imre Pozsgay) could point to a rather strong and long-running reform orientation, while the Czechoslovak Communist Party had much weaker (or non-existent) pre-1989 reformist credentials and was more identified—and self-identified—with the pre-transition system.

The fairly clear differentiation in self-placement between voters for these various parties seems to further confirm that there existed not only a broad supply of programmatic political positions and a fairly conventional structuring of the party system along the left-right dimension, but also of a large variety of political preferences within the electorate. Wessels and Klingemann indeed conclude that the supply of parties was 'not artificially diverse due to élite intervention only, but meets with the variety of general political preferences already existing during this early period [i.e., in late 1990 and early 1991].'⁷⁰ The post-communist societies certainly appeared much less socio-politically structured than the Western democracies, but patterns of alliances were emerging on lines quite similar to the ones common in the West, particularly regarding the new programme parties.⁷¹ One may speak of a small, but clear and growing congruence between political differentiation and social interest differentiation.

However, the flat social structure and low level of socio-economic differentiation in Eastern and Central Europe meant that citizens' party preferences to a large degree were determined by 'cultural politics' rather than by interests related to their individual positions in the social structure.⁷² It has indeed been argued that the political parties which operated in the period immediately following the transition may have articulated only theoretical interests of social groups that did not even exist at the time.⁷³ Class certainly was a weak prognosticator of voting behaviour in all the founding elections, far behind age, education, union membership and, in particular, religion. For instance, in the 1989 Hungarian elections, class voting was negligible, and although it was slightly higher the next time around in March 1990, it was still very low compared to levels observed in Western countries. The single best indicator of social status in Hungary—and without doubt throughout post-communist Eastern Europe—is educational attainment.⁷⁴

In all countries in the sample, self-identified members of the working class were in fact over-represented among the voters of Christian parties, but underrepresented among voters for left-wing parties, i.e. communists and socialists. Quite apart from the obvious paradox in this, one may note that the left-wing parties had a problem in not being able to rely on strong support among any particular social group. Recall surveys also show that an overwhelming majority of former members of the HSWP—i.e. the Hungarian communist party—preferred to vote for the opposition. Even of those who had been members as recently as in 1988 a larger proportion supported the Democratic Forum than the reformed communist party

⁷⁰ Wessels and Klingemann (1994), 12.

⁷¹ Klingemann (1994), 18.

⁷² Wessels and Klingemann (1994), 12-17; the argument is followed in some detail below.

⁷³ Cf. Szaniszki (1991), 337.

⁷⁴ Cf. Tóka (1995), 90.

(the Socialists), and HSWP members who had handed in their cards before 1988 were approximately three times more likely to vote for some of the two liberal parties, the Free Democrats (AFD) and the Young Democrats (FIDESZ), than for the Socialist party.

*Table 6.5: Recalled 1990 Vote in Hungary by Former Communist Party Membership*⁷⁵

	Never been member of HSWP	Has been member earlier	HSWP member in Oct. 1988	Row total
Hungarian Democratic Forum	27	15	21	26
Alliance of Free Democrats	16	27	15	17
Smallholders Party	9	6	6	8
Socialists	4	10	20	6
Young Democrats (FIDESZ)	7	6	8	7
Christian Democrats	6	4	1	5
Other parties	5	10	9	6
Non-voters	27	24	20	26
TOTAL	83	7	10	100

Throughout Central Europe, union members were more likely to vote for left-wing parties than the electorate in general, but Wessels and Klingemann argue that this conceivably is less an indication of class awareness than of the integration of union members into the communist-era socio-political system. Indeed, during the era of communist hegemony, union membership did not tend to be differentiated by class; membership ratios were comparable in all social strata as a result of the particular 'transmission belt' function that unions had in the state socialist systems.

Among other social characteristics for voting behaviour one may point to the lower than average support for the reformed communist parties among the young (under 29-year-old) voters, and the higher that average support for ecological parties among that group. Voters who identified themselves as believers voted for Christian parties to a high degree, and distinctly below average for the former communist parties. In conclusion:

Results indicate that there is not yet [at the time of surveys in late 1990 and early to mid 1991] an entirely clear relationship between social structure and vote, especially not with respect to class. And if a relationship exists, it does not always fulfil the expectations derived from Western experience. On the other hand, parties from the same party family do have some distinct profiles. The Communist parties gain above-average support among the older, higher educated, secularised and unionised workers; the Socialist parties from among non-religious voters, union members and non-workers; the Ecological parties from the young, higher educated and secularised voters; the Liberal parties especially from the younger generations and non-religious voters; the Christian and religious parties from the older and religious voters; the farmers' and nationalist parties from the less educated, religious voters and workers, and the ethnic parties from the non-workers, the more religious and less educated.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Tóka (1995b), 84; N (weighted)=877.

⁷⁶ Wessels and Klingemann (1994), 15.

Ethnic Fear and Loathing

The chapters above should have indicated that the communist authorities were no models of tolerance and multi-cultural liberalism; in fact, discrimination was rife and assimilation of minorities attempted at high cost. Did this then reflect popular attitudes? Hard and reliable survey data on the subject is hard to find, but as shown in this study, there are plenty of other indications that nationalism and xenophobia found a receptive audience. After the transition from communism, surveys were made on the subject, which may be seen as indicative also of previous attitudes. Table 6.6 summarises the findings on inter-ethnic attitudes charted by the Times Mirror East/West polls conducted in Eastern Europe in late 1990 and early 1991. Czechoslovakia was at the time of the survey still federation, but it is technically possible to separate respondents resident in the two halves of the country. It should be noted, however, that the number of missing observations is fairly high, ranging from about one third to more than half of the total sample.

Table 6.6: Percentage Viewing Ethnic Groups 'Mostly' or 'Very Unfavourably'⁷⁷

Poland		Czech Lands		Slovakia		Hungary		Germany	
		Gypsies	93	Gypsies	91	Gypsies	82	Gypsies	59
Jews	33	Jews	12	Jews	17	Jews	11	Jews	24
Germans	46	Germans	20	Germans	20	Germans	3		
		Czechs	6	Czechs	9				
		Slovaks	32	Slovaks	24	Slovaks	11		
								Poles	50
		Hungarians	38	Hungarians	46	Romanian			
						Magyars	38		
						Romanians	28	Romanians	44
Ukrainians	42							Soviets	31
Byeloruss'	19								
Lithuanians	18								
						Arabs	60	Turks	46

Table 6.6 appears to indicate that some of the earlier groups have vanished from the top of the hate-lists. Throughout the region Jews and Germans appear fairly low in the ranking of negative feelings, well below Gypsies, Slavs from the former USSR and non-European nationalities. This would appear to reflect the changing ethnic composition of the countries in question. Yet sentiments towards ethnic groups are not necessarily dependent on personal experience. Attitudes towards Jews were indeed markedly more unfavourable in Poland than in Hungary, despite the fact that Hungarian Jewry is many times the size of the Polish one. In Czechoslovakia, attitudes towards Jews are about as favourable as in Hungary. Despite the particularly strong traditions of popular anti-Semitism in Slovakia, no statistically valid difference can be observed between the expressed level of anti-Jewish attitudes in Slovakia on the one hand and in the Czech lands on the other. The high number of non-respondents in all

⁷⁷ Times Mirror Centre for the People & the Press East/West Poll; Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Data provided by courtesy of Prof. Russell Dalton, Politics and Society Dept., University of California, Irvine, CA. Figures for Germany: Barany (1992), 45 quoting *The European*, 27–30 September 1991.

three countries, and particularly in both halves of Czechoslovakia, may indeed to indicate an indifference to Jews.⁷⁸

As Tables 6.7 and 6.8 also indicate, the level of popular anti-Semitism in Central Europe is moderate to low in comparison both with negative attitudes towards some other ethnic groups, and with the level recorded in other European countries. Yet anti-Semitism exists—as illustrated by the fact that one fifth of Poles in 1994 thought Jews have too large an influence on the Polish economy, when Jewish ownership is in fact negligible.⁷⁹

Attitudes towards Germans in Central Europe show a similar pattern, with a markedly higher level of anti-German sentiments expressed by Poles than by Czechs and Slovaks, and particularly in comparison with Hungarians. In this case, however, the reported attitudes do not necessarily, or even mainly, concern only the domestic ethnic German element, but rather Germans from abroad.

As regards Hungarians, Slovaks confess to an only slightly more negative attitude towards representatives of that ethnicity than Czechs, despite the fact that Czechoslovakia's ethnic Magyar minority almost exclusively resided (and resides) in the Slovakian half of the federation. Almost as surprising, given the élite political discourse, is the fact that Hungarians in Hungary are more negatively predisposed to Magyars from Romania than to ethnic Romanians.

Czech-Slovak attitudes also present an interesting pattern. Attitudes towards ethnic Czechs were only marginally more unfavourable in Slovakia than in the Czech lands, and expressed feelings towards ethnic Slovaks only slightly more favourable in Slovakia than in the other half of the federation. The fact that 24 per cent of respondents in Slovakia were unfavourably disposed towards ethnic Slovaks cannot be accounted for strictly by resentments felt by Magyars, Czechs and other ethnic minority groups, as they simply do not add up to a quarter of the population; if the poll is valid and reliable, at least some ethnic Slovaks themselves appear to have had an unfavourable view of the traits of the Slovak ethnic identity. Remarkably, in Slovakia dislike of Slovaks appears to have been more widespread than dislike of German or Jews; this paradox obviously raises some questions about the reliability of these particular findings.

The ethnic group viewed by far most unfavourably is the Gypsies, about whom nine out of ten Czech and Slovak respondents, and eight out of ten Hungarian expressed negative attitudes. In the Czech lands and Slovakia, two thirds of respondents reported a 'very unfavourable' attitude towards Gypsies, and in Hungary almost every second. In all three cases, only one per cent or less of respondents reported a 'very favourable' attitude towards Gypsies—i.e. less than the proportion of the ethnic Gypsy component in each country's population—and even those moderately favourable only numbered 5 to 11 per cent of the polled. The level of indifference towards the Gypsy ethnicity, as measured by the number of 'don't know'-answers, was also extremely low, with only 3 to 6 per cent of respondents refusing or unable to state their attitude.

All in all, with the major exception of animosity towards Gypsies, inter-ethnic relations in Central Europe do not seem particularly inflamed. As one point of reference, surveys conducted in Germany show an equal or even higher level of resentment of ethnic groups deviating from the dominant nationality.

At least in the case of Poland, the findings of the Times/Mirror poll seem to be substantiated by the annual surveys conducted by the CBOS institute. The poll which is referred to below was conducted some three years later, in September 1994, and although it registers somewhat higher anti-Jewish and anti-Ukrainian sentiments, the findings by and

⁷⁸ Percentage of non-respondents to *Q: Feelings towards Jews*: Hungary, 20; Poland, 24; Slovakia, 32; Czech lands, 35

⁷⁹ Cf. Table 6.8.

large correlate. Gypsies (on whom Poles were not polled by Times/Mirror) were regarded with the strongest dislike, and Russians and Serbs at the time also came high on the Poles' hate list—the latter possibly as an effect of the war in the former Yugoslavia which climaxed at the time of the 1994 poll. Of the direct neighbours, Czechs and Slovaks were fairly well liked, while Lithuanians and Germans received less sympathy. Nevertheless, the CBOS's pollsters note that Germany was the only nation for which Poles felt more affection in 1994 than a year earlier, adding that although the war-time experience still has a significant influence on Poles' attitudes towards the Western neighbour, 'nearly two-third are of the opinion that war-time wrongdoing should be forgiven'.⁸⁰

*Table 6.7: Question in Poland: 'How Would You Term Your Attitude Toward Other Nations?'*⁸¹

	Fondness	Dislike	Indifferent	No answer
Americans	58	13	25	4
Italians	54	12	27	7
French	51	13	30	6
British	41	20	32	7
Hungarians	41	21	32	6
Swedes	40	17	33	10
Austrians	37	20	32	11
Slovaks	33	27	33	9
Czechs	30	32	33	5
Germans	26	45	26	3
Lithuanians	22	43	27	8
Byelorussians	17	49	25	9
Israelis	17	47	27	9
Bulgarians	16	43	31	10
Russians	16	59	22	3
Serbs	12	51	21	3
Ukrainians	9	66	20	5
Romanians	8	68	17	7
Gypsies	6	75	16	3

⁸⁰ CBOS Polish Public Opinion, October 1994.

⁸¹ CBOS Polish Public Opinion, October 1994. From 'Stosunek do innych narodów', 'Przeszłość i terażniejszość w kontaktach polsko-niemieckich'. CBOS, September 1994. Random address sample of Polish society. N=1219.

Table 6.8: *Question in Poland: 'Is the Influence of Representatives of the Following Nationalities on the Polish Economy Too Great or Conversely Too Small?'*⁸²

	They have no influence at all	Too small	Neither too small nor large	Too large	Difficult to say
Japanese	11	46	23	4	26
French	7	32	31	3	27
Americans	2	31	27	21	19
British	10	28	33	3	26
Germans	1	23	32	25	19
Chinese	25	20	22	1	32
Russians	17	18	28	15	22
Jews	16	15	20	20	29

Notably, the stereotype of Germany as a nation attempting to dominate Poland appears to be alive and well in many quarters of the Polish public, although German investment in Poland at the time was not particularly plentiful. Most welcome in Poland was Japanese, French, British and American capital. Reactions to American influence on the economy bear out a certain ambivalence: it is regarded both as too small and too large. The causes behind this state of affairs seems to be three-fold: Americans are generally well liked by Poles, the presence of American capital generates mixed feelings, and Poles remain 'hypersensitive to anything that may appear as the overbearing influence of a superpower'.⁸³

Party Sympathies and Inter-Ethnic Attitudes

Table 6.9 gives the percentage of supporters of a sample of political parties who express a mostly or very unfavourable predisposition to the ethnic groups mentioned in the questionnaire. The level of support for the various political parties is at odds with their showing in the founding elections; this is simply due to the fact that respondents' party sympathies are not measured against their actual voting behaviour, but through a 'Sunday Question', i.e. asking them which party the polled would cast their vote for if elections were held the following weekend.

The samples, though small to moderate in size, cannot verify the hypothesis that xenophobic voters cluster around right-wing parties, although they appear to do so to some extent. Supporters of the Slovak National Party were more negatively predisposed than the average towards Jews and Germans, and particularly against Hungarians (57 per cent as against 46 per cent for the whole sample; this is not included in Table 6.9). In Hungary, the Smallholders Party appears to have attracted the highest proportion of supporters with negative views of other ethnic groups. The supporters of regionalist and ethnic parties, i.e. the Movement for Moravia and the two Hungarian parties in Slovakia, did, however, not express significantly more xenophobic views than average. Similarly, supporters of Polish Catholic- and nationalist-oriented parties do not appear have been more xenophobic than the sample on average.

⁸² *CBOS Polish Public Opinion*, October 1994. From 'Stosunek do innych narodów', 'Przeszłość i teraźniejszość w kontaktach polsko-niemieckich'. *CBOS*, September 1994. Random address sample of Polish society. N=1219.

⁸³ *CBOS Polish Public Opinion*, October 1994.

The most interesting finding, however, is that the reformed communist parties emerge as veritable hotbeds of xenophobia. The supporters of the former ruling parties tended to have stronger than average negative feelings about other nationalities: Czechs about Slovaks, Slovaks about Hungarians, Poles about Byelorussians, Ukrainians and Lithuanians. This punctures the myth of the communist parties' ability to reinforce socialist internationalism and pan-Slavic feelings among their core supporters. But in particular they attracted support from citizens holding anti-Semitic and anti-German views. Czech supporters of the reformed communist party were three times as likely to be negatively predisposed towards Jews and Germans as the population at large, and supporters of that party's Slovak sister organisation, the Party of the Democratic Left, about twice as likely. In Poland, too, supporters of the communist party's main successor party and of its former ally, the Peasants Party, were approximately twice as likely to be negatively predisposed towards Jews and Germans as the sample average.

*Table 6.9: Percentage of Party Supporters Mostly or Very Unfavourably Predisposed Towards:*⁸⁴

	Jews	Germans	Gypsies	Slovaks	Czechs	N =
Poland	33	46				
Social Dem Party	42	58				43
Peasants Party	49	50				40
Christian Nat Union	25	50				4
Confed Indep Poland	33	58				12
Party X	50	45				44
Czech lands	12	20	91	32	6	
Civic Dem Party	8	14	92	38	3	91
Civic Movement	8	19	94	27	3	36
Civic Dem Alliance	0	6	100	24	6	17
Communist Party	37	58	89	32	16	19
Movem for Ind Moravia	14	14	92	37	4	51
Republicans	12	21	92	33	17	24
Slovakia	19	20	91	24	9	
Public Against Viol	9	15	91	22	2	45
Christian Dem Movem	12	15	91	31	4	112
Slovak National Party	23	28	91	18	10	79
Party of Dem Left	44	47	87	19	16	32
Hungarian Movement	14	12	90	36	3	58
Hungarian Chr Dem	4	4	89	14	0	28
Hungary	11	3	82	11		
Socialist Party	0	3	86	11		36
Smallholders	14	9	79	18		34
Christian Democrats	8	12	79	29		24
HDF	20	2	84	14		80

'Don't Know'-answers included in percentages; non-respondents excluded

⁸⁴ Times Mirror Centre for the People & the Press East/West Poll; Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Data provided by courtesy of Prof. Russell Dalton, Politics and Society Dept., University of California, Irvine, CA. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

This is remarkable, but should come as no surprise given the traditions of xenophobia within the former ruling parties that have been amply exemplified in the previous chapters. The findings indicate that their long-running anti-Jewish and anti-German posturing indeed had strengthened their bases of core support, and that they were widely perceived as trustworthy guardians of national values and interests during and after the transition. The foci of communist supporter xenophobia also indicates that it is determined by historical factors rather than by personal experiences. To put it briefly: communist sympathisers were in the early 1990's still fighting the communal conflicts of the 30's, 40's and early 50's. As noted earlier, at the time of the polls—i.e. 1990 and 1991—the vote for the successor parties still overwhelmingly came from functionaries of the former ruling régime and from social groups threatened by economic and political reform. It logically follows that xenophobic attitudes should have widespread within the former *nomenklatura* and bureaucracy before the transition.

The Socialist Party in Hungary was, however, an exception. Its supporters were in fact less negatively predisposed than average towards ethnic minorities and foreigners. One can only speculate to the reasons for this deviance: the long-running reform inclination and strong dominance of liberals within the post-transition party—as the hard-liners of the former ruling Hungarian Socialist Workers Party had withdrawn into an own fringe formation—may play a role.

The Conservative Issues

Based on the previous exposition, one would expect a relatively clear left–right, or conservative–liberal cleavage to emerge in the orientation towards questions of family and personal morals. Table 6.10 tracks the attitudes of supporters of a number of parties towards a related indicator: pornography; Table 6.11 of another: abortion

*Table 6.10: Statement: 'Nude magazines and sexually explicit movies provide harmless entertainment for those who enjoy it', %*⁸⁵

	Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Completely disagree	Don't Know
Poland					
<i>TOTAL</i>	35.7	41.7	12.7	5.0	4.8
Democratic Union	36	50	5	6	4
Agreement of Centre	33	36	15	10	5
Lib-DemCongress (UPR)	29	48	17	2	4
NSZZ Solidarity	32	46	16	5	2
Social Democratic Party	44	42	7	5	2
Christian-National Union	75	25			
Peasants Party	18	50	18	5	10
Peasants Solidarity	15	62	15	4	4
NSZZ Private Farmer	23	37	30	7	3
Party X	61	23	14		2
Confed Ind't Poland	58	25	8	8	

⁸⁵ Times Mirror Centre for the People & the Press East/West Poll; Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Data provided by courtesy of Prof. Russell Dalton, Politics and Society Dept., University of California, Irvine, CA. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Czechoslovakia	Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Completely disagree	Don't Know
Czech lands					
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>33.1</i>	<i>42.0</i>	<i>12.3</i>	<i>6.3</i>	<i>6.3</i>
Civic Democratic Party	44	41	5	4	5
Civic Movement	50	28	6	6	11
Civic Democratic Alliance	41	53	6		
Communist Party	26	58	5	5	5
People's Party	8	33	30	8	19
Cz-Sl Social Democracy	37	37	7	16	2
Mov't Indep Moravia	16	55	22	6	2
Green Party	30	44	15	7	4
Cz-Sl Socialist Party	38	38	15		8
Republican Party	46	50			4

Czechoslovakia	Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Completely disagree	Don't Know
Slovakia					
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>33.3</i>	<i>41.9</i>	<i>13.4</i>	<i>5.5</i>	<i>5.9</i>
Christian Dem'c Movement	38	38	13	5	6
Public Against Violence	51	24	7	4	13
VPN-Democratic Slovakia	35	49	12	3	3
Party of Democratic Left	28	53	9	6	3
Democratic Party	17	32	28	6	17
Slovak National Party	39	37	10	13	1
Hungarian Movement	17	55	19	5	3
Hungarian Chr Democr	29	46	14	7	4
Agrarian Party	35	47	23		12
Green Party	44	53			3

Hungary	Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Completely disagree	Don't Know
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>29.7</i>	<i>35.3</i>	<i>13.5</i>	<i>15.1</i>	<i>6.4</i>
Hung. Democratic Forum	28	27	17	22	5
Christian Democrats	8	25	21	38	8
Smallholders	32	26	3	32	6
Free Democrats	37	38	17	8	
Young Democrats	33	43	10	8	5
Socialist Party	36	33	14	17	

Attitudes towards pornography and adult-oriented movies should serve as a useful indicator of overall libertarian attitudes. The communist authorities were by and large strongly opposed to sexually explicit material, which they branded as products of Western decadence. This fact, i.e. the identification of anti-pornography measures with the communist political system, indeed seems to account for the relatively relaxed attitudes recorded towards nude magazines and blue movies. In all three Central European countries, approximately two thirds of the polled were prepared to tolerate the circulation of this type of material.

Among the three polled countries, Hungarians expressed the most negative attitudes towards the sexually explicit; about 15 per cent of the respondents were totally opposed to it, as compared with about 5 per cent in Poland, the Czech lands and Slovakia. This does not,

however, necessarily indicate a fundamental difference in the levels of libertarianism. Hungarians were at the time much more used to nudity in the media than Poles or Czechoslovaks. Later opinion polls indeed indicate that the attitude in the three latter countries has become more critical.

Attitudes towards pornography appear to correlate fairly strongly with party-political preferences. Supporters of the two liberal parties in Hungary, the Free Democrats and the Young Democrats, were overwhelmingly in favour of free access to nudity, while supporters of the conservative side of the political spectrum were almost as critical. The anti-pornography stance was particularly strong among supporters of the Christian Democrats. Among supporters of the Smallholders Party, a hard-core moral minority of about one third is poised against a clear majority of relative libertarians. Table 6.10 thus appears to support the argument that the Hungarian party system was more clearly structured along Western-type ideological lines than were the Polish, Czech and Slovak ones.

In Poland and Czechoslovakia one can identify a tendency among supporters of agrarian parties to be less tolerant than the average of sexually explicit material. In the Czech lands, moralists tended to be attracted by the People's Party; in Slovakia, by the Democratic Party. In the Czech lands, the three successor parties to the Civic Forum (the Civic Democratic Party, the Civic Movement, and the Civic Democratic Alliance), all appear to have attracted libertarian voters. But whereas supporters of the communist party's main successor party in Hungary were less tolerant of pornography than the national average, quite the opposite was true for Poland and Czechoslovakia. And in those two countries, supporters of what may be considered pure right-wing parties—such as the Czechoslovak Republicans, the Slovak National Party or Poland's Christian National Union, Party X or the Confederation for an Independent Poland—also express remarkably tolerant attitudes.

Abortion rights is another explosive issue, which in the Western context tends to correlate strongly with party-political preferences, general ideological orientation, and religious activity. In Central Europe, however, the cleavage is less clear-cut, as Table 6.11 indicates.

*Table 6.11: Statement: 'A woman should be allowed to have an abortion in the early months of pregnancy if she wants one', %*⁸⁶

	Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Completely disagree	Don't Know
Poland					
<i>TOTAL</i>	40.9	27.7	15.8	10.2	5.3
Democratic Union	49	29	12	6	5
Agreement of Centre	36	31	15	10	8
Lib-Dem Congress (UPR)	37	31	27	4	2
NSZZ Solidarity	44	23	18	12	3
Social Democratic Party	53	23	12	5	7
Christan National Union	25	25	25	25	
Peasants Party	30	38	8	15	10
Peasants Solidarity	31	31	11	11	15
NSZZ Private Farmer	13	30	13	30	13
Party X	52	31	27	4	2
Confederation Ind't Poland	58	8	33		

⁸⁶ Times Mirror Centre for the People & the Press East/West Poll; Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Data provided by courtesy of Prof. Russell Dalton, Politics and Society Dept., University of California, Irvine, CA. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Czechoslovakia	Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Completely disagree	Don't Know
Czech lands					
<i>TOTAL</i>	63.8	18.7	8.1	7.6	1.7
Civic Democratic Party	69	18	7	5	1
Civic Movement	69	14	6	8	2
Civic Democratic Alliance	67	27		7	
Communist Party	72	11	17		
People's Party	31	14	26	23	6
Cz-Sl Social Democracy	81	14		6	
Movement Ind't Moravia	61	18	8	14	
Green Party	63	26	11		
Cz-Sl Socialist Party	69	8	15		8
Republican Party	52	26	4	9	9

Czechoslovakia	Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Completely disagree	Don't Know
Slovakia					
<i>TOTAL</i>	54.6	24.7	8.0	5.2	7.5
Chr Democratic Movement	29	24	10	24	14
Public Against Violence	22	22	33	22	
VPN-Democratic Slovakia	65	24	5	2	5
Party of Democratic Left	64	21			14
Democratic Party	75	25			
Slovak National Party	56	18	18		74
Hungarian Movement	57	43			
Hungarian Chr Democracy	100				
Agrarian Party	25	25		25	25
Green Party	56	22			22

Hungary	Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Completely disagree	Don't Know
<i>TOTAL</i>	53.6	27.5	7.3	8.6	3.0
Hung. Democratic Forum	46	31	7	12	4
Christian Democrats	33	37	12	12	4
Smallholders	35	14	12	32	6
Free Democrats	61	31	4	4	
Young Democrats	60	27	4	6	2
Socialist Party	69	17	9	6	

After the Soviet Union liberalised its abortion legislation in late 1955, abortion became freely available on demand throughout Central and Eastern Europe, to the extent that it was routinely used an alternative to contraceptives. Without doubt the liberal official attitude to abortion was widely appreciated, but at the same time it was the focus of strong criticism from many quarters, particularly the Catholic and other churches. Abortion rates—legal abortions and admissions to hospital of women after spontaneous or illegally induced terminations of pregnancy—were certainly very high: in 1975–79, 218 per 1,000 live births in Poland, 314 in Czechoslovakia, and 501 in Hungary (although 1,221 in 1969–73 when abortions were wholly unrestricted). Particularly the GDR, Hungary and Czechoslovakia experienced very low birth rates (in the case of the GDR, well below the natural reproduction

rate), and by the 1960's it had become policy to counteract liberal abortion legislation with material incentives to encourage births.⁸⁷ Romania banned abortion altogether in 1966, resulting in the doubling of birth rates overnight. Before the ban, Romania had the highest abortion rate in the world—more than four per live birth—and the birth rate had dropped below the point needed to sustain a growing labour force. This was the main concern underlying the ban, but the Ceausescu family's puritanical streak and romantication of the Romanian nation also played in. By the 1980's, however, birth rates had crept back to the level of the early 1960's due to an increase in the number of illegal abortions.⁸⁸

Popular attitudes immediately after the transition showed overwhelming support for the retention of liberal abortion legislation: two thirds of Polish and eight out of ten Hungarian respondents expressed as their opinion that abortion should remain available to women on demand. Yet from the very outset of pluralist politics, abortion became a major point of contention. In many respects, the cleavage was similar to the one concerning nudity in the media: a grouping of libertarian parties poised against Christian and agrarian parties. Adherents of the successor parties of the former ruling parties stood on the libertarian side on the issue of abortion right.

Poland, with its strong Catholic heritage and politically interventionist Church, is particularly interesting in this respect. In the early 1990's, as many as 800,000 abortions were performed yearly in Poland, one of the highest rates in Europe. This was despite an unofficial, and then illegal, ban on abortions which Polish doctors introduced in 1989.⁸⁹ Although public support was strong for the existing liberal abortion legislation, in 1993 the government drastically tightened the rules so as to allow abortion only when pregnancy was the result of incest or rape, or when the woman's life was in danger. President Lech Walesa personally endorsed the new legislation, and pledged to veto any attempt to repeal it while he was in office. The government also discouraged the use of contraceptives, and critics of the new abortion legislation even argue that many women who are entitled to abortion under the tighter rules are nevertheless turned away from public hospitals. A result is that the authorities have recorded a ten-fold increase in the number of infanticides from 1992 to 1995.⁹⁰

The abortion issue in Poland seems to demonstrate not so much a cleavage between different political parties as of one between the political élite and the public. There is no doubt that the tightening of Polish abortion legislation resulted from pressure from the Catholic Church leadership rather than from broad public demand. The government has explained its opposition to abortion by reference to morality and religious ethics, but also implicitly by eugenics: conservative and nationalist political forces warn that low birth rates threaten their pet nationality with being swamped by other, more reproductive ethnic groups.

The Closing Circle

In Chapters 2 and 3, the argument was made that 1920's and 1930's fascism in many ways came from the left; the radicalisation of conservatism combined the ideas of the traditionalist backlash against the Enlightenment and social modernisation with the methods of revolutionary socialism. Above, we have pointed to the reverse connection: when communists came to power, they tended to ally with and exploit right-wing radicalism, building strong

⁸⁷ Stokes (1993), 272-273.

⁸⁸ Stokes (1993), 57-58.

⁸⁹ Hockenos (1993), 242.

⁹⁰ *BBC World Service, Newshour*, 18 July 1995, 19 hrs GMT.

state powers, frequently fanning nationalism and xenophobia from above. Despite the strong disclaimers from both political extremes, there is such a thing as a 'Radical Affinity': 20th century political radicals on right and left have been united by their idea of a dictatorship supposedly representing a transcendent mass entity, as against the idea of individuals with rights within a civic order.⁹¹ Migration between the camps occurred on a large scale; in the late 40's many of the generic radicals who earlier had been drawn to rightist-radical and proto-fascist formations rallied behind the communists. They were by and large welcomed as they had genuine radical credentials, albeit of the wrong hue.

As had been the case in Russia soon after the 1917 Bolshevik *coup*, the Marxist-Leninist state ideology was thoroughly transformed by the influx of an upwardly-mobile element of core supporters who lacked a training in communist theory. Some certainly had a background in pre-war reformist socialist movements; many of them later became disaffected and eventually provided the basis of the liberal-minded intra-party opposition. Those who had a background in the pre-war radical right, however, tended to gravitate to the parties' hard line groupings, which through this process were increasingly identified with attempts to merge Real Existing Socialism with the pre-communist legacy of *étatisme*, paternalism, authoritarianism and nationalism. Socio-economic developments supported this development until at least the late 1960's. During the early years of communist rule, the process of secularisation that had started in Central Europe was also halted and even reversed. The communist parties exhorted an increasingly anachronistic class war strategy, which provided religion and the national heritage with an attractiveness and legitimacy it had already begun to lose.

This process continued until the socio-economic modernisation project of the communist rulers started to take effect, but then the result was not necessarily increased popular support for the dictatorship of the proletariat but rather the development of civil society and demands for individual freedoms, pluralism and a consumerist society. In Poland, increased autonomous organisation even led to increased influence for the Catholic Church, which due to its non-subjugation by the communists in the 1940' and 1950's was in place to provide a venue for sub-system structuring. At the same time the communist parties or factions thereof chose to start advocating a backlash against state socialisms' own modernising accomplishments. Chauvino-communism emerged as the manifestation of the attempt to channel residual support for *étatisme* and authoritarianism towards the ruling structures. This line of reasoning had two particularly tempting features for the ruling élites: not only did the invocations of nationalism and xenophobia find receptive audiences among the population segments who wanted to continue fighting the communal and class wars of the pre-war period, but the content of chauvino-communism itself legitimised repression on a large scale and thus bolstered eroding party authority.

It should, however, be noted that chauvino-communism was not the dominant current in the Central European context: only in times of extreme economic and legitimacy crisis did it get an upper hand, and even then not for long. This constitutes a clear cleavage with the Balkan countries, particularly Romania and Albania. The main strategy of the ruling régimes in Central Europe was to bolster popular support through economic growth and an increased standard of living. This technocratic orientation was the strongest and most consistent in Hungary, but was also intermittently tried out in Poland. Even in Czechoslovakia, régime strategy during the two decades of 'normalisation' after the 1968 events combined repression with attempts at providing a stable incomes and a net of social security. In all three cases the communists failed, if not in absolute terms then at least in comparison with the capitalist market economies in the West.

⁹¹ Conquest (1994).

The ideals of individual freedom voiced by the anti-systemic opposition were powerful, but it is hard to envisage that they would have enjoyed the mass appeal they did in the late 1980's had it not been for the deepening economic crises in the state socialist economies—or at least the perception of such. Not least had the intense politicisation of society resulted in the discrediting of politics as such, while socialisation had obscured all real societal antagonisms and allowed almost no voluntary association.

During the final days of communism, proto-party formation thus had to take place in an environment largely untouched by four decades of social, political and ideological developments in the outside world. The post-communist intellectual élites were certainly strongly influenced by classical liberalism or neo-liberalism, but popular anti-communism was mainly spelled out in terms of residual pre- or proto-modern belief systems. This is shown by the relatively strong showings of agrarian, Christian fundamentalist and traditionalist conservative parties in all Central European countries save the Czech republic. These parties have been widely critical of the materialist West, instead harking back to the 1930's idolisation of community, nationhood and religion. With their stress on egalitarianism and a strong role for the state, they in fact present a strong leftist streak, while their affirmation of community and national particularism is conservative in a truly traditionalist sense. They are certainly strongly influenced by the particular experience of the era of communist dominance, which they claim to abhor so deeply.

Nevertheless, it need be pointed out again that the surveys cited above do not give support to the assumption that voters in Central Europe, at least in 1990-91, on average were particularly xenophobic or interventionist in their attitudes. On the contrary, tolerance appears to have been more or less on par with levels recorded in the parliamentary democracies in the West. At least in Poland and Hungary, this was true even for supporters of socio-cultural parties which according to Western usage may be classified as being traditional-conservative or even radically rightist.

This brings up another important observation, that supporters of archaic and pre-modern views on nation, state and society tended to cluster also around the successor parties of the former ruling parties, whose adherents expressed much more nationalist, xenophobic and interventionist views than the average. Even if the Central European reformed or non-reformed communist parties were not particularly successful in the first free elections, they managed to attract the support not only of members of communist-era *apparat*, but also to a large extent of old-age pensioners and other individuals and groups who felt threatened by the prospect of economic and political reform. The structure of these parties' electorate, as indicated by the survey-type data presented above, reinforces the impression that central European voters saw the former ruling parties as—if one may use that terminology—forces of reaction. It is hard to escape the conclusion that they at the time were widely discerned as guardians of tradition (protecting not only the accomplishments of more than 40 years of state socialism, but the entire national heritage against the perceived danger posed by Western consumerism and individualism), rather than as vehicles for the implementation of social change and modernisation. In Slovakia, the first of the Central European countries where formations emanating from the communist-era élite returned to power, they did so under explicitly nationalist, interventionist, étatist and crypto-socialist banners.

During the immediate post-transition period, one could identify Sartorian factors at work in the differentiation between moderate and extreme pluralism in the various Central European countries.⁹² In Czechoslovakia and Poland, the timing of the franchise and of proportional representation, as well as the low degree of political organisation, encouraged a large number of political entrepreneurs to flood the market. In Hungary on

⁹² Sartori (1966) and (1976), Cf. Chapter 2 above.

the other hand, not only the threshold rule but also the longer period of relatively unobstructed proto-party formation dampened multi-partism.

As regards the other two factors which Sartori has identified as influencing the level of pluralism—i.e. the number of cleavages and the structure of cleavages—it is, however, difficult to point to clear differences between the three Central European countries. All were characterised by low social complexity and differentiation, which inhibited interest-oriented politics and the formation of political parties which represented existing, as opposed to imagined, social group interests. By necessity, meant that cultural politics played a strong role in the immediate post-communist years.

By early 1996, the Czech Republic was the only one of the four Central European countries where the former communists had not managed to stage a comeback on the national political scene. That country was also the only one where post-transition politics for years to come remained dominated by programme parties, not socio-cultural formations. Particularly when contrasting the two halves of the former Czechoslovak federation, this appears to attest to the importance of political culture. Czechs could relate to the pre-war and even pre-independence traditions of tolerance, parliamentarism and interest politics, whereas Slovak society, with its highly disparate historical experience, turned to communalism, separatism and étatism. In terms of socio-political traditions, Poland and Hungary are positioned between these two extremes, which is indeed consistent with their relative level of socio-economical development at the time of the communist take-over.

Concluding Remarks

For perverse unreason
has its own logical processes
— *Joseph Conrad*

The main hypothesis underlying this study has been one of a 'grand continuity': that conservative and right-radical attitudes have influenced, even permeated Central European societies and political parties at least since the outset of independence in 1918, through the era of communist hegemony to the introduction of competitive political pluralism in the early 1990's.

This conjecture has prompted us to investigate the character of the 20th century Central and Eastern European right wing, and the nature of Real Existing Socialism in the so-called Soviet Bloc. We have probed for the roots of post-communist right-radicalism not only in the inter-war fascist and semi-fascist formations, but also—and particularly—in the post-war communist régimes and their attitudes towards the national and religious heritage. In short, we have conceptualised the right-wing political culture and tradition so as to include elements of the communist-era *nomenklatura*, and made the argument for a sort of augmented continuity in socio-political structures. The approach has in many respects been similar to the one applied by many modern students of Russian nationalism and right-radicalism, who have identified the embryo of the right-radical revival in the nationalist undercurrents within the formerly ruling Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

In 1989–90, competitive politics replaced the dominance of the communist parties. The former ruling parties were thrown into disarray or even altogether banned from operating. The forces that initially stepped in to replace them were broad-based popular fronts, united by the common aim of fighting communism. Yet soon after that was accomplished, the centrifugal tendencies reasserted themselves and the heterogeneous fronts soon disintegrated into a great multitude of parties and factions.

The previous chapter examined politics in Poland, the Czech lands, Slovakia, and Hungary at and onwards from the time of the founding elections. Although several exponents of more or less extreme right-wing thought were identified, radical-right ideologies were found to be relatively weakly articulated and generally lacking natural socio-structural constituencies.

The main exceptions were the nationalist parties in Slovakia, which have been able to exploit the very tangible and profitable issue of separatism and secession, and later have taken a tough stance on the relationship with Hungary and the rights of the country's substantial ethnic Magyar community. Some parties have chosen to openly identify themselves with the Slovak nationalist parties of the inter-war era, even with the war-time clericalist, Nazi-puppet government of Slovakia. At the same time, the leadership and the activists of the largest separatist party is to a significant extent drawn from the ranks of the communist-era *nomenklatura* party and bureaucracy élite.

The First Czechoslovak Republic has been interpreted in a very different fashion by the main post-communist parties in the Czech lands: Bohemian and Moravian national feeling is associated with a perceived legacy of tolerance, moderation and liberalism. We have identified variations in the levels of state- and nation-building as the dominant explanation for this Czech–Slovak cleavage.

In Poland and Hungary, too, parties attempting to connect directly to pre-communist right-radical predecessors have fared poorly, with the qualified exception of agrarian and denominational-clericalist parties.

A number of truly extreme right-wing parties had emerged throughout the region by the founding elections in 1989–91, but support for them among the broad public was marginal. The survey data analysed lends credence to the view that the social demand for distinctly right-radical parties was limited at the time; not least because many issues typically brought to the forefront by parties on the extreme right were also on the agenda of other parties. Particularly illustrative is the extent to which voters with stronger than average negative feelings about other ethnic groups clustered around the communist parties and their successors: this lends additional support to the hypothesis that the former ruling parties enjoy convincing nationalist credentials. The only major political issues which right-radicals managed to exploit to any larger extent have been immigration and communal tension, but as equally restrictive and semi-xenophobic attitudes have been expressed by more mainstream parties, this was not translated into stable voter support or organisational growth.

All in all, the analysis of party programmes and election campaigns in the immediate post-communist era has led us to conclude that the Central European right wing is traditionalist rather than radical. With the exception of the Czech lands, where the right after 1989 has been dominated by Hayekian free-market neo-liberals, Central European conservatism has not undergone a modernisation of the even remotely of the magnitude seen in the West since the 1940's. As Western European conservatism has been transformed into a force for individual initiative, free markets and the limitation of state powers, the Central and Eastern European variety remains overwhelmingly étatist, collectivist, hierarchical, paternalist and authoritarian.

We have pointed out that many of these traits were also high on the agendas of the ruling communist parties. Indeed, the communist élite was at least as authoritarian in its attitudes as the former ruling strata, and it too understood the role of the state in a bureaucratic manner without direct reference to society. There is no doubt that there is an abundance of bearers of the radical right among former leaders and supporters of the communist and communist-affiliated parties. Given the similar development in other Eastern European countries, in Russia, and in break-away republics of the former Soviet Union, one cannot escape the impression of a continuity from early 19th-century right-wing radicalism, through communism, to post-communist étatist and xenophobic authoritarianism.

* * *

Extensive attention has been devoted in this book to the 1944–49 period, the formative years of communist rule in Central Europe. The ultimate success of the communists in their quest for power has been attributed to several factors, of which Soviet intervention has been identified as decisive. Without the presence of the Red Army and the *NKVD/GPU/KGB* in Warsaw, Prague and Budapest, it is highly unlikely that the communists would have triumphed to the extent they did; far stronger communist parties in countries outside the Soviet orbit certainly failed to take power. Apart from Soviet-condoned and Soviet-assisted harassment of their political opponents, the communists also managed to take advantage of

the opportunities for patronage created by the dramatic resettlement and redistribution programmes implemented after 1945.

Yet we have also pointed internal, structural and tactical factors operating to the advantage of the communists, above all the radicalisation of the masses and the communists' successful appeals to 'generic radicals'. The shattering defeat of the old order during the Second World War led to a widespread turn to the left by people seeking a radical change from what had failed during Europe's hour of need, and the upheavals of the war had created disillusionment, fatigue and a craving for a fundamental reorganisation of society which benefited all radical ideologies, including communism. The crowds which rallied to the communist platform thus included not only leftists disillusioned with moderate socialism, but radicals of all shapes and forms.

The communist strategy was also to turn, recruit and enrol all but the most discredited and stigmatised supporters of pre- and inter-war right-radical movements, as well as lower-echelon administrators of earlier right-oriented authoritarian régimes.

Some joined the communist ranks out of ideological conviction. During the war—that great clash of ideologies—communism had proven to be a more viable movement than fascism in its many local varieties. Although communist leaders went to great lengths to portray communism as the very antithesis and mortal enemy of fascism, we have shown how left- and right-wing radicalism are in many respects ideological siblings, plebeian movements sprung out of the cross-pressures of social modernisation and extolling the same modes of political action. The post-war mobility from right to left had indeed been preceded by a movement in the reverse direction during the 1920's and 1930's, when a many a European fascist leader and ideologue was a defector from the socialist camp.

The communist parties were rather open-minded and forgiving of individuals whose radicalism had been of the wrong hue but of the right stuff. The courting of the right also had practical reasons. Communist hegemony could hardly be maintained, utopian communist programmes be implemented, nor the governments retain power for long without building and keeping at least some degree of public support—even if they could rely on a powerful machinery of draconian repression and the backing of the seemingly omnipotent Soviet Union. In order to strengthen popular support, the communists stressed issues that had also been pivotal to the 1930's radical-right and agrarian populism: land reform and social justice, a strong state and state intervention, critique of 'cosmopolitan' finance capitalism. The territorial revisions, confiscations and expulsions had also raised widespread public fears of revanchism—particularly German—and the communists made every effort to exploit these anxieties. As one slogan used by the Polish communists said: 'socialism is the guarantee of our borders'; this intended to convey the message that Poland had to put up with the alliance with the Soviet Union—and with the communists—as a lesser evil than a revival of German hegemony. Throughout Eastern and Central Europe, it did not take long for the communist parties, or at least factions within them, to find it convenient or even necessary to exploit and adopt the residual political legacy.

The paradigmatic explanation of the communist take-over in Central Europe remains Seton-Watson's theory of a gradual evolution from genuine coalitions to facade coalitions and ultimately to total communist control. We have accepted it, but only with the reservation that the evolutionary theory is more a description of events than of intentions. It has not been sufficiently proven that there indeed existed a Soviet blueprint for Eastern Europe, at least not before 1947. Moreover, the schedules of the communist take-over in the various countries were different, largely determined by Soviet strategic interests and, albeit sometimes vacillating, expansionist ambitions.

This brings us to a further observation of a somewhat paradoxical nature. During the immediate post-war period—1944 to late 1946—the Soviet leadership treated Poland and

the Polish communists with a harshness, arrogance and disdain incomparable to anything seen outside the borders of the Soviet Union. The need to secure lines of communication to Germany was one motive, but one cannot escape the conclusion that historical Russian aspirations played an important, even crucial role. Moscow's annexationist policies along the fault-line between the Baltic and Black Seas can hardly be explained without taking into account territorial revisionism—particularly if one accepts the claim that Moscow then intended to build a bloc of socialist states and thus could count Eastern Poland as safe for socialism in any case.

So strong was the Soviet grip on Poland until 1953 that one may indeed view it as virtually a Soviet colony. And here comes the paradox: this totally subjugated country was, in the final analysis, the one which provided the most of political pluralism during the phase of communist rule. In fact, Poland developed into the major problem for the Soviets as soon as they loosened their grip. The Hungarian rebellion of 1956 was a direct result of Polish attempts at building a Yugoslav-inspired 'socialism with a national flavour', and by the mid-1960's Poland had emerged onto the path of diminishing communist party authority and emerging autonomous social organisation. As the economy veered from crisis to crisis, the communist party was immobilised by increasing internal conflicts between relative liberalisers and hard-liners. Increasingly distinctive of the hard-line faction was its appeals to national pride and its attempts at presenting itself as the keeper of a national tradition going back to the rebellions of the 19th century and the inter-war *Endecja* philosophy. It mixed overt anti-Semitism and anti-German slogans with prudish Russophobia. Chauvino-communism also figured in Hungary and, of course, eventually became dominant in all Balkans countries. Its content obviously varied, but the significance of chauvino-communism was that it no longer sought the foundation and legitimisation of communist power in the iron laws of materialist theory, but in populist nationalism and strong-man authoritarianism.

* * *

The communists' gradual adoption of many central tenets of their right-wing opponents did, to some extent, incapacitate the scope for autonomous anti-systemic conservatism and right-radicalism. Yet at the same time the modernisation process created similar effects as in the West: backlashes among social strata feeling their positions and values threatened by the rapid social transformation. This type of conflict between more and less modern sectors is indeed inimical to post-agrarian societies undergoing rapid change.

As outlined in Chapter 5, the communists managed to institute rapid industrialisation, urbanisation and rationalisation of agriculture. Already by the 1960's, industry replaced agriculture as the predominant sector. By the 1970's, the Central and Eastern European countries of the Socialist Bloc noted the largest share of industry as a proportion of GDP in the world. But while crash industrialisation generated strong economic growth, it remains doubtful whether the living standards rose correspondingly. The governments put a premium on heavy industry and investment, while the production of consumer goods and services was considered a secondary priority. As industrial development reached maturity in the 1970's, overall growth slowed down and government planners proved unable or unwilling to shift the emphasis to services, which by then had become the motor of growth in the Western market economies.

In communist Central Europe, the preservative backlash was primarily directed at the élites from the outside. Nevertheless, modernisation also created splits within the régimes, elements of which feared that the new and more complicated social structure would endanger social cohesion, the efficacy of authoritarian rule, and the reach of the state—that is, communist rule undermined by its very success at instituting modernisation while failing to

fully carry it through. The counter-reaction in those quarters—among the ‘hard-liners’—was, paradoxically, a revitalisation of archaic ideals, exploitation of national pride and an attempted strengthening of collective authority. Chauvino-communism can thus be interpreted as a backlash reaction against the successes of socialist modernisation. After the communist parties lost power altogether, the ideological affinity between communist hard-liners and traditionalist or radical right-wingers became even clearer.

A significant portion of Chapter 5 has been devoted to the principal crises of communist rule. The low levels of consumption seem to have played a major role in inducing unrest. Communism did not bring workers the material well-being to the extent promised or—for that matter—provided in the capitalist West. Indeed, the modernisation effort was paid for by the working class and by the rural population, which for all practical purposes continued to be treated as a class enemy. A more interesting question, however, than the reasons for political disaffection is why the outcome varied so dramatically. Why did Hungary erupt much more violently than Poland in 1956? Why was there a Prague Spring only in Prague? How come there was no *Solidarity* in Hungary?

We have concluded that ruling élite cohesion was probably decisive both in 1956 and in 1968. If the highest echelons of the party leadership managed to contain conflicts within its own ranks, system stability was greatly enhanced. If, on the other hand, some faction chose to appeal to lower party ranks or even to society at large, the conflict was likely to escalate to a counter-revolutionary level: whenever the door was opened for moderate reformists, radical anti-systemic opponents poured in through it. Once that happened, anti-communism became energised by anti-Sovietism and national fervour, a game which the communist parties could only lose if played by opposition rules. The latter occurred in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and the result of both these events was the realisation among the communist leadership that if actual unity could not be accomplished, then it was vital to preserve at least the pretence of it. The Polish party, which failed at papering over its internal cracks and could never decide how to approach the disaffected workers, paid a heavy price for this failure already in the 1970's. Most important from a stability point of view, however, was the willingness to take early drastic countermeasures against any perceived anti-systemic opposition. The collapse in 1989 followed almost exactly the same pattern as in 1953–56, 1968, and 1980–81, but then the régimes were incapacitated by the Soviet withdrawal of support however prepared they may have been to institute repression.

Why then did Poland become something of an odd man out? It is tempting to refer to historical factors: Poland's history as an early modern-age great power, the traditions of insurgency, and the enormous upheavals and suffering that befell Poland during the World Wars. But above all one should point to the enormous influence and political independent-mindedness of the Polish Roman Catholic Church. Poland is indeed an archetypal counter-reformation Catholic country with a dualist relationship between religious and secular authority. Already by 1956–58, the communists were forced to create a *modus vivendi* with the church, built on the basis of a shared appreciation of Poland's national uniqueness; however differently that concept may have been interpreted. The *de facto* concordat heralded the end of the communists' aspirations to total hegemony, and punctured their ambitions to be absolute masters even in the more narrowly defined political and economic spheres.

The Slovak Catholic Church, on the other hand, has historically been less identified with national aspirations and often even been seen as a symbol of historical Magyar oppression. Hungary and Bohemia–Moravia are, on their part, typical secularised Catholic or mixed Protestant–Catholic societies where the state has upper hand over religion, even though church interests occasionally may have independent influence on the citizens.

Hungary too provides interesting features. After the years of deep freeze following 1956, the country was steered onto a path of gradual liberalisation and fairly ambitious economic

reform. The strategy of the paternalistic Kádár régime was to offer relative prosperity in return for, if not legitimacy, then at least quiet acquiescence. It de-politicised everyday life and was prepared to gradually increase participation to broaden the social and political base of the régime. In 'Goulash communism', everything could eventually be debated and criticised but for the leading role of the party. And although Kádár was put in office by the Soviets, the Kádárist wing of the Hungarian communist party was clearly national and populist in orientation, stressing the importance of incorporating aspects of the national spirit into state ideology.

We have pointed out that many of the post-communist right-radical movements hail back to the pre-communist era, but also noted how they have gathered extensive support from former communist activists, secret policemen and *nomenklatura* figures. This does not in itself support the hypothesis that right-wing traditions existed submerged within the communist establishment; it may simply be the case that former communist sympathisers feel attracted by some elements of the right's programme, such as authoritarianism, étatism or nationalism. But at least in the case of Slovakia and Poland, the evidence indicates a stronger and more manifest continuity.

Although the communist régimes boasted of having finally crushed nationalism, in fact they routinely used it to bolster legitimacy. Populist factions of the ruling parties exploited the crudest of plebeian traditions and institutionalised chauvinism and anti-Semitism in order to fight enemies both inside and outside the ruling parties. Stalinist methods and rhetoric were an integral part of the hard-line fare, but simultaneously they attempted to generate support by blaming the excesses of Stalinism particularly on Jewish leaders. In the 1940's and 1950's, 'national communism' expressed an often liberal-minded reaction against Stalinism and foreign hegemony, but by the 1960's it developed into populist authoritarianism with a strong chauvinist streak. If it was Stalinist in method, it was anti-Soviet in essence.

This was nothing new. Within a few years of the October revolution, Marxist-Leninism merged with Great Russian nationalism into what is usually called National Bolshevism, a bizarre hybrid of Stalinism and chauvinism. Despite the partly unique aspects of the Russian experience, Soviet nationalism *à la Russe* was of intense relevance for Central Europe. What the oldest brother did, the younger ones were quick to learn.

The chauvinist stance of the Soviets created parallel and even competing nationalist inclinations within the junior communist parties. In many instances—in Yugoslavia, in China and even in Romania (a founding member of the Warsaw Pact)—national communism eventually took on openly anti-Soviet (or perhaps anti-Russian) features. The communist parties' inability to contain the forces of nationalism was ostensibly one important factor in the demise of their hegemony both in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union itself. After the break-up of the USSR, nationalism has indeed become the dominant force in Russian politics, transcending all other ideologies. Nationalism is a powerful force in Central European politics as well, but has nowhere gained the prominence of a Russian-style meta-issue.

Modernisation was a, or the, major goal for the communists: they saw themselves as determined state-builders, and where nation-building was incomplete, they took on that task as well. This raises yet another paradox. The best prospects for political and cultural pluralism seem to be found in territories where there is a strong tradition of nationhood and statehood, and where society has been secularised.

If this indeed is true, democratic survival in the post-communist countries seems to depend upon the extent to which the once ruling communists were actually successful in promoting their self-proclaimed modernisation goals. Yet the modernisation which the communists accomplished through their breakneck industrialisation, urbanisation and collectivisation schemes had unique features. It created an extremely flat socio-economic

structure with low social complexity and differentiation, and this diffuse cleavage structure complicates interest-oriented politics and obstructs the formation of coalitions between social groups and political parties. Voting and attitudes may thus, at least in the first stage of post-communist transformation, be determined not by interests, but by cultural politics. It is indeed in cultural politics that—if one may use the term—the market niche of the Central European right still lies; offering collectivism, solidarity, hierarchy, discipline, homogenisation and a powerful state. Cultural politics is, incidentally, not only promised by the traditionalist and radical right, but also by formations emanating from the power structures of the bygone communist era. In this point of traditionalist affinity, the circle of *fin-de-millennium* generic radicalism in Central Europe is closed.

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Shaking Hands with the Past

Since 1989, the countries in Central Europe have been trying to build democracies and market economies on the foundation of weak traditions of pluralism and tolerance.

This book investigates political culture in Poland, Hungary, the Czech republic and Slovakia in the 20th century—from the inter-war experiment through the communist era to the post-transition societies. It identifies an augmented or 'grand' sociopolitical continuity in the region, and in particular charts how the communist rulers exploited and adopted many of pet themes of pre-1945 authoritarianism, étatism and nationalism. Yet at the same time, the success of Real Existing Socialism in modernising society has undermined the authoritarian and nationalist tradition.

Keywords: Eastern and Central Europe, Political Culture, Political Transition, Radicalism, Communism, Nationalism, Authoritarianism, Anti-Semitism