

Ferenc Miszlivetz

ILLUSIONS AND REALITIES

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THE METAMORPHOSIS OF CIVIL SOCIETY  
IN A NEW EUROPEAN SPACE

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M C M X C V I I I

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*To Jody – my home and my exile*

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## INTRODUCTION

In the late 1980s, Ferenc Miszlivetz was one of the leading figures in the Hungarian opposition. In 1987 and 1988, he played a major role in setting up the Network for Free Initiatives, one of the first independent political organizations in Hungary since 1956. He also helped the Young Democrats (FIDESZ) to survive the difficult years of 1988 and 1989. He is a sociologist and senior research fellow at the Institute of Sociology at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and a Jean Monnet Chairholder in European Studies at Dániel Berzsenyi College in Szombathely where he established the Department of Sociology and Political Science. He is the founder and director of the Institute of Social and European Studies (ISES) which is an international think-tank devoted to training, research and publication on European issues.

He is author of

- *Békák a szárazon*, 1989
- *A lehetséges határainak újrafogalmazása*, 1993
- *Vadkelet-party*, 1995

*This is a book of challenging questions. Is East Central Europe a reality or an illusion? Is it a political and/or economic and/or cultural entity? What has happened in Eastern Central Europe since 1989? Was 1989 a revolution or not? Is it an "unfinished" revolution? What role have the Polish, Czech and Hungarian civil societies played in the process of transition? What kind of New European Order is emerging today? Can the gap between Western and Eastern Europe be closed? What are the alternative strategies of European security? Is reconciliation between East European nations (including the Balkans) possible? Can European citizenship and a European civil society be created? [...] Which road leads to Europe for the Central and Eastern European countries? Which road leads to a Europe of more freedom, more justice, more security? [...] The author's recommendation is to take the "N-th" road, the road to genuine, "social" democracy, to cooperation and social responsibility, to a Popperian open society complemented with the Habermasian communicative dimension, Dabrendorf's "ligature", and with the "creative chaos" of civil society.*

– Elemér Hankiss

I. EMERGING CIVIL  
SOCIETY: TOWARDS A  
POLITICAL TURNING POINT

# CIVIL SOCIETY IN EASTERN EUROPE?

## THE CASE OF HUNGARY

### Trends and Shifts in Hungarian Society in the Post-WW II Period

The most debated question in Hungary today is whether or not the political and institutional system is reformable. There are experts who are convinced that in spite of many important changes in the style and detail of the exercise of power, usually summed up under the label of “liberalisation,” the basic institutional and power structures have remained the same. Others point to the shift from the organisational principle of despotism to that of etatism, from the principles of a “one-party totalitarianism” to those of a one-party pragmatism, or the emergence of market mechanisms and elements of cultural, though not yet political, pluralism, and contend that these are real and substantive changes.<sup>1</sup>

The economic crisis, however, is the consequence of the crisis of the given social system. Today Eastern Europe is facing a general social, political and ideological crisis, in addition to the crisis of legitimacy of power. The roots of this complex crisis can be found in the lack of democratic traditions, the well-known Stalinist voluntarism, dictatorship, extensive and coercive economic developments in the post-WW II period.

In order to facilitate the process of complete centralisation and “etatisation” after the communist take over in 1948, Hungarian society was systematically disintegrated and atomised. Traditional social networks – local, professional, cultural, religious and to some extent even family networks – were destroyed.

Society was demobilised by many different means; by the dismantling of democratic institutions; by the destruction of the autonomy of economic and social actors; by monopolising interest mediation through the “etatisation” of trade unions, the liquidation of both the Constitutional Court and independent mass organisations. The most effective means of demobilisation was the atomisation of society. Between 1930 and 1940 there were around 30,000 clubs and associations in Hungary. After 1945 their number dropped to less than 1,000. The lack of social articulation continues to be a dominant feature of present day Hungarian society that is acutely felt in the sphere of interest groups. This state of disintegration and atomisation has radically reduced people’s ability and freedom to protect themselves against the pressures of the ruling elite.

The substitution of diffuse generalities and pseudo-identities such as, “we are the country of steel and iron,” the destruction of social groups, networks, and associations led to the destruction of social identities and the destruction of value systems. But as recent sociological work emphasises, people were never – even in the worst, “dark” years – totally demobilised. After the mid-1950s, they began a secret struggle to regain their freedom to increase the scope of their activities.

Social networks survived in semi-latency and semi-legitimacy. In the mid-1960s the slow regeneration of social networks, or to use Habermas’ phrase “life world” began. The attitude of the Hungarian elite to this process was ambivalent. Given the trauma of 1956 and the subsequent

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to acknowledge my heavy reliance on the work of my colleague Elemér Hankiss, for the content of this chapter.



unwritten compromise between the state and civil society during the Kádárist era, a degree of liberalisation had to be tolerated. But the Hungarian leadership was only able, or willing, to “liberalise” the country and not to liberate it. From the very beginning this process was highly contradictory. The elite prepared and began to implement a reform, but then frightened by the possible consequences, it started to brake the process and to reinforce its position of power. The swinging between initiating and abandoning reforms was a political sleight of hand: a particular mixture of liberalisation and paternalism. The scenario is quite simple: the ruling elite slowly widens the non-prohibited zone, without granting rights or without tolerating the assertion of rights. Liberalisation is thus only a temporary and conditional extension of freedom, it does not mean that rights are guaranteed. In this respect liberalisation is the opposite of democratisation.

This modern version of paternalism as a kind of enlightened socialist absolutism has produced a social infantilism. László Bruszt demonstrates the “without us but for us” syndrome:<sup>2</sup> the fact that people in Hungary feel and know that they have little say in the decision-making process; but at the same time they hope, believe or only assert, that their interests are taken into consideration by the “gods” above.

On the other hand, this mechanism of “give and take” offers something when there are no consequences and takes back something when there are. This can become a dangerous game when, as it happened in the 1970s and 1980s, people began to mobilise themselves.

The process of the regeneration of social networks cannot, however, be halted by administrative tricks. In the last few years this process has significantly accelerated. In the cultural field, new alternative literary and artistic groups have been created; there is a strong religious resurgence galvanised partly by “basis communities”<sup>3</sup> and alternative religious groups outside the established (official) churches. A whole set of colourful initiatives oriented more directly toward actual social and political issues have also come into existence. Among them we can find single issue movements such as the peace and environmental movements, as well as political and social clubs. From the early 1980s on, the movement of university “special colleges” emerged. In September of 1987, Hungarian populists founded the Democratic Forum and in the spring of 1988 independent groups and alternative movements formed an umbrella organisation, the Network of Free Initiatives. The League of Young Democrats (FIDESZ, the first independent youth organisation after 1956) was founded during the same period.

This blossoming of new social initiatives does not mean, however, that a strong civil society already exists in Hungary. Instead of using the overly optimistic and ideological term “civil society,” Elemér Hankiss suggests rather the term “second society.” Hankiss separates the concept of the first society, characterised by vertical organisation, downward flow of power, state ownership, centralisation, political dominance, legitimacy, etc. from the concept of a hypothetical alternative society which would be characterised by fully-developed, oppositional characteristics (horizontal organisation, upward flow of power, the autonomy of social and economic actors, etc.). He identifies the second society as an intermediate sphere “somewhere between the two.”

This second society is characterised by the absence of the characteristics of the first, and by the timid emergence of oppositional characteristics. Thus, this second society is a grey area, the empire of possibilities, a “no mans land,” where the governing principles and rules of the game of the first society do not work, but the principles and rules of a different type of social existence have only barely hardly emerged.

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<sup>2</sup> László Bruszt, “Without us but for us? Political orientation in Hungary in the period of late Paternalism,” *Social Research* vol. 55, nos. 1–2 (Spring–Summer 1988).

<sup>3</sup> “Basis communities” are religious groups which are organized outside the framework of the official church, and are often at odds with it.

## Crisis and New Political Discourse in Hungary: The Activity of Grassroots Peace Movements

The independent peace movement, “Dialogue,” was organised in September of 1982, primarily by university students and young intellectuals. During the brief span of its independent activity, the group attracted thousands of young people and organised a number of successful activities of the sort not normally tolerated in Eastern Europe.

After visiting Dialogue in Budapest in September of 1982, E. P. Thompson wrote in *Double Exposure* that the group was well-informed about the western peace movement, with whom they hoped to enter into direct relations, and that “the mood was that of a search for a third way among the younger European generations.”<sup>4</sup>

Dialogue had reason to believe that the authorities might accept a compromise, namely that the official Peace Council would tolerate the existence of an independent peace movement which would be an indication of a political liberalisation. In return, Dialogue would agree to distance itself from the political opposition. As it turned out, Dialogue’s efforts to separate the peace issue from that of human rights and political opposition played directly into the hands of the authorities.

An official report of the Central Committee Section for Party and Mass Organisations from March 1983 discussed the activity of the National Peace Council (NPC) – which included numerous attempts to co-opt the unofficial peace group.<sup>5</sup> The report indicated that the semi-legal activities of Dialogue would not be tolerated much longer by the government and that peace movements outside the Peace Council would not be legalised. The report said: “The (Dialogue) group does not have any significant mass support, but its influence is growing. At the present time Dialogue groups are operating in Budapest, Szeged, Debrecen and Pécs. Their ideas are in equal measure mixed, immature and self-contradictory, giving rise to controversy even within their own ranks. Pacifist efforts making their appearance in church and religious circles are also on the increase.

The National Peace Council has taken up and continues to maintain contacts with the majority of spontaneous groups, and tries to influence their activities. [...] The Party organs and organisations have not always paid sufficient attention to directing and supervising the peace movement. Uncertainty can be observed in relation to how the new peace phenomena and, in particular the independent initiatives of the youth, are to be judged. The National Peace Council, social organisations and movements have not been able to integrate spontaneous peace initiatives within the bounds of their own framework.”

The Political Committee resolved that peace groups would be “brought into connection with the united movement directed by the NPC,” and that the Party should isolate and expose “those efforts which seek to use the peace movement as a pretext for questioning the peace policies of our Party and government, our commitments to our allies, and the initiative for peace made by the Soviet Union and the socialist community.”<sup>6</sup>

In July 1983, officials prevented the group from holding an international peace seminar in Hungary by refusing visas, expelling Western peace activists and detaining Dialogue members. The group soon disbanded after members faced police harassment, saying that its chief aim – dialogue with the authorities, the very reason for the group’s name – had become effectively impossible.

Although there were no organised grassroots peace movements in Hungary after the dissolution of Dialogue, some aspects of the peace issue found a permanent place on the agenda of independent clubs, movements and circles. Since 1983, the Club movement has become more influential, making room for grassroots environmental activity. Especially after Chernobyl, the connections between the use of nuclear energy, environmental pollution, militarisation, the nuclear

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<sup>4</sup> Edward P. Thompson, *Double Exposure* (London: The Merlin Press, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> The NPC is the officially established and state-controlled peace organization. This sort of organization can be found in every Eastern bloc country.

<sup>6</sup> *From Below: Independent Peace and Environmental Movements in Eastern Europe and the USSR*. A Helsinki Watch Report (October 1987), pp. 49–54.

arms race, etc. were broadly discussed in independent circles. The emergence of a new type of grassroots movement in other Eastern European countries – especially Freedom and Peace in Poland, People for Peace Culture in Yugoslavia, and the East German opposition organised around the samizdat journal *Grenzfäll* [Border Case] – represented a new way of thinking and reflected the emergence of a new value system, according to which peace, human rights and ecology are inseparable issues. This new consciousness gathered momentum and was very attractive especially to students and young intellectuals in Hungary.

Besides the “club movement,” the movement of university colleges has played a significant role in the process of re-politicising and opening up civil society in Hungary. In the period between 1983–1988, the István Bibó College of Law was the organisational centre of several political seminars and meetings where taboo questions such as environmental issues, minority problems (the Gypsy and the Jewish questions, and the status of the Hungarian minority in Romania) and peace and human rights questions (including the system of Yalta, East–West relations and the militarisation of East European societies) were openly and broadly discussed. There has been a tradition in the Bibó College to invite Western, and if possible, Eastern experts, public figures, writers, politicians and sociologists to these debates. Members of the European Parliament, END activists, West German Greens, Polish historians and sociologists, and Hungarian dissidents became everyday guests during the period from 1985 to 1988. Being part of the network of institutions of higher education, Bibó College played a significant role by circulating information about these meetings. The College Bulletin and their journal *Századvég* [The End of the Century] is also popular among intellectuals outside student circles, with a circulation of 5,000.

Step by step, during the first part of the 1980s the network of specialised colleges, instead of being the source of a new power elite aligned with the *status quo*, became the source of independent political thinking and action. A decisive step was taken by the college movement towards political discourse in late 1986 when its leading activists signed the East–West Memorandum.<sup>7</sup>

Unexpectedly, in the summer of 1987 at the END Convention in Coventry, the NPC signed the “END Appeal” defining itself as an independent peace movement. As a response, in September, a declaration was issued by independent intellectuals, including the Greens, representatives of the club movements and the Colleges – raising specific issues that should be addressed before NPC’s application to END was accepted. Some of the most important claims were: (1) the NPC’s dissociation from the 1983 HSWP position opposing independent peace activity; (2) the NPC’s commitment to campaign against the imprisonment of conscientious objectors and for the introduction of alternative military service in Hungary; (3) the NPC’s acceptance of the END Appeal’s declaration of joint responsibility by the superpowers in the arms race, etc.

Although the whole context of East–West dialogue deserves more attention and analysis, let me now focus on one of the most burning issues in Eastern Europe: the issue of conscientious objection. The existence of conscientious objection and the demand for alternative military service was never really a problem for the Hungarian public in the previous decades. The Kádár consensus had excluded any open debate on such an issue.

Religious pacifism started to gain impetus at the end of the 1970s. Members of a Catholic “basis” community, the followers of the excommunicated Catholic priest György Bulányi, repeatedly refused military service, even when faced with imprisonment.

Hungarian law does not permit conscientious objection. Article 336 of the Penal Code provides for sentences up to five years of imprisonment for those who refuse military service. Since 1977, however, members of some small sects – Nazarenes and Seventh Day Adventists – have been allowed to do alternative military service. The authorities have not, however, extended this right to Roman Catholics.

The position of the Hungarian Catholic Church concerning conscientious objection is unprecedented even in Eastern Europe. The Polish Catholic Church openly supports conscientious

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<sup>7</sup> *Giving Real Life to the Helsinki Accords*. A memorandum to citizens, groups and governments of all countries participating in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). The Memorandum was also published in Hungary in the Bulletin of the István Bibó College (Szakkelegiumi Értesítő, Különszám) in May 1987.

objection and the East German Evangelical Church more tacitly supports this. The Catholic leadership in Hungary issued a declaration condemning conscientious objection in October 1986. Imre Miklós, the State Secretary for Religious Affairs, expressed the government's position, saying that conscientious objectors are committing an "offence against their families and countrymen" and that their position is "morally untenable."

From 1987–1988 significant changes could be seen in the official attitude towards independent peace activity including conscientious objection. Even the trial of the first political objector, Zsolt Keszthelyi, reflected the changing atmosphere. Keszthelyi's bold statement is itself proof of the emergence of a new way of thinking among the younger generation: "I, the undersigned, Zsolt Keszthelyi, hereby declare that I wish to refuse military service for political reasons. I am not inclined to put my trust in a 'people's democratic' army which is not placed under the control of a government elected through universal suffrage, involving competing political programs. I think that by this action, in my struggle for a free press, I can contribute to the creation of a society free of fear, in which the management of social affairs is determined by responsible individuals of conscience and not by unquestioning faith and fear."<sup>8</sup>

In November 1987 the issue of conscientious objection was discussed at an East-West conference in Budapest, organised by Eastern and Western independents, i.e., the Bibó College and the European Network for East-West Dialogue. The success of the conference was a moral and political victory for grassroots initiatives, for "détente from below" and for East-West citizen's diplomacy. The statement that was drawn up and signed by the majority of participants urges demilitarisation between and within the East and West. "This includes nuclear and conventional disarmament, respect for the right of conscientious objection and the creation of a democratic peace culture." The NPC, a participant of the meeting, refused to sign the statement, being uncertain of the outcome of this new kind of dialogue. Representing an official point of view, the General Secretary, Miklós Barabás, in an open discussion about the issue, announced that "a martial spirit runs in the blood of the Hungarians, due to their permanent struggle for freedom in the last four centuries against invading empires." This "official" evaluation, however, soon began to shift.

After March 1988, when Bishop László Paskai, the President of the Conference of Hungarian Catholic Bishops, suggested that the Prime Minister consider alternative military service for certain groups of Hungarian youth, Barabás initiated an open discussion with independents.

There was also increased grassroots activity from below. The independent East-West Circle, established after the Budapest meeting, sent its appeal to the government, party and church leadership and organised an international seminar for conscientious objectors in May, in Budapest. In June, the East-West Circle presented a citizen's proposal for non-military forms of national service with around 800 signatures and a draft bill of 17 paragraphs on conscientious objection to the President of Parliament. As a sign of the new official attitude, the Hungarian press reported on these events and discussions and it was officially announced that a new bill is expected in January 1989.

According to the suggestion of the previously discriminated against independent East-West Circle, service to the fatherland is a duty, but citizens must have the right to decide what manner of service is acceptable. The East-West Circle also recommended the immediate release of the 158 imprisoned conscientious objectors in Hungary. To everyone's surprise, the Hungarian authorities released Zsolt Keszthelyi on January 11, 1989, without any explanation. This unexpected step can be taken as a symbolic sign of a significant change in the official position, not only *vis-à-vis* civil disobedience, but also *vis-à-vis* bloc discipline, i.e., this is a reflection of the growing independence of Hungarian foreign policy as well.

This is, of course, only one example. Similar processes have emerged or developed further in the fields of ecology and human rights. Hitherto taboo subjects, such as political pluralism, the monopoly of mass communication and freedom of association, have become part of a widening political discourse. This does not mean that all of these problems will soon be solved, but at least they cannot be neglected any longer.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 57.

How can we explain this new socio-political constellation? True, without Gorbachev's new initiatives this would not have happened in Hungary or elsewhere in East and Central Europe. But it would be a crude simplification to restrict ourselves only to external factors. The growing intensity and number of grassroots movements and the growing solidarity between independent actors and groups plays an equally important role. It would be difficult to prove whether this growing solidarity is a result of a deepening crisis or a self-generating natural process, a *causa sui*. Both may be true. The very existence and popularity of independent political and social organisations such as FIDESZ, the Network for Free Initiatives and the East-West Dialogue Circle is also a proof of the need for the self-defence and self-articulation of civil society.

## Dialogue, and What is Behind It

Dictatorship in Hungary today finds itself in the process of meltdown. "Dialogue" between the alternative/opposition camp and the party/state began at the beginning of 1988. Photos of "dangerous dissidents," deprived of passports not so long ago appear in the official press, together with MSZMP [Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party] cadres; people are surfacing on TV who for years were barred from all official publicity. All that, however, does precious little to alleviate the economic woes of the "civil society" referred to so abundantly by both sides. Permitting demonstrations and greater opportunities for free expression are no remedies for economic decline and profound poverty. A touch of *glasnost* will not heal the wounds of the society and of the economy.

In actual fact, the situation has changed very little, and the pace and intensity of the promised renewal are less than convincing, despite all the open talk. The dictatorial command of the economy has remained unchanged; social demands are met on a symbolic rather than on a real level, such as declaring March 15th a national holiday.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the 120,000 signatures collected on a petition demanding reconsideration by the Parliament of the Bős–Nagyymaros hydroelectric dam have not succeeded in putting the issue back on the table.

True, the newly hatched social movements have gained much public attention, but their strident voices, often deliberately distorted, cannot make up for the increasingly angry silence of the masses that are still waiting. These dangerous circus acts may, at any time, be followed by sudden and dramatic developments.

In December 1988 the first handbook of the new social movements and organisations was published, entitled *Lel-tár* [Inventory].<sup>10</sup> The majority of the forty newly established organisations described therein – apart from cultural, professional and conservative groups – are political and interest-oriented in scope.

During the latest period of ferment even the cultural and ecology-related groups have become politicised. Among them, the Danube Circle, organised in 1984 for the purpose of disseminating information about the ecological and economic arguments against the building of the dam, is the most widely known. In the past the Circle emphasised the apolitical nature of environmental protection. By 1988 activists of splinter groups, the "Danube Movements," have changed course, openly accepting political confrontation with the power structure, which is accelerating the pace of construction. They proceeded to organise their September meeting, designed to awaken international public opinion, jointly with the International Wildlife Fund, the International Rivers Network, and with an independent Hungarian youth movement – the Federation of Young Democrats.

The Hungarian Democratic Forum, founded in September 1987, is the largest of the new political organisations. Its primary objective is "the rebuilding of a nation in disarray." This organisation described itself in *Inventory* as follows: "In these times of national peril there is a need for the unification of all forces into a broad-based spiritual coalition." HDF's mission is "to follow

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<sup>9</sup> In commemoration of Imre Nagy and the others martyrs who were executed in 1958.

<sup>10</sup> *Lel-tár*, Új társadalmi szervezetek katalógusa (Bercsi János, Telkes József). Budapest: Pszichoteam, 1988.

those historic traditions that [...] have striven to coalesce national and social interests with the demands of the times, and to communicate them to the nation [...].” The movement, voluntarily assuming the task of hewing out a third way, “accepts neither the label of establishmentarianism nor that of opposition” while emphatically wishing to retain “its coalition-like structure open to all honourable ideas and initiatives in the interests of the country.” According to the ideologues of HDF, “issues of Hungarian destiny” may be resolved by the Forum’s action to uncover and organise “the best of Hungary’s spiritual and intellectual forces from every social stratum.” In addition, the Forum intends to support all those spiritual-cultural objectives and movements that are involved in the renewal of public education, “the hallmarks of which are quality, humanity and traditional national values.”

This platform appeals primarily to the provincial intelligentsia and the “populist” intellectuals in Budapest. Such popularity stems in part from forcefully surfacing nationalist sentiment, long suppressed under insincere internationalist slogans. With its middle-of-the-road stance, HDF distances itself from the democratic opposition, with its emphasis on willingness to compromise. Thanks to its 13,000 members and its numerous branches across the country, the HDF could easily turn into a political party without becoming a dangerous antagonist of the MSZMP. HDF was well-connected from its inception. At the initial meeting, Imre Pozsgay (then Secretary General of the “Popular Front,” currently minister without portfolio) in his introduction conveyed greetings from Károly Grósz (then Prime Minister, currently Secretary General of MSZMP). There are several party members among the organisers and leaders. Due to continued deterioration in the economy and the radicalisation of the intelligentsia, this initial advantage may backfire.

No common ground exists between HDF and either the radical intelligentsia or the many groups concerned with environmental protection, human rights and religious freedom. To bring together these groups, the Network of Free Initiatives was launched in a “Call to Action” on March 17, 1988. The “Call” held the chance for the broadest possible coalition of newly organised movements and civic initiatives. Among its members, it counted representatives of every major alternative movement save those of HDF. The focus of the “Call” was on a dialogue between society, in the early stages of self-organisation on the one hand, and the governing party, which showed signs of disintegration, on the other. The “Call” emphasised that the responsibility for the unfolding crisis rested primarily on the shoulders of the power holders. It urged the party to accept responsibility and to handle the conflict arising from the crisis non-violently. At the same time, the “Call” stressed society’s responsibility to participate in forming its own destiny. The Network’s purpose was to guard against “the splintering of the forces of democracy” and to enhance the effectiveness of the dialogue by coordinating the viewpoints of groups interested in such a service.

The Network has been only partially successful in fulfilling its mission. While the “Call” stimulated the activities and inter-group communication of the smaller, isolated movements, initiatives and individuals and counted (in the spring of 1987) as a psychological and political breakthrough, the most potent need in that phase of society’s re-politization was for the self-definition of each particular group. The period of feverish articulation, of shaping independent political parties, sometimes an excruciating effort, has been an inevitable development, one that to some extent continues to this day. The initial period of fear during the fall of 1988 has given way to a phase of increased self-esteem. The thrill of free organisation and the possibility of rapid transformation into politicians has overwhelmed the need for broader cooperation. Paradoxically, most groups, often even the smallest, entered the fray with demands for coalition. The euphoria, at times bordering on narcissism, may be explained by the fact that the new movements emerged in a political vacuum following 33 years of political nirvana. At the beginning they had no audience; while the power structure hinted at willingness to dialogue, in practice it reached for the truncheon. The broader masses of society were partly afraid and partly incapable of responding to the political choices offered. The effects of the experiences of the past decades - the artificial atomisation of society; successful post-1956 consolidation efforts at suppressing political awareness; the differing degrees of freedom in the capital versus the provinces, the continued existence of semi-feudal social relations perpetuated under a socialist guise - all have taken their toll on society. The demands of the movements are radical, but their mass support slight. Interchange between manual workers

and/or the population living in provincial isolation on the one hand, and the radical intellectuals of the capital on the other, is not easy. In this respect Hungary is very different from Poland, where labour and the intelligentsia have long found ways to collaborate.

By means of simultaneous threats and promises, the power structure sought to capitalise on the rivalry among the alternative organisations and their relative isolation from society. “Only those organisations” – they intoned from on high – “having a platform and by-laws and accepting the principles of the Constitution, may participate in discussions with the Party.” In the meantime, the truncheons were busy. Obviously, at this juncture, the alternatives chose to comply and regrettably, too often they did this without thorough analysis, and with a self-deceiving assurance.

Relinquishing its original objective of creating horizontal connections to strengthen solidarity and communications, a politically active minority, employing the slogan of “achieving a high political profile,” turned the Network of Free Initiatives into a political membership organisation.

Undeniably, the Federation of Free Democrats, created in November 1988 during a national meeting of the Network, has made its presence felt in public life through its announcements and public events. It has remained, however, the radical enclave of the urban elite intelligentsia which has voluntarily relinquished the task of building broader social solidarity.

Simultaneously, part of the Network Council decided to continue the work of networking albeit with a more modest scope.

Although not yet evolved into a party, the Free Democrats conduct party-like activities. So far, outlines of a high political profile have not yet materialised, but the “Statement of Principles” bears witness to their liberal, bourgeois-radical, social democratic, and reform-communist roots. It appears that the only political attitude not acceptable to the philosophy of the party organisers is that of the “anti-political” which eschews traditional political categories. Thus, having fit into the traditional political mold, the development of a many-sided social net has been squeezed out completely.

Similar processes are taking place in rival alternative organisations, in HDF, and in the Endre Bajcsy Zsilinszky Friendship Society which espouses an ideology somewhere between that of the populists and the free democrats.

Among the new organisations established in 1988 perhaps the only one reacting in a non-traditional way to the developing political-ideological crisis is the Federation of Young Democrats [FIDESZ]. Even though FIDESZ is specifically the organisation of young intellectuals, with a membership of about 2,000, like that of the Federation of Free Democrats, their presence in public life is probably the most multifaceted as well as the least dogma-bound, due to regular canvassing of the country by its members and their spontaneous responses to such issues as environmental protection, education, and the recall of discredited parliamentary representatives. Their foreign affairs working group is unique in that not only does it develop and maintain ties to independent movements in Eastern and Western Europe, but it also initiates acts of solidarity. Protests mounted against the jailing of Vaclav Havel and the Czech peace activists, or the memorial organised for the 20th anniversary of Jan Palach’s death demonstrate that the ideal of “Central-Europeanism” inspires deeds as well as slogans. Of all the political movements, ecological awareness and activities are greatest in FIDESZ; in addition, FIDESZ is the first – and so far the only – organisation to form a women’s group.

By placing special emphasis on building a civil society, as opposed to political competition, and based on the principle of non-violence, FIDESZ corresponds to some of the new independent movements in Eastern Europe, primarily Charter ‘77 and the Polish Freedom and Peace Movement, as well as to Western European grassroots movements. While all the above-mentioned movements are in their formative stages, and there are a variety of choices for their further development, FIDESZ has made the greatest progress toward a novel conception of politics and a new, global view and value system which points towards the creation of a new political culture:

“FIDESZ does not support the theory that gaining government power would result in democracy. We do not believe that any new organisation attaining power would by itself bring about human and civil rights. This is because the ultimate guarantee and

repository of democracy is a democratic, politically aware society, not the State. The existence of political parties vying for power is an essential, but not sufficient, condition [for democracy]. Our task is not to grasp the power to govern; rather to promote grassroots organisation in the hope that the reborn society, building on its own communities, will be able to choose its own government. This requires each individual's effort to join with like-minded others to create their own communities, movements, organisations. FIDESZ would be just one among these, as an organisation of young people whose paramount political principles are respect for human and civil freedoms without fear and oppression.”<sup>11</sup>

Espousing and proclaiming the value of independence, moral conviction and solidarity are certainly encouraging signs in a society turned narrow-mindedly materialistic, largely apolitical, cynical or fearful. They portend the birth of a new spirit without which neither emergence from the deepening many-levelled crisis nor the marshalling of energies for construction of a new society is possible. Without them, slogans demanding change, from any corner, will sound empty.

During its first year of existence, FIDESZ has progressed from initial police harassment and threats of arrest and house searches to regular press and TV appearances, a significant advance indeed. In general the initial threatening attitude of the power structure appears to be toning down to willingness to negotiate, as if the initial floundering were being replaced by a more considered strategy.

When the Independent Small-holders' Party announced resumption of its activities in November 1988, the one-party system *de facto* ceased in Hungary. Citing the fact that it had never officially been disbanded, the Small-holders' Party considers its existence unbroken (since before World War II) and does not wait for official recognition. Subsequently, the Social Democrats and the People's Party have also re-emerged. The latter, suggested by its name, is a cooperative populist party; in reality it continues left-wing peasant party traditions. The Hungarian Independence Party and the Christian Democratic Party have also announced the beginning of their organisational activities. Sharp debate about the dilemma of becoming a party is raging in HDF. The Federation of Free Democrats, while believing the time is not yet ripe for becoming a party, nevertheless functions as such.

Looking back on long-standing historical traditions, the parties, in renewing their activities, are plagued by severe generational and power struggles. Their weakness, however, is most apparent in routine political activity and programs affecting concrete demands. Behind these problems lies the failure of a clear conception of the future based on the actual situation. The platforms, eerily resembling one another, are no more than collections of popular slogans, with the MSZMP itself borrowing freely from them, having switched tactics just in time.

The situation is fluid and chaotic; the forms of pluralism are well nigh baroque while the contents are nearly unknown. It is not known, for example, what responsibilities and burdens the slogan “Let's join Europe” – present in almost all platforms – will mean: deepening poverty for the majority of society and consequently more social unrest and polarisation or, conversely, unification and balanced social development, a “civilising” of the economic, political and cultural life of society. The platforms never detail the various ways of becoming part of Europe.

Despite the contradictions and childhood ills characterising the era of transition, genuine democratic transformation is taking place in Hungary. More than at any time in the post-World War II era, the international situation favours democratisation. In Hungary, just as in Poland, the prospects of the democratic forces are enhanced by the moral crisis of the power elite. In the given situation, some form of negotiated power-sharing is seen by the power elite as the most obvious solution. Naturally, power-sharing can be for show, but it can also be meaningful. The elite needs the appearance of power-sharing in order to shift some of the responsibility for the deepening economic hardships. To this end, they are making a number of concessions unimaginable before, permitting almost unrestricted freedom for alternative voices, while employing more refined

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<sup>11</sup> In *Lel-túr*, op. cit., p. 28.



methods of manipulation to try to thwart the coalition of opposing groups. There is one thing the elite, is certain about although it reveals signs of uncertainty and disintegration as a result of fractional fights and the lack of a new ideology: it wants to retain power. The majority, therefore, is willing to make sacrifices and to compromise. Having recognised the inevitable fact of some kind of restructuring, it also accepts the necessity of accomplishing this non-violently, as a pre-condition for possible Western economic aid. The game has not yet been decided. Even if it tolerates unprecedented freedom, the power structure retains its monopolistic position with regard to the forces of coercion, mass communication and the major industrial complexes. Formal power-sharing would perpetuate the *status quo*, which it is willing to tolerate. That is why the elite is striving to integrate the inexperienced, still relatively weak political organisations into the prevailing political structure. Outlines of a coalition initiated from above are appearing on Hungary's political horizon.

As to the shape of such a coalition, much depends on the independent movements organised from below. Critical determinants include whether these movements are able to overcome, within a limited time, their initial identity crises, develop their programs into concrete, realistic, and constructive demands, enlist the major, so far passive segments of society into their ranks, and whether they are able to leave behind the worst traditions of Hungarian political culture and suspend fruitless rivalry at least while the initial compromises are being worked out.

# REDEFINING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE POSSIBLE

## EUROPEAN INTEGRATION FROM EASTERN AND WESTERN PERSPECTIVES

### The Lesson

In August 1968, Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev put the following question to U.S. President Lyndon Johnson through diplomatic channels: Did the United States acknowledge the continuing validity of the results arrived at at Yalta and Potsdam concerning the division of Europe after World War II? Johnson answered that the agreements were valid as far as Czechoslovakia and Romania were concerned. At dawn on 21 August 1968, Soviet troops invaded Czechoslovakia with the assistance of other Warsaw Pact countries. In 1987, a prominent American historian of the Cold War was questioned about the historical justification of a settlement which has led to the critical and complex present-day economic, political, and moral crisis in East Central Europe. He answered, “I hope the East Europeans have learned the lesson of 1956” (when the USSR invaded Hungary) – i.e., the lesson that there must always be victims. “Now the East Europeans are the victims.” This particular approach to history suggests many important and interesting questions, two of which I shall attempt to answer here: Is it true that the small nations of East-Central Europe – primarily Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary – are the victims of the post World War II international system? If so, must they remain victims in the future?

### The Yalta System

The division of Europe at Yalta reflected the military strength of the victors of World War II and was not made with the consensus of the Central and East European nations. It led to a realization of superpower interests and not to a solution of the deeply rooted social, political, and economic conflicts of the Central and East European region.

As a direct consequence of the postwar *status quo*, based on a militaristic concept of security, the logic of the Cold War and the arms race resulted in an unprecedented crisis, endangering civilization as a whole. Today even the superpowers must give a second thought to the logic of East-West bipolarity. They pursue endless military preparations in order to attain “security,” yet the result is increased insecurity and constant fear. The irrationality of this system is evident in the case of the small European states, none of which feels directly threatened by the other.

The negative consequences of the division of Europe are the most obvious in the case of Central and East European countries. For them, the Yalta system has meant Soviet occupation and separation from Western Europe. Citizens of this part of the world cannot consider Yalta as a guarantee of peace. The lesson they were so reluctant to learn is that despite their long-lasting and cherished hopes for democracy and freedom, the Western powers tacitly acknowledged Soviet

decision-making in their countries, accepting that the Soviet Union may apply military force to safeguard the imposed political systems.

Today an increasing number of East and West European social scientists and politicians are convinced that the fate of Europe must be placed in European hands – i.e., that Yalta must be revised. Yalta has become a symbol of a larger political process in which, as Ferenc Fehér formulates it, “the powerful of the world still feel themselves appointed to make ultimate and supremely national decisions for the rest of us.”<sup>12</sup> One can agree with George Kolankiewicz and Paul Lewis, who argue that the attitudes of the United States and the Soviet Union toward Yalta are hypocritical:

“It was clearly a formula in which the conflicting interests of the major parties were accommodated [...] While representatives of all the Great Powers agreed that the postwar regimes of Eastern Europe should be both democratic and friendly towards the Soviet Union, there was never a formal attempt to define what those terms should mean.”<sup>13</sup>

János Kis points out that the built-in ambiguities of the Yalta agreement have facilitated dramatically opposing “interpretations.”<sup>14</sup> According to one of the documents from Yalta, the “Declaration about Liberated Europe,” the Allies would recognize the legitimacy of only those new governments that came to power *via* free elections. This is the “Atlantic interpretation.” The “Lublin interpretation” is based on the doctrine that for security reasons the Soviet Union could not allow hostile regimes along its frontiers. In 1943, when Soviet troops reached Poland, the Soviet Union withdrew its recognition of the Polish government in exile and established a National Liberation Committee in Lublin. By the *de facto* acknowledgment of the Soviet right to decide the nature of neighboring governments, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt gave up the principles of the declaration. After the settlement of Soviet-type regimes, the Western powers started to argue that no one recognized the right of the Soviet Union to subordinate the principles of the declaration to its geopolitical interests in the European theater. This gave Stalin the chance to accuse his erstwhile allies of undermining the new *status quo*. “The Yalta agreement dissolved into two irreconcilable interpretations – the Cold War broke out in earnest.”<sup>15</sup>

The vicious circle of Yalta has become increasingly clear. The superpowers do not want to leave Europe; the existence of the partition intensifies superpower rivalry which in turn perpetuates the partition. Thus, the peace treaties following World War II have led to new conflicts instead of resolving old ones. George Konrád identifies the Cold War as a “Russian-American confrontation and cooperation” functioning as a new Holy Alliance:

“Bipolar power forces societies to submit to the discipline of one bloc or the other [...] Two different types of hierarchical systems weigh upon society, and their ultimate police sanction is the machinery of war which, in the last analysis, means atomic weapons. The Soviet bomb guarantees the police discipline of the West; the American bomb guarantees the police discipline of the East.”<sup>16</sup>

The unacceptability of maintaining this bipolar organization provides a common basis for Europeans to attempt a rapprochement, to outline a move toward independence, and to formulate plans for demilitarization. Some undeniable recent political trends give practical content to these theoretical considerations. On the one side, Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev’s new détente policy, combined with a significant tolerance of attempts at political reform in both Hungary and Poland and, on the other side, the determination of Western Europe to move toward

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<sup>12</sup> Ferenc Fehér, “Eastern Europe’s Long Revolution Against Yalta,” *Eastern European Politics and Society* 9. (Winter 1988)

<sup>13</sup> George Kolankiewicz and Paul G. Lewis, *Poland, Politics, Economics and Society*. London and New York: Printer Publishers, 1988, p. 177.

<sup>14</sup> János Kis, “The Yalta Problem in the Mid-Eighties,” *East European Reporter* Nos. 1 and 2 (summer 1985).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> George Konrád, *Antipolitics* (New York: Hancourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1984), p. 32.

economic unity in the European Community enhance the chances for a European rapprochement and independence from superpower domination. The existence of bipolarity does not mean that any kind of intra- or inter-bloc symmetry exists in East–West relations. The most serious potential centers of conflict for “Yaltanized” Europe are the Germanies, Poland, and most recently again Central Europe (especially Hungary and Czechoslovakia). It is to these regions that we now turn.

## The German Question

If the partition of Europe symbolizes unresolved superpower rivalry, the partition of Germany is the symbol of the symbol: it locks the superpowers into a strategically central conflict. Present political and theoretical controversies leave no doubt about the revitalized significance of the German question. It has been a “question” since the victorious Allied powers never concluded a peace treaty with the successor states of the Third Reich. In the course of drawing up a peace treaty, it was not openly and unconditionally decided whether the division of Germany would be permanent or transitional. In the 1970s, when European frontiers were finalized, when the status of Berlin was settled, the open question of the German peace treaty was again avoided. Its resolution evokes two distinct views. On the one hand, a general fear concerning German reunification has gained strength in the context of the new *détente*. Some observers – somewhat exaggeratedly – envision Eastern Europe threatened by a new Rapallo.<sup>17</sup> Ferenc Fehér’s metaphor about the “dormant German volcano” which “has begun to erupt anew” expresses the widespread fears among intellectuals in Europe and the United States.<sup>18</sup> Fehér stresses the importance of an “emerging German neo-nationalism carried by movements both on the left and the right” which have begun to question the role of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) as a bastion of the West, for West Germany is not capable of achieving German reunification.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, according to more sophisticated counter-arguments, the survival of the European peoples and their right to self-determination and independence depend on German politics. German reunification will secure both. In one of the scenarios, suggested by the historian Peter Brandt, both East and West Germany would leave their respective military pacts and build a neutral two-state federation. The political institutions of this loose federation would be led by members of the current parliaments and administrative units. Although membership in different international economic organizations would be maintained, the sheer constraints of federation would direct the two states’ international structures toward rapprochement. The establishment of this federation would dismantle the core of superpower rivalry in Europe and would help to dissolve the Yalta system.

In a November 1987 Chatham House speech, Wolfgang Schaubele, a minister of the West German cabinet (*Staatsminister im Kanzleramt*), warned of the growing impatience of Germans who perceive the current situation as unnatural; he stressed that the German Democratic Republic (GDR) is not a foreign state but a state in Germany, and that the people in the GDR are not foreigners but Germans who, “though living under a different political system, belong to the same nation.”<sup>20</sup> Schaubele makes it clear that the FRG will not abandon its long-term goal “to achieve in free self-determination the unity and freedom of Germany.”<sup>21</sup> Schaubele also emphasizes the commitment of the FRG to the Western community, asserting that the integration of the country into the Western world is not subject to revision: “Freedom takes precedence over unity.”<sup>22</sup> In view

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<sup>17</sup> See Ferenc Fehér and Ágnes Heller, “Eastern Europe under the Shadow of a New Rapallo,” *New German Critique* (spring 1986).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Wolfgang Schäuble, “Relations between the Two States in Germany: Problems and Prospects,” *International Affairs* 2 (1988), p. 210.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

of the intertwining and inseparability of Germany and Europe, he calls for a widening of Western diplomacy and the buildup of a common Western *Ostpolitik*:

“Our aim must be to encourage the nations of Central and Eastern Europe to take a closer interest in the West again. And this process is not possible without a *modus vivendi* between the two states in Germany.

Thus our relationship with the GDR must be seen in a broader context, as an element of joint Western efforts to overcome the division of Europe [...] We must together try to ensure that the Central and Eastern European nations do not remain exclusively oriented towards the Soviet Union. We must whenever possible encourage them to open up to the West and give them a place again in the Western sphere [...] A lasting peaceful order in Europe, and with it the solution of the German Question, will only be possible if it can guarantee everybody’s security and freedom and if all the European nations – including the German nation – can live as they see fit. The division of Germany, which is at the same time the division of Europe, cannot remain a permanent state of affairs.<sup>23</sup>”

There is general agreement among Western powers concerning their long-term “mission” in East-Central Europe. Differences will appear in the medium and short runs in deciding who will take the leading role in the process of liberalization and modernization in the region. If recent tensions between American and West German policy-makers continue to deepen, conflicts over the German question might reemerge. Without reference to the German question, the other issues noted above, which are locked in with it, cannot be resolved either. Modern history demonstrates that the suppression of social and political tensions and antagonisms does not lead to their solution. Solutions can be reached exclusively through negotiation and mediation on both the international and domestic levels.

## The Polish Issue

The future of Europe is intertwined not only with the future of Germany, but also with that of Poland. This was as true in 1939 as it is today. The Polish crisis has far-reaching international implications despite the official argument that it is purely a domestic issue which rules out foreign interference. It clearly shows the vulnerability and inherent contradictions of Yaltanized Europe. In the case of Poland, Yalta is not just a symbol, it is a flawed symbol.<sup>24</sup> While giving a free hand to the Soviet Union concerning Poland and allowing the Soviet acquisition of formerly Polish territory, the Western powers planted in the Yalta and Potsdam agreements a commitment to the immediate holding of “free and unfettered elections in Poland.”<sup>25</sup>

A few months after the military coup in December 1981, Adam Michnik, a leader of the opposition Polish United Workers Party (Solidarity), in a letter from prison on the ways of resistance under martial law, pointed out this built-in latent contradiction:

“Regardless of changes [in the Soviet Union], Poland will remain the political focus of every Russian state [...] And the Poles have to figure out what relations to have with any such state [...] Let us remember that as a point of departure for analysis of Polish-Russian relations we might take another look at the contents of the Yalta agreement which, while placing Poland in the Soviet sphere of politico-military influences, leave to the Poles the choice of their system of government. The Yalta agreement does not

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 214.

<sup>24</sup> Expression used by Kolankiewicz and Lewis, *Nove Dragi* (July–August 1982), p. 177.

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Kolankiewicz and Lewis, p. 177 (from *Nove Dragi* [July–August 1982], p. 208).

stipulate the role of the Polish United Workers Party – that role is merely a consequence of terror, rigged elections, and Stalin’s violation of the agreement.<sup>26</sup>

The resistance by Polish civil society in the 1980s proved to be effective: after the amnesty offered to Solidarity in September 1986, open opposition was increasingly tolerated. Above-ground independent organizations – most of them Solidarity committees – have been established with publicly known memberships. The “gray area” between legal and illegal political and social activity has rapidly expanded. After the liberation of the religious and intellectual spheres, the economic sphere, within limits, has begun to be liberated as well. The outlines of a “national reconciliation” between the Solidarity-based opposition and the party-state emerged in the fall of 1988. Even some of the most radical leaders of the opposition consider the envisaged compromise desirable, hoping that a legalization of Solidarity and the institutionalization of independent democratic organizations will confirm the present political situation. As Leszek Moczulski, head of the Confederation for an Independent Poland, has concisely put it: “Compromise marks the end of one period and the beginning of another.”<sup>27</sup>

The Polish Communist Party has agreed to restore the upper House of Parliament. “Seats in the lower house will be apportioned by agreement before elections in June (65 percent going to the Communists and their allies and 35 percent to the opposition, but) Solidarity has been assured that elections to the upper house will be freely contested and open to all candidates.”<sup>28</sup> Though not immediately and not totally unfettered, free elections have come to Poland.

While the outcome of political reforms is still uncertain and the battle between the civil society and the state is far from over. One thing is clear, in the future Poland will be a bridge between East and West rather than a bastion of Soviet-style socialism in the East. The Polish case is likely to have a continued impact on Eastern Europe and may also generate a reorientation in Western Europe. One of the major achievements in this area in the 1980s was an emerging dialogue between Solidarity and European peace movements and grass-roots civil initiatives. This dialogue accentuated the existence of common interests across the dividing line in Central Europe. These interests indicate that the dividing line was only a superpower effort to perpetuate the *status quo*.

## East Central Europe

The key to a genuine all-European rearrangement and possible integration lies in the crisis-stricken region of East Central Europe, which is afflicted with both open and hidden tensions. Former U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski assigns the task of evolving European integration exclusively to Western Europe.<sup>29</sup> In my opinion, East and West can move from stalemate only on the basis of mutuality. Thus, the major part of the burden is on East Central Europe.

What can be called a long peace from the perspective of the “haves” is seen as endless indecision from the perspective of the “have-nots” in East Central Europe. The conclusion might be drawn that the logic of Yalta means only a merciless suffocation of any democratic movement isolated within national boundaries. György Konrád may be right in asserting that the Europeanization of Europe can be achieved only by the Central Europeanization of Central Europe. But as long as this area is not able to articulate its regional interests, no serious steps can be taken toward a broader European integration.

An autonomous East Central Europe is needed which, based on a sensible division of labor, might reinforce organically and on the basis of equality its economic connections with Western Europe, while at the same time maintaining its economic links with the Soviet Union. In East

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<sup>26</sup> Adam Michnik, “On Resistance,” in *Letters from Prison and Other Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 57.

<sup>27</sup> Speech by Leszek Moczulski on 30 September 1988 at Warsaw University; cited in *Uncaptive Minds* 1, no. 4 (November-December 1988), p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> *New York Times*, 11 March 1989.

<sup>29</sup> “The Future of Yalta,” *Foreign Affairs* (winter 1984/85), pp. 279–302.

Central Europe the task is especially difficult because unlike in Western Europe, it is not to revive democracy and the institutions of civil society, but to create them. Domestic and diplomatic conditions enable adherents of the bloc to attack every reform as a loosening of bloc discipline and as proof of sympathy with the other bloc. In most of East Central Europe, civil society exists without being institutionalized, as a “second society” Neither the rules of the democratic political game nor the culture thereof have been developed (except in Poland). Remnants of fear are still stronger than the desire for autonomy. Democracy exists only as an exigency or as a desire. Sometimes the people who fight for it do not know what it really means. The State has been successful in preventing the development of autonomous institutions in civil society. At times of crisis, reform processes are started from above which, in the official version, render initiation from below superfluous, and they may be withdrawn at any time if deemed necessary. In societies where political democracy and freedom of speech and press are not habitual, potential allies cannot meet, and common endeavors will not take shape as clear political or economic postulations. The historical traditions of separateness are stronger than a trend for formulating common interests. Suspicion and fear are more likely responses to an open standpoint than solidarity. Divisions within groups don’t necessarily have to be manipulated from above since they already exist, and there is no common position from which attacks on civil liberties can be repulsed.

This is, however, only one side of the picture. On the other side, various groups in East Central Europe are struggling for more autonomy – first in the cultural, then in the economic and the political fields. Social autonomy and political democracy are not identical concepts. In opposition to the totalitarian dictatorship that endeavors to control all social and individual activities, the paternalistic state, which is representative of state forms in socialist Eastern Europe, keeps political decisions of general interest as a privilege of the power elite. It is not necessary to prohibit social and especially individual freedoms which do not endanger these privileges. It is enough to maintain the mechanisms of fear in order to isolate the various components of autonomy.

Since the mid-1980s a new social and political dynamic has emerged throughout East Central Europe. Despite the reluctance with which the more conservative East European political elites – especially in the GDR, Czechoslovakia, and Romania – are following Gorbachev’s new course and the Polish and Hungarian political reform processes, hopes have again been raised throughout the region. There is a widespread conviction that a significant ideological shift can provide the basis for new political discourse. As a consequence of this new ideology, the relationship between the state and civil society has become clearer and less hidden by the antagonism between local civil societies and the Soviet empire. The changes inside the Soviet Union and the attendant shifts in the relationship between state and civil society mean that the “*Moscow card*” *can no longer be played by local satellite leaders with the same effectiveness as before, since the suppression of change can no longer be justified by reference to orders from the Soviet Politburo.*

Despite the expectations of veteran hardliners and scholars of the Soviet Union, for the time being there are no signs of aggressive reactions from Moscow to the rapidly shifting relationship between the party-state and the new social movements in Poland and Hungary. In a speech in Kiev in early March 1989, Gorbachev reaffirmed the right of Communist governments to choose their own paths. A unilateral withdrawal of six tank divisions and 50,000 troops from East Central Europe, which Gorbachev has promised, would significantly reduce the offensive capabilities of the Soviet Union in the Eastern theater. Soviet ground forces deployed in the region would be given a new and more defensive structure.

There are obvious signs, however, of fear and reluctance on the part of officialdom concerning this new social autonomy and the efforts of the independents on behalf of political pluralism. East European politicians often stress that it is necessary to defend “order” against anarchistic developments. Paradoxically, due to the increased freedom of press and speech, it is becoming more obvious to the public that the incorrect and uncontrolled decisions of the ruling elites are responsible for the growing post-Stalinist anarchy. It is the specter of accountability which horrifies officialdom. *Glasnost* and *perestroika* combined with an articulation of economic, social, and political demands from below can create conflicts in East Central Europe that cannot be controlled by discredited authorities.

Under the circumstances we can hardly expect that peace in itself will lead to autonomous mass movements in East Central Europe. Peace activists in the West, who have been reared on mass demonstrations, political rallies, and open press discussions, must understand this. Any autonomous social movement in East Central Europe is bound, first of all, to demand political democracy. Without it any such movement will remain isolated and prey to easy manipulation. Only when the European peace movement recognizes that its primary task is not just a formal demand for peace will it play an important role in supporting the East Central European grassroots movements and reform efforts. To support the East a constant dialogue and systematic exchange of information are essential, mainly within the orbits of civil society. These are all the more necessary because, due to a lack of information in the East and its inherent inferiority complex, the West is surrounded by an aura of mysticism. This mysticism, enhanced by a scarcity of commodities in the East, leads to bad imitations of the West. Shoddy products of Western materialistic culture are avidly received and accepted, while its most valuable assets – such as functioning political democracy, pluralism, and individual rights – are neglected.

Now that we have identified so many distinctive features of Eastern and Western Europe, is it still possible to conceive of European integration? Is there any substantial interdependence between the two parts of Europe? Do they share mutual interests?

## Rearrangements in the West

Crises often have a way of bringing into sharp focus disagreements that under normal conditions would remain more or less submerged. The relationship between the United States and Western Europe started to change in the 1970s, when Europeans became very skeptical of U.S. leadership. While Western Europe has remained dependent on the United States for military security, it has clearly initiated attempts to emancipate itself from American political and economic tutelage. The most telling example is the radically changing tone of British politicians concerning Great Britain's relationship to the United States and Western Europe. In a dramatic speech at Chatham House in 1988, former British Prime Minister Edward Heath argued as follows:

“We know inside ourselves, throughout Europe, that we are never going to be our true selves and develop our true welfare again unless we have an independence of foreign and military policy [...] We saw what happened at the Reykjavik Reagan-Gorbachev summit in October 1986 without any Europeans being taken into account at all [...]

We are a European Community and our task is now to put our own house in order.

We in the United Kingdom have got an enormous responsibility. Our place is in Europe. Our policy must be European. We are friends and allies of the United States as Europeans, and that is basic. But we must no longer try to ride both horses at the same time, for as we will increasingly see, we have no influence economically, militarily or politically on the United States. These are realities. We must face them and make a success of the powers we can see, which is that of Europe.<sup>30</sup>”

In Europe, détente has taken root and appears to be bearing fruit. Political and economic interactions between East and West have multiplied, and some progress has been made even in the sphere of human rights. The dialogue has tended toward an identification of common interests. Détente has also contributed to the emergence of Solidarity and other grassroots civil movements in Eastern Europe by widening the room for movement. Until recently the paranoid structure of Yalta and the imperatives of bloc identity had excluded such developments.

For Western Europe, the East holds a special economic attraction. It has been the traditional market for West European industrial goods. At the same time Western Europe has been the

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<sup>30</sup> Edward Heath, “European Unity over the Next Ten Years: From Community to Union” *International Affairs* 1, no. 2 (1988), pp. 206–207.



traditional market for East European primary products and agricultural goods. Currently Eastern Europe badly needs Western technology. The natural historic division of labor between the two parts of the continent is much more sophisticated today and could develop further in the future. As Western Europe discovers that in its fragmented condition it is becoming less competitive in markets dominated by Japan and the United States, the notion of a special economic relationship with the East will become particularly important.

## A Pan-European Entente

The East Europeans long for a genuine Europe, guaranteeing them more pluralistic economies and societies and the right to create autonomous and democratic *sui generis* socialisms or liberal democracies. Growing ties with a politically autonomous Western Europe offer a chance for an equal partnership. According to Andre Gunder Frank:

“The growing conflicts within both the Atlantic Alliance and the Eastern Bloc, and the underlying economic and political weakening of both of the American and Soviet superpowers relative to their respective economic and political allies on either side of the Elbe, could enable important political and economic forces in each of the present four major regional groupings—Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and their no longer so big respective brothers in the United States and the Soviet Union—to consider an alternative East-West European economic and political rapprochement.<sup>31</sup>”

Such a European realignment, which could lead to a part European entente, would offer a greater chance of avoiding nuclear war, greater possibilities for national independence and political democratization in Eastern Europe, and increased political bargaining power and room for maneuver for grassroots movements in the Third World. Although many experts sensibly warn us that a pan-European solution as an alternative to the present division and militarization of the continent is implausible in the foreseeable future, even the most cautious evaluations concede that “the psychological appeal of the Pan-European idea, especially in Eastern Europe, is so strong that it should be maintained as a long-term aspiration.”<sup>32</sup>

A Europe militarily dependent, politically fragmented, and economically inefficient remains a theater where performance is directed by competing “friends.” The existing economic division of labor and cultural-historical traditions may serve as a basis for, but not as a guarantee of, European integration or the establishment of a demilitarized and independent Europe. At the same time, bipolarity and a continuation of the division are feasible as well. Small states, subject to the consequences of superpower rivalry, feel considerable interdependence within a bloc.

According to bloc ideology, the relationship between small states and superpowers is ostensibly in the interests of the former, but in fact it is detrimental. The small states must break with bloc discipline and the senselessness and destructiveness of being set against each other. *If they do*, they may play a prominent role in getting rid of bloc identity. They may conclude that as members of blocs they are merely the spare parts of a huge military mechanism, whereas if they could work toward mutual understanding, they might become a remarkable alternative to the military *status quo*. An independent demilitarized Europe would be able to smash the inhuman spiral of the arms race. Due to their economic and political difficulties, the small states are orbiting in an ever diminishing circle. Thus their chances of reaching mutual understanding are very limited. The new Western social movements have to restore the democratic relationship between civil society and the state. In the East a new impulse has to be given to the democratization which has barely begun. Solidarity

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<sup>31</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, *The European Challenge: From Atlantic Alliance to Pan-European Entente for Peace and Jobs* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1983), p. 83.

<sup>32</sup> Lincoln Gordon, *Eroding Empire: Western Relations with Eastern Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1987), p. 1; see also pp. 2–8.

has to be established among grassroots movements, although their origins are different. Programs must be established which transcend the framework of the nation-state.

## Détente from below: A European Assembly

In a recent article, Joanne Landy, Director of the New York-based Campaign for Peace and Democracy/East and West, criticized the “realist” who cannot imagine the future of Europe without superpowers. She argues that “practical politics” limit grassroots movements and call for changes that conform to elitist interests, but, she adds:

“In Europe and around the world we must seize the moment. We must use the opening offered by the emerging superpower détente to redefine the boundaries of the possible and demand changes from below that can create the basis for a lasting, democratic peace.”<sup>33</sup>

Landy refers to a proposal by Solidarity advisor Jacek Kuron about a neutral superpower-free zone in Central Europe. According to Kuron, West Germany would leave NATO, and East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia would leave the Warsaw Pact. They would “step out of the military blocs and step out of the political blocs. They would have the right to freely self-determine their fate, and on that territory the creation of any military or political bases for attacks on the other side would be forbidden.”<sup>34</sup> Needless to say, Kuron’s view is widely shared by the majority of newly established grassroots movements from the Baltic Republics to Slovenia.

In even broader, all-European terms, Charter ‘77 initiated the idea of a European Assembly, i.e., a parliament for independent grassroots movements from both parts of the continent. The Network for East-West Dialogue, an independent umbrella organization located in West Berlin, has already begun to put the idea into practice. The European peace movement has thus succeeded in establishing a new international attitude, and it may become the catalyst and organizing force for anti-systemic movements all over the world.

## The Historical Moment

The recent shifts in attitude regarding international affairs of some East and West European nations indicate an erosion of the Yalta system. Even if it would be hasty to conclude that the system is rapidly facing dissolution, to neglect these shifts by defending the *status quo* would mean missing an opportunity for major progress at this important juncture.

The issue of Hungary’s neutrality and a demand for the withdrawal of Soviet troops were raised by one of the first independent Hungarian political movements – the Network of Free Initiatives – in March 1988. At the time the demand for withdrawal sounded too radical and caused anxiety and alienation even in independent circles. Today, although with different emphases, it has been incorporated into the programs of most of the new political movements and proto-parties. Most recently it has been widely discussed by official forums like the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, reform clubs and literal-minded high-ranking military officers.

According to the architects of a new Hungarian foreign policy, Hungary today has the greatest space for maneuver in the area of international affairs since the 1940s. The authors of a newly publicized official document argue that, although a fundamental change in the orientation of

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<sup>33</sup> Joanne Landy, “A New Goal for the Peace Movement,” *New York Times* (25 December 1988).

<sup>34</sup> Speech delivered at the July 1988 European Nuclear Disarmament Convention in Sweden; quoted in *Peace and Democracy News* 3, no. 2, p. 12.

Hungarian foreign policy would not be suitable at this time, Hungary should build up balanced relationships with both parts of Europe by realizing its dual (Eastern and Western) orientation.<sup>35</sup>

At a press conference in Moscow in February 1989, Oleg Bogomolov, Director of the Institute of Economics and World Socialist System, asserted that, provided it remained a member of the Warsaw Pact, Hungary's adaptation of the Swedish or Austrian social and economic model would not threaten the interests of the Soviet Union. He added, "Even if Hungary became militarily neutral, this would not endanger the security of the Soviet Union."<sup>36</sup> This statement would be remarkable even if it were only the private opinion of an academician. The promise of unilateral withdrawal of tank divisions and troops demonstrates that the shift from an offensive to a more defensive strategic posture dominates Soviet military thinking today.

The bonds of the Soviet empire are slackening both inside the Soviet Union and in the East Central European periphery. The example of Poland is even more telling in this respect than that of Hungary. As a result of round table discussions, a compromise has been reached in Poland between the state and civil society. Meanwhile, Poland and Hungary openly criticize COMECON for its inefficiencies, arguing that it is one of the main causes of their deep economic crises. Calling for the democratization of the Warsaw Pact, they are desperately trying to establish closer links with Western Europe and the United States. Their gradual detachment from the Soviet empire, both in economic and political terms, is obvious.

In Czechoslovakia civil society is giving increasing signs that its patience is coming to an end. Despite increased and anachronistic police harassment, it is becoming more reluctant to live in fear and silence. The ideologues and beneficiaries of "normalization" cannot expect much from Gorbachev, who keeps repeating the slogans of the Prague Spring. As an integral part of his new détente policy, Gorbachev also emphasizes the independent development of individual socialist countries and that military intervention is incompatible with the principles and practices of democratic socialism. It is very doubtful that the Soviet Union would interfere militarily with the increasingly rapid processes of democratization in Poland and Hungary. The obsolescence of the Brezhnev doctrine parallels the slackening of the bonds of empire. Of course the "military solution" remains one possible scenario for the region, although a very unlikely one because it would mean the end of the carefully designed new Soviet foreign policy and would irretrievably damage Gorbachev's credibility. Some Sovietologists, especially in the United States, argue that East Central Europe is worth this price. In view of the complexity and depth of crises in the region, I disagree. The permanent warning on the part of Western experts on Eastern Europe about the danger of a Soviet invasion if the East Europeans "go too far" can help those whose interest is the maintenance of the present intra-bloc *status quo* in East Central Europe and the Soviet Union. Maintaining the *status quo* would slow down the process of democratization, further intensify the already deep local and regional crises, and consequently lead to explosion.

Sovietologists and strategic experts still think in terms of the Cold War paradigm. Accepting the logic of bipolarity, they do not grasp the processes of rearrangement of the two regions of Europe, and this inspires skepticism and caution. However, the desperate illnesses of East European societies can only be cured by their involvement in the processes of recovery. Suggesting a "new Yalta," U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger did not mention the participation of these societies, including the newly established alternative political organizations, in a new process of decision-making. West German social democracy, instead of encouraging the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, stresses its deep concern about turbulent processes which could threaten Gorbachev's *perestroika*, and it warns the Hungarians of the dangers of a "too rapid" restructuring. Kis aptly argues against the one-sidedness of this approach:

"The peoples of Eastern Europe revolted against what they saw as the unrealistically restricted concessions they had received from the attempted concord between the West and the Soviet Union. In the course of the Cold War, totalitarian terror ruthlessly suppressed every kind of local resistance. Once, however, oppression

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<sup>35</sup> Imre Sarkadi and Csaba Tabajdi, "A magyar társadalmi modellváltás – a magyar külpolitika orientációváltása?", *Magyar Nemzet* (18 March 1989)

<sup>36</sup> Cited in "Szovjet magánvélemények," *Heti Világgazdaság* (18 February 1989) p. 9.

became somewhat more restrained – it became more clear that stability in the region could only be achieved by permanent concessions. Not only are those solutions unstable that do not enjoy the acceptance of the Soviet Union: anything the peoples of Eastern Europe are not prepared to live with is equally unstable.”<sup>37</sup>

The emerging or reemerging civil societies with their new political movements and proto-parties and with their increasingly bitter working masses are no longer negligible factors in the international political arena. Western politicians, anxious for *perestroika* and *glasnost*, should see more clearly that the lesson of Yalta, which the defeated and temporarily paralyzed societies were forced to learn, has also been learned by the (similarly paralyzed) power elite in East Central Europe. None of the politically articulate forces in Eastern Europe today considers violence as a means of conflict resolution. The lesson of Yalta is for everyone: it is a false, anti-democratic treaty based on a military balance of power at the end of World War II.

In a time when the threads of interdependence are strengthening all around Europe, it is impossible to neglect the issue of mutual responsibility for the present state of East Central Europe. To assert that Yalta is the symbol of peace in Europe is an anachronism in 1989, partly because 1956, 1968, and 1981 will be seen as the years in which wars were unfairly waged against unequals and as the years of military invasion and violence in the still unwritten history of the region. The wars were waged in part because the political and economic conditions shaped by the rules of the Eastern bloc provided neither enough room to maneuver nor enough autonomy for a healthy process of integration. On the contrary, by hiding the roots of the crises they helped to further deepen them.

The road to regional democratic rearrangement is obviously very long. But to get onto this road, issues concerning East Central Europe, hitherto taboo, have to be raised openly in international forums, both officially and via the grassroots. The new *détente*, the declared end of the Cold War, the West European goal of integration in 1992, the relative decline of U.S. and Soviet hegemony, the emerging and institutionalizing pluralism in East Central Europe, and the appearance of articulate political oppositions – all provide favorable conditions for renegotiations.

The moment is historical. It would be a historical mistake to miss it.

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<sup>37</sup> Kis, p. 7.

# TOWARDS RECONCILIATION IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE\*

Only two years ago, when I came to the first Prague meeting organised by Charter '77 and the independent peace groups, the police entered the apartment of our host and interrupted the meeting. They forced the Western participants to leave and arrested me as the only "real" catch. When after an hour of silence I asked my two "civilian" escorts why they had arrested only me, they answered in a reconciliatory tone, "Don't worry, we arrest the Westerners tomorrow." Now here we all are together and our number has multiplied. I can easily imagine that my escorts from two years ago would now like to join this assembly and maybe they have. Certainly in Hungary they have been popping up in new political parties. And this is good or at least unavoidable. Reconciliation has to occur on every level, including the personal. But there is more at stake today than sitting or campaigning together with our former teachers, preachers and escorts.

The East Central European countries, escaping from the cage in which they were imprisoned by Yalta, have to come to terms with each other if they want to represent their common interests in international fora. It is clear to me that there is a common interest which stems from a common historical past, and I believe that if this interest would for once be formulated, not only in general terms but in terms of concrete needs, reform projects, strategies and policies, it will strengthen the bargaining position of the individual countries, namely, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and then Yugoslavia, the Baltic Republics and later perhaps Romania and Bulgaria.

There are many who doubt the relevance or deny the possibility of such a cooperative approach. Some of the new politicians even believe that their countries will benefit from their special Western contacts in the competition for "joining Europe" *vis-à-vis* other East Central European countries. From time to time you can hear them say, "We are better accepted here or there than the others." Those who are skeptical about East Central European cooperation say that if we cooperate with each other we can only contribute our poverty, inefficiency and technological underdevelopment - so what's the point?

Others believe that in the process of transition and integration to Europe only individual nation-states can succeed. These views are reinforced by some Western politicians. The U.S. State Department, reminiscent of the policy of differentiation, has a particularly strong tendency to deny the common characteristics of our region and does not consider individual countries as belonging to a historical region. This differentiation unfortunately did not work at the time of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, so that not even Poland was able to benefit from this more than obtaining a special and useless clause in the Yalta agreement.

The British foreign policy-makers see mostly dangers in an East Central European integration process, raising the spectre of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy on the political horizon.

I certainly do not deny the importance and justification of the efforts of individual countries to improve their positions and respect the principle of competition among those who recently entered the transition process. But relying exclusively on the ideology of the absolute sovereignty of the

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\* This chapter was presented at the foundation conference of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly in Prague, October 1990.

nation-state today, when the goal of the competition is joining the European Community, the existing member states of which succeeded exactly because they gave up a part of their absolute sovereignty, seems to me absurd and will undermine efforts at reconciliation and cooperation in the region.

I strongly believe that individual effort and collective interest are not mutually exclusive. I also believe that neither one should take precedence over the other. The creation of a balance of interests should always be striven for. This is a matter which the art of politics and policy-making can reconcile, combining them to the mutual satisfaction of both. I admit, this is not an easy task.

A new kind of package-aid for the entire region is not only an economic possibility. This would be an important political gesture from the West, especially from the Western part of the continent as an acknowledgement of an unjust inequality at the end of a dark political epoch. And it would have a tremendous positive psychological impact on the Eastern part of the continent by outlining a new horizon on every important level of human existence.

During a short visit to Budapest in September of this year, Margaret Thatcher excluded the possibility of any kind of new "Marshall aid" to the new democracies of East Central Europe. She said that the West should teach a lesson to the East about how to build up an efficient economy. She meant that receiving significant financial support would prevent East Central European societies from learning this lesson. I'm not a specialist of Great Britain's economic, political and social conditions, but the decline of this 19th century power and "industrial workshop of the world," especially in comparison to Japan or the united Germanies, astonishes me as a student of history.

Reading the Hungarian press and following the media, I wondered why it did not occur to any of my friends in the opposition parties to mention the lesson the East was teaching the West, namely how to survive 43 years in the special cage of bondage of the Yalta system which was so carefully designed by the big and super powers. I do not intend here to give a *j'accuse* speech against the Western Allies with regard to the consequences of Yalta and Potsdam, but what I want remembered is that the nations of East Central Europe did not themselves decide to remain outside the list of benefactors of the original Marshall plan. And yes, I strongly believe that one can take a moral stand when evaluating history. Great historical turning points, such as the revolution of 1989 bring to the surface questions of historical injustice in a concentrated and aggravated form. Why should we avoid trying to answer them? The acceptance of East Central Europe as a Soviet sphere of influence can be described as acceptance of a military reality; but at the same time it is an unjustified political act against societies whose vast majorities would have voted against this. Pluralism means the pluralism of viewpoints and perspectives as well. If we want a democratic world, the diversity of perspectives concerning international relations must be taken into account. The links between the social and political dimensions of local societies and international relations should be explored in an age when the significance of national boundaries has begun to lose its original meaning. This approach can lead us towards the elaboration of a new concept of international security.

One of the basic underlying assumptions of pan-European democratic integration is the further democratisation of East Central European societies for which the overthrow of the party-state and the introduction of parliamentary pluralism can serve only as a starting point. Civil society and political society are not identical, and the process of self-civilisation and the auto-therapy of East Central European societies must continue. Without further development, there is little hope of political stability and the likelihood of the survival and expansion of nationalistic, anti-intellectual and anti-Semitic attitudes is enormous. This would exclude the healing of old and new wounds and prevent serious attempts at reconciliation.

The first and most formidable obstacle on the road towards East Central European cooperation is the resurgence of more or less suppressed nationalisms throughout the region. The first euphoria of 1989, the rightful happiness and joy expressed about the successful revolutions, was soon replaced by old clichés of national interests and mutual accusations. The friendly smiles of brothers-in-revolution turned – even if not everywhere – into angry cries against ethnic minorities, into redundant declarations of state boundaries or irresponsible and groundless revisionist attitudes.

None of the countries of the region could avoid these poisonous ideologies. After World War II, East Central Europe was never able to face and come to terms with its history. Maybe 1989 will finally allow for this. This is why people feel that World War II has only just now ended for them.

And so it is no wonder that old clichés are reformulated and political and religious symbols of the 1930s reappear. The question is how are we going to deal with them? I do not agree with those who argue that this a natural side-effect of the transition period and that we should not be so upset about it, that it will disappear with time. It might disappear, but how and when? What damage and destruction will it leave behind? It can poison relationships for years to come and weaken both the individual and the social structure in the region.

I have heard quite often recently from Western observers that the East Central Europeans are narcissistically obsessed by their history, and especially by the role nationalism has played here during the past century. There might be a grain of truth in this observation, although I think national grievances which gave birth to two world wars in one century need special attention and treatment. “The end of History,” with a capital “H”, indeed! 1989 is rather the beginning of history with a small “h” for us. The great project of nation-building was never completed here, and the reasons for this are at least as much external as internal, although it is not always easy to separate the two. This is why the concept of the “nation” even today plays such an important role: it was never fully achieved in reality. For me, the special tragedy of East Central Europe was that the societies were never given the chance to move beyond the point of narrow-mindedly blaming each other and their own minorities because of this historic failure. The sequence of tragic historical events did not leave them time or space to work out their conflicts and reach historically valid compromises based on popular consensus. Perhaps the time for this has arrived. This is why, in the “Budapest Appeal,” the East-West Circle calls for a Forum of East Central European Reconciliation. Only by looking in the mirror of our common history, only by coming to terms with the past, will we have a chance to escape from the trap of our clichés and nationalisms. Reconciliation will not occur overnight. It will take time, a lot of energy, patience and tolerance. Any agreement among nations and ethnic groups living for so long in a state of mutual fear, ignorance, mistrust and hatred will not be total. But I don’t see why if the Germans and French were able to reconcile, that the Romanians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Czechs, Serbs, and even the Poles and the Germans cannot come to terms amongst themselves.

Why should anti-Semitism and any form of racism especially anti-gypsy sentiments flourish in societies which so proudly call themselves new democracies? Looking in the mirror of recent history might be uncomfortable and painful, but it is surely unavoidable if we are serious about our wonderfully formulated aims: the development of democratic civil societies in a common European home.

The reconciliation process should occur simultaneously within and among East Central European countries. Civil society cannot be confined by the nation-state and our meeting here is an excellent example of this. The concept of international civil society will have a meaning only if it can provide realistic alternatives to the non-civil, that is militaristic and violent forms of conflict resolution. The concept of “civil society” that I am using has a double meaning: not only civil versus state or “official,” but also civil in terms of civilised as opposed to military and militarised. The building of that kind of society cannot be based on a national plan. By its very nature, the concept overcomes the boundaries of the nation-state. No borderlines guaranteed with arms and violence can define and confine this common project.

We, East Central Europeans, have to make the first common step towards our real integration into a larger democratic framework by being able to reconcile the differences between each other, in other words, within ourselves.

II. EMERGING  
PARADOXES  
AFTER 1989



# THE INJURIES OF EAST CENTRAL EUROPE:

## IS THE AUTHO-THERAPY OF CIVIL SOCIETY POSSIBLE?

*“The greatest danger that may threaten a nation is not that it sink into slavery and that it has to work for a mightier, more populous and violent people. Slave nations can be great, they can achieve a great destiny despite poverty, work and humiliation. The greatest danger that threatens a people is that they become primitive, shredding conscious thinking and conscious thinkers and submerging into the ocean of unconsciousness.”*

Béla Hamvas, “Aquarius,”  
in *Láthatatlan történet* [Invisible Story],  
(Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988), p. 33.

## The Long Crisis of East Central Europe

The history of East Central Europe has been a sad one since World War II and 1989 may provide the break with this tradition and bring hope to this disadvantaged region of the continent. The pre-1989 history can be described as the story of the continuous, ever deepening crisis of the societies of the region which in some cases are now threatened with disintegration. This only appears to be contradicted by sham economic booms (as in Hungary in the 1960s) and ephemeral social “openings” that proved to be illusory (1968 in Czechoslovakia and 1980–81 in Poland). In reality the failure of these attempted reforms organically pit the long crisis of the Stalinist social, political and economic model forced upon these societies. The important dates to keep in mind are: Yugoslavia – 1948, GDR – 1953, Poland and Hungary – 1956, Czechoslovakia – 1968, and Poland – 1980–81.

Following the relatively unexpected and sudden local explosions, prolonged, deep and complex symptoms of crisis manifested themselves from 1981 in Poland, and 1985 in Hungary. The German Democratic Republic, despite being considered a “hidden” member of the West European Common Market, was also unable to avoid the open appearance of social crisis in political guise. In order to preserve the appearance of everlasting order, the East German police state took absurd steps against small human rights and environmental groups operating within the framework of the Lutheran Church. These steps provoked international protest which reinforced domestic dissent. Large scale police actions against these very small groups simultaneously reflected internal uncertainty and the loss of ideological perspective. In the summer of 1988, as *perestroika* reached its climax in the Soviet Union, Honecker welcomed the increasingly isolated Ceausescu with comradely kisses. At the same time, he banned Soviet newspapers and weeklies under the pretext that they falsified history.

The similar, hopeless adherence to the *status quo* of “normalization” was exhibited by Czech authorities on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Prague Spring when they ruthlessly clamped down on political groups participating in the commemoration ceremonies. Czech and Polish pro-reform activists repeatedly cheered the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as a form of protest against regimes that sentenced themselves and their societies to rigidity. Before 1985, not even the blackest East Central European humorist would have envisioned this kind of popularity of a Soviet leader in East Central Europe. On the contrary, the general conviction was that Moscow was directly and exclusively responsible for the political inflexibility of the East

Central European satellite states. In 1988, both in the GDR and in Czechoslovakia (the most well organized and economically developed police states of East Central Europe), it was just as much an offence to demonstrate with “I love Gorbi!” posters as with slogans for democracy. By the late 1980s, a paradoxical situation emerged in which the GDR and Czechoslovakia were not only the last bastions of the conservative, neo-Stalinist system, but they also made up the vanguard of ideological resistance to *glasnost* and *perestroika*. The Soviet Union had up until then been the primary source of their “legitimacy” and power and their unquestioned and unquestionable referential base.

The “unexpected” richness in political and public life of the 1980s, culminating in 1989, was not surprising for those who knew about the deep undercurrents in East Central Europe. This richness was found in civil existence which was never totally eradicated from the collective social consciousness and was preserved in enclaves. These latent forms of civil society gradually became more visible during the turbulent decade of the 1980s.

The invisible movers in the field of political power were the suppressed revolutions, the thwarted attempts at democratization, and the demands for radical reforms aimed at the creation of “socialism with a human face” that survived in latent form and preserved the tensions which effected new reform efforts and the promises of officialdom to continue democratization and liberatization. Subsequently, the reforms launched from above – even if they were soon stopped – gradually mitigated the totalitarianism of the system of monopolistic power. The dictatorship weakened or, as Adam Michnik said, the Communist system remained totalitarian but it lost its teeth. This is what happened in Yugoslavia after 1948, in Hungary and in Czechoslovakia after 1968, and in the Soviet Union after 1985.

There was an unforeseen and uncalculated process going on between the sudden outbreaks and the circumspectly introduced and subsequently withdrawn reforms. The suppressed revolutions were not useless and unnecessary tragedies in view of this peaceful and slow evolution which has yielded historical truths. In Hungary, 1956 led to the reforms of 1968 and to the political reforms of the late 1980s. It definitely improved the bargaining position of the evolving Hungarian political society. The quiet Polish revolution of August 1981 laid the solid foundation for the reforms and democratic evolution of the mid- and late-1980s. It can even be said that the very existence of a strong Polish opposition was one of the instigators of Soviet *perestroika*.

The nature of political power itself showed signs of change under the impact of recurrent crises and the slow process of evolution. The self-confidence of those who were in power until 1989–90 gradually diminished as it became increasingly obvious that the maintenance of fear and the sense of uncertainty was not necessarily the most effective method of controlling and directing a society. Although these means were not entirely abandoned, the slow erosion of the dictatorship could not be stopped after the “melting” of 1955–56 and the open critique of Stalinism by Khrushchev. This erosion continued, but the monopolistic forms of dictatorship and economic and industrial structures also continued to exist, though in increasingly hidden and sophisticated forms. The crisis in East Central Europe, which climaxed in the late 1980s, openly manifested itself in the contradiction between the publicly admitted failure of the historical utopia of communism and the autocratic parties who employed violence, oppression and dictatorship in order to achieve that aim and which still claimed their right to the indivisibility of their power. They usually condemned the “mistakes of the past” and the “crimes of Stalinism”, and they tried to maintain continuity while at the same time they tried to create the impression of discontinuity by deciding what was good or bad, by deciding who was an ally or an enemy, by deciding what degree of openness the society was mature enough for, and by deciding who and what should be considered as subversive or as “elements of destabilization”. It was exactly the self-criticism related to the past which was supposed to conceal the fact that the main cause of destabilization and the deepening crisis was the Stalinist model and its inconsistent reform, which only created the illusion of change.

In Hungary, the advocates of order had curious answers to the questions put to them: “if we only talk about the past we cannot move ahead”; “instead of searching for those who were responsible, we – the entire nation – should unite”; “we are in this crisis together”. This simple linguistic trick, the arbitrary use of the first person plural, allowed the script to slide here and there and seemed to solve a lot of problems by blurring a great deal. They said, “We, the Communists”, if

it was a question of rule; and when the consequences of bad rule had to be endured they said, “We, the Hungarians”.

This trick however, became less and less effective. With the falling living standards, the hearing ability of the society improved and an increasing number of people all over East Central Europe demanded more precise articulation. It was becoming increasingly obvious that there was no real force behind the slogans calling for unity and joint effort capable of forming a consensus. At the moment they understood the actual weakness of the authoritarian regimes, the alternative social and political organizations were ready to negotiate only on the basis of the division of power.

The East Central European ruling elite and the oligarchy of functionaries, the nomenklatura linked to them, simply gambled away the last reserves of their legitimacy. The series of economic, cultural and finally political failures after World War II, resulting from the separation of the small East Central European states from the rest of Europe, left little doubt about the historical model value of this strange social setup and the forms of authority which determined and constituted an organic unity.

## The New Script

Gorbachev's radical reforms and new policy of détente placed the complex and ever deepening crisis of the East Central European region in a new system of interrelationships. A fresh wind blew through East Central Europe despite the fact that the vast majority of the political elites and their apparatuses (helped into power after 1945) only reluctantly and hesitantly joined the new course, or only paid lip service to it, or tried to disregard it altogether as was done by the Czech, East German and Romanian allies. In some East Central European countries, the hope emerged that a significant ideological change would create the opportunity for a new political discourse. In Hungary, for example, the new reform politicians emerging from the ranks of the nomenklatura gave people the impression that the relationship between the society and the state could be more clearly and democratically defined: with the Soviet Union's new policy of detente, the hope emerged that this interrelationship would become less and less confused and blurred by the direct intervention of the Soviet empire into the problems of the local societies.

All this is true. In order to keep our sense of reality, however, we must share the Polish political scientist, Wojtek Lamentowicz's skepticism, when he warns that the novelty of Gorbachev's domestic policy is not manifest in the new ends, but in the new means.<sup>38</sup> In other words, the pro-reformist Soviet leaders decided to introduce institutional changes (*perestroika*) and public debates (*glasnost*) in the interest of correcting the distorted East Central European process of modernization and in the interest of dynamizing the economies.

In June 1988, Gorbachev stated:

“We have no opposition. How can we keep ourselves under control? Only through criticism and a self-critical attitude. First of all, by openness. No society can exist without openness. But unlimited democracy can only turn into anarchy.”<sup>39</sup>

This statement reveals the limitations of Gorbachev's concept of democracy. Here the question is whether the demand for a new legitimation born within the sphere of authority – manifest as a strong rivalry for power between the ‘reformists’ and the advocates of ‘order’ – correspond (and if yes, how?) to the increasing demand of the East Central European societies for democracy and autonomy.<sup>40</sup> An increasing number of intellectuals, social scientists and politicians held the view that if opening more room, to free initiatives and to a relative independence of activities of social groups passes

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<sup>38</sup> Wojtek Lamentowicz, “How Open is Glasnost?” *END Journal*, 3 (December–January 1987–1988).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

without threatening the existence of the system, it might bring about mutual satisfaction of both needs, enabling the necessary reforms.”<sup>41</sup>

The reactions of officialdom, however, were ambiguous. At this point the self-organization of society and the demand for “new social contracts” in addition to the new ideology, provoked fear, confusion and frequently even violence. Before the historical autumn of 1989, the politicians advocating reform policy from Mikhail Gorbachev to Károly Grósz, quite frequently talked about and stressed the primary importance of the preservation of “order” in the face of anarchic developments. Despite these changes it appeared that the anarchy of the post-Stalinist era increasingly threatens the entire region, from the Baltic to Yugoslavia, and from Czechoslovakia to Armenia.

In reality, however, the prime cause of this is the autocratic power elite itself and the socialist bureaucracy immediately subordinate to it. Up until 1989–1990 these groups were never held responsible for the situation. This apparatus arbitrarily characterized the demands of society articulated from below as attempts to subvert the system and order, the two regarded as synonymous. In daily political speech, such antiquated slogans connected with bitter memories like “the elements of destabilization,” “efforts of bourgeois restoration,” “sharpening class struggle,” the hated catch words of the 50s, recurred even in places, like Hungary which was regarded as being in the vanguard of East Central European liberalism.

Confusion mounted as ideology increasingly became empty ritual. In 1988–1989, during the period of the collapse of the *ancien* communist regimes, ideology increasingly lost its disciplinary function and legitimacy, and the previously rigid bureaucracies bothered less and less about what was and was not allowed ideologically. Their strong desire to “make order” manifested itself unpredictably here and there in old slogans, creating an atmosphere of absurdity and fear. This degradation of ideology took the shape of a more gradual, step-by-step process in Hungary and Poland where the threads of continuity of liberalization from the 1960s were the most evident. They were more abrupt and explosive in East Germany and Czechoslovakia where the oppression and suppression of dissent were more pervasive and omnipresent. Nevertheless, neither in reformist Poland and Hungary, nor in normalized Czechoslovakia and militarized GDR could anyone predict with certainty that the party-state would refrain from using violence or that Soviet troops would not interfere at least by making their presence more apparent. As it turned out, both the GDR and Czechoslovakia had their Tiananmen Square scenarios and even Hungary, the “most cheerful barrack,” was threatened by “non-political solutions” (i.e., a military coup) planned by an alliance of high-ranking party leaders. The East Central European atmosphere of absurdity and fear was created by “in reality existing” options. The fact that these options were not realized does not mean that they were not real or did not affect societies, offsetting and further deteriorating the political culture of the East Central European region.

The old system of ideas, gradually torn to shreds, has not yet been replaced. More time is required for the development and crystallization of a new system of ideas and values broadly accepted by society. In the chaotic situation of the pre-1989 period, the slogans of the reform scenario which insist on the market, the luring of capital and which present the pauperization and marginalization of millions of people as the natural corollaries of socialist modernization, alternated with stubborn inconsistency with the apologia of historically realized East Central European socialism. In addition, the catch words of these two different scenarios did not only alternate but were often juxtaposed in the declarations of politicians, sometimes even within a single sentence. But the situation was even more serious. A new script was being made in a curious, East Central European manner, slipping in earlier texts here and there.

The political and social vacuum, which began to be filled by a diversity of independent or semi-independent social movements in the mid-1980s, was created by the accumulation of tensions and

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<sup>40</sup> The issue emerged simultaneously in large parts of the region, and as a result it preoccupies social scientists. This is reflected by the issue of civil society versus the state in sociology and political science of the 80s in Eastern Europe.

<sup>41</sup> Zagorka Golubovic, “The Emerging Civil Society: Enforced Reforms from Below vs. the Imposed Ones from Above as a Way of Reforming ‘Real Socialism’,” (University of Belgrade, Manuscript, 1987).

crises within and among the states of the Eastern bloc and by the disintegration of their ties to the “grand ally”. Although in East Central Europe one could always count on the possibility of a rollback and although it was still uncertain that movements of civil society would become an equal partner in public and political life, they at least came into existence spontaneously and their organizational level went beyond the point where direct political repression could completely succeed against them. At the end of 1988, the lessons of 1956, 1968 and 1980-81 were clear: violence cannot solve the problems in the region; the new script cannot be entirely written from above.

## The Protracted Evolution of Civil Society

One of the most characteristic features common to all East Central European countries and inherited from the Stalinist model forced upon them is the lack of a well-articulated civil society. This has had grave social and political consequences during the present crisis. Derived from a curious missionary spirit, the activists of the Communist parties in East Central Europe considered it to be their moral duty to cut the horizontal fibers of civil society, or to hinder their development. Society, kneaded into an atomized mass, delivered reliable and obedient subjects to the authoritarian system in the spheres of politics and economics. And the State, intertwined with the party dictatorship, was naturally stronger than the atomized society. As the economy was characterized by the lack of competition, political life was characterized by the lack of opposition, and culture by the lack of alternatives. Those exercising power were not hindered in any way in their wasteful exploitation of human capital, ruling over every minute detail of political life and manipulating through the use of symbols and twisted meanings.

Monopoly control was organized by the party, the army and the security forces. This guaranteed that, from the top to the bottom, the processes of decision-making and implementation were made under the threat of violence. All this created a constant state of fear and uncertainty in society which, after a while, started to reproduce and maintain itself systemically. This introduced and made common a sense of total vulnerability and the corresponding psychological escapism which helped to conceal a sense of humiliation. Political indifference, living in continual lies, and the total loss of responsibility with regard to public welfare all became the permanent features of social existence. The liquidation of civil society was nearly accomplished in countries which had considerable democratic traditions (Czechoslovakia and Poland); and elsewhere its evolution was successfully blocked.

The destruction, however, was not complete. The violent implementation of the apparently stable Stalinist model for 43 years provoked an undercurrent of resistance which surfaced from time to time. The sudden and shocking uprisings and revolts proved the continuous existence of protest potential.

In common terms, civil society is a community capable of rationally expressing and protecting its interest, and which is capable of organizing itself distinctly separate from state hierarchy and other external and internal apparatuses of coercion. The state/civil society dichotomy becomes an explanatory force in both political rhetoric and in the social sciences wherever an already broken, but still excessive state power confronts a still weak and uncertain society which wants to defend and express itself; wherever the techniques and institutions of self-defence and self-organization are weak and barely extant. In other words, the relationship between state and society is a dynamic one when there are real chances for new compromises and contracts between those who exercise authority and those for whom authority is said to be exercised.

It is not accidental that the concept of civil society has had an amazing career from the late 1970s onwards in Poland, and from the mid-1980s onwards in Hungary and Yugoslavia. It was and still is “in the air” in East Central Europe in general, whereas it is received with incomprehension,

or with curious suspicion in most circles, even academic ones, in the United States. Its usage in the Russian social sciences is only beginning to spread.<sup>42</sup>

According to Lamentowicz, civil society should be able to satisfy its needs without relying on the state if it possesses an economic and material base, as well as a skilled labour force and independent culture and ethical system. Accordingly, economic self-reliance and material security are the preconditions for the institutional defence of civil rights by churches, trade unions, parties and associations, which openly represent the personal or group interests of their membership.

Lamentowicz raises an important point with the issue of economic independence, yet this is not the essence of the development of civil society. Civil society can be born – or reborn in some cases – in present-day East Central Europe only by the reconquest of politics and political life through new public discourse and the establishment of political pluralism, i.e., multiparty system and parliamentary democracy. This is, however, only one part (although the most important part) of a much more complex process.

Norberto Bobbio argues convincingly that the democratization of society is not possible without the socialization of democracy.<sup>43</sup> According to Bobbio, the process of democratization means a development from political democracy to social democracy. This is nothing more than the increasing distribution of power in the different spheres of civil society. Therefore, the democratization of the state is not equivalent with the democratization of society. The political sphere is only a part of the much more complex, broad and rich notion of society. This is why it can be said that the process of democratization continues even in those countries which can be termed historically democratic. Political democracy, Bobbio warns, does not in itself guarantee anything but the avoidance of despotic rule of society.

In the Pace of the mounting social and political problems of East Central European societies at the beginning of their transition period, we can ask along with Bobbio: is it enough? In Western Europe, where democracy has a long tradition, a new concept of citizenship is emerging. Spontaneous movements and civil initiatives, serving the continuous and horizontal reorganization of society, have become a significant component and moving force of the civil society.

This ability and readiness can be called a protest potential. It does not necessarily have to be articulated, but it is, nonetheless, a force to be reckoned with by the prevailing masters of power monopolies. This new concept of citizenship not only allows for civil initiatives and their existence and institutionalization, it assumes their existence. Without this institutionalization, there is no democratic self-organizing civil society it only exists in a latent, literary or embryonic form.

The multi-party political system and parliamentary democracy are only the framework for civil society which continuously redefines and democratizes itself. This framework is a necessary precondition or common set of rules of the game which must be further developed by living movements, democratic initiatives, in short, by social self-organization.

Civil society cannot develop without civil courage and without the large-scale appearance of individuals who are able to emerge from the mental and psychological state of being a “subject”. This requires having undergone the process of individuation in the sense of West European social development – a person becomes identical with himself or herself and is capable of self-reflection. Whatever develops without these conditions is a caricature of civil society, an empty concept celebrated with hollowness. This hollowness strongly characterized, for example, the Hungarian movements at the beginning of the transition period. There was a great temptation for self-celebration, for the noisy and spectacular celebration of mere existence, for mixing empty and dead forms with living content in the case of political cultures expressed in symbols and metaphors. Permanent and open criticism as well as self-reflection are not characteristic of East Central European political cultures since they are still living in symbols and concentrate rather on externalities.

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<sup>42</sup> Naturally, civil society has innumerable academic definitions and approaches. The book *Democracy and Civil Society* (London and New York: Verso, 1988), by the British sociologist John Keane, is a good summary of the exciting literature from Hobbes through Hegel and Gramsci to Adam Michnik. For the most recent and comprehensive evaluation of the topic see the first chapter of the forthcoming book by Andrew Arato and Jeanne Cohen, entitled “Discourse of Civil Society.”

<sup>43</sup> Norberto Bobbio, *The Future Of Democracy*, P. 106.

Naturally, it is difficult and even risky to generalize. In the Polish case, for example, a civil society preserved and continued the traditions and values of independence. It survives and perseveres by learning how to be self-reliant. In the case of Hungary, the creation of civil values is at stake in a society with a weak and discontinuous democratic tradition. Because of these differences, symbolic politics have different contents as well. But in both cases there is the danger that an elite stratum will articulate values resembling those of civil society and then take them as their own. They might confuse themselves with a potential civil society, and while they fiercely struggle for the realization of a set of values, they are not able to see that the decisive majority of society is indifferent at best, or at worst is identified with the opposite and more aggressive militant ideology. In the initial stages of social organization, this fundamentally intellectual elite behaviour may cause serious damage by alienating and isolating potential allies before they have accomplished their goal. This elite behaviour and thinking combined with the lack of social responsibility and accountability and the low level of political culture fundamentally effected the later, post-1989 period in which political parties began to play the dominant role almost everywhere in de-Sovietized East Central Europe.

## Who's Controlling the Controllers?

Where the evolution of civil society is only at an early stage, in other words, where the social control or the social need for accountability and community responsibility is relatively undeveloped, the parties identifying themselves with democracy can easily impose themselves on the civil communities or further strengthen the atomization of the society. This imbalance of the civil society and the political society is characteristic today (although to different degrees) of the transition societies in the region of East Central Europe.

In Hungary, for example, the parties which entered parliament via free elections, pretend that they alone represent civil society. Almost all of them envision pluralism within their ranks and so they proudly exhibit their sometimes neo-conservative, sometimes liberal, sometimes social democratic colours, at the same time not forgetting to emphasize their Hungarianness. There seems to be no limit to political extremes and the one extreme presupposes the existence of the other. They socialize people to the rudeness and unseriousness of politics by treating them as if they were the public at a circus.

The two largest parties, the Hungarian Democratic Forum and the Free Democrats altogether did not receive 50 percent of the votes. And only one third of those who were eligible to vote voted for them. This is a miserable result especially at a revolutionary time full of the promise for significant changes. There is little sign of a self-critical analysis of this apathy, of the anatomy of silence, or of the initiation of new social dialogues by the "winners". The extremely low turn out for local elections (36 percent) in September 1990, only half a year after the first free elections, underscores the fact that this negative tendency has not changed. Any comparison with the low turn out rates in well-established Western democracies is not only misleading but self-deceiving on the part of the parties. This apathy reflects both the fact that the parties do not represent civil society and that civil society is still weak and unable to articulate itself.

The new parliamentary parties are not thinking seriously about the socialization of democracy, i.e., the further democratization of society. In other words, they are not prepared to distribute power further. This makes their actions and programs not quite trustworthy. Their attention is basically focussed on each other. They measure themselves in relation to each other and they are convinced that it is sufficient if they control each other. It does not occur to them that social democracy cannot exist without the control of the controllers.

Behind this self confidence, which sometimes develops into aggressivity, there is fear, anxiety and uncertainty. This is revealed in their inward-looking character, their inability to dialogue, their supersensitivity to and refusal of any outside criticism. This is also revealed by questioning

independence or party neutrality and the spread of statements like “all so-called independents must be agents of the enemy.” The aggressivity and hysteria which characterized the electoral campaign to a large extent contributed to the surfacing of repressed emotions like prejudice and racism. Unfortunately, these phenomena became characteristic of everyday life.

During their uncertain electoral campaign, the majority of the parties exploited similar and sometimes even more aggressive emotions surfacing in the neighbouring countries against Hungarian minorities. None of these served to make society more “civil”. Quite the opposite, they increased society’s militaristic and intolerant spirit. This led to the deterioration of our image abroad which decreases our chances of joining the European Community and increases our isolation and self-centeredness. None of this helps as we try and think in terms of long-term interdependence which is one of the greatest achievements of European civilization.

Returning to the question: who would control the controllers and how? One thing is clear, it cannot be the exclusive right of hierarchical institutions, superintendents and executive committees established from above. These bodies, set up by ex-oppositional, democratic parties do not serve the development of social democracy. The only safeguard against this is the enhanced ability of society to organize itself in new forms or spontaneous and individual actions and in the establishment of organizations designed to articulate non-party, non-state and non-military interests. These mostly horizontal democratic organizations or social movements, by their very nature cannot be calculated, programmed or planned. Their presence and impact on public opinion is a sign of social democratization. Their suppression and withering away are signs of the limiting of this process. Today, at the beginning of the transition period both possibilities exist. There are no guarantees yet for the further distribution of power in the civilian sphere which is the essence of social democracy.

Without social self-organization, without continuous pressure “from below” this process cannot develop. The parties will only follow their interests by sharing proportional control in the areas of economy, culture, public administration and mass communication. If their vertical, power-oriented organizations are not counter-balanced by more horizontal network-type organizations, critics of their activity quite rightly become the target of mockery.

The picture is not, of course, that simple. The organization of social and political life, the weaving of the social web is always a thousand times more complicated than is reflected by the over-simplified categories of social science. The main point here is, however, that either society will accept a new kind of tutelage or through the processes of continuous interaction, and better understanding of their mutual relation and interdependence with the new political class it will be able to become an active, conscious and creative force in its own future.

The rapid process of party-building which began in Hungary in the fall of 1988, pushed back both horizontally and vertically organized grassroots social movements. They lost their significance in the light of this spectacular process. This process, unexpectedly permitted and to a certain degree encouraged by the state party, which continued more or less unharrassed, was seen and interpreted by the ideologues and aparatchiks of the new parties as the complete success of their own struggle. From this point on, they saw themselves as the expression of the will of the people and gave the impression of representing society as a whole. At the same time, as a new elite, they cut a deal with the old, collapsing power elite. They labelled all criticism against them as “evil”, saying that it was against the public interest and implying that behind this criticism could usually be found the manipulation of the party-state.

The new party leaders strongly believed that it was to Hungary’s advantage that there was no umbrella movement like the Czech Civic Forum. They believed that the parties, in their articulation in the political sphere, represent a higher level of political democratization in opposition to movements which are blurred, confused and easy to manipulate. The negative feelings of these ideologues towards movements are not accidental. The movements, if they are democratic, can more easily avoid rigid hierarchical organization. Their structure is more fluid and without strong party discipline they can preserve their spontaneity and grassroots character. It is more difficult to coopt them and to force inappropriate compromises, in other words to corrupt them. What is most



important is that in the fluid situation that exists today in East Central Europe, there are at least two possibilities:

(1) that stronger movements will become parties and push out or at least seriously challenge their rivals; or

(2) that movements will fill the vacuum of the present loose party structure and significantly modify present party power relations.

By counter-positioning parties and movements, party theoreticians suggest that the rapid party-building process has led to a highly developed and well-functioning political articulation. In reality, however, there is a vacuum where social democrats and greens should be in the Hungarian parliament. The organization of worker's councils which are independent of parties and the growing activity of green movements is also not accidental. The "well-articulated" parties are now trying to reach back to their movement phase, trying to mobilize their disappointed supporters and enlarge their mass base. All this proves that the process of political articulation is unfinished. This is reflected in the identity crisis that most of the parties are experiencing and in the contradictions of their political value system. It is undeniable that in presenting their electoral kaleidoscope, the majority of the parties have shown pink and green mosaics in their programs, but the promise that everything and its opposite are represented by them left most voters cold.

It is incorrect to assume that either political parties or social movements are representing a higher level of democracy. They simply express something different. Their organization is different even if their demands are occasionally similar. One is not transcendent over the other. Their simultaneous existence is not exclusive, but it entails conflict. This conflict, however, can be very fruitful. This is a necessary conflict between civil society and political society, the conflict of different view points which includes the possibility of mutual benefit. It can secure the social control of political parties, preventing them from falling into the trap of self-deceit by which they declare that they represent society while in reality they represent particular interest groups. In addition, the challenge of the parties increases the political consciousness of social movements, forcing them to articulate their political values.

The counter position of parties and movements is especially problematic when the civil value system has not yet crystallized and when the nature of societal democracy remains as yet unclear. This is exactly the situation of most of the societies of East Central Europe today. There is no party-state dictatorship or party tutelage, but there is also no democratic society with its manifold democratically functioning institutions, tolerant reflexes and open attitudes. Non-democratic attitudes can be preserved in a multi-party system as well.

The other side of the coin is the low level of self-organization, the negative attitude towards local, everyday and concrete policy-making, and the survival of a sense of alienation from politics in general. In addition to the fragmented state of the greens and social democrats, there is a lack of strong trade unions and apart from sporadic examples a lack of movement towards self governance especially in the countryside.

These shortcomings are expressions of the unarticulated value system of the related social groups. After 45 years of dictatorship and tutelage, social groups have not, in the short time they have had, learned how to handle or solve their own problems, or how to organize themselves at any level to defend their interest. In the formulation of different social interests, independent fora, organizations and institutions and above all mass communication can play a significant role. It is equally important to all players in the democratic game whether or not independent institutions will be able to contribute truly independent of party interest. If they are not, they will be run by the interests of new power-brokers.

## The Lack of Long-Range Vision in East Central Europe

In his book, *The Civilizing Process*,<sup>44</sup> Norbert Elias traces the evolutionary process of contemporary Western civilization. How is it possible, he asks, that historical change is not planned rationally, yet is not the haphazard result of disorderly formations?<sup>45</sup> In more concrete terms it is the constant pressure of competition which guarantees the increasing differentiation of social functions and which led to contemporary, Western patterns of human coexistence.

Elias' theory of civilization cannot, however, be applied to East Central Europe without further considerations. The historical traditions of the region are summarily embedded in imperial existence, and in its peripheral, yet despotic, dictatorial forms. Disregarding those parts which are intellectually and physically closer to Western Europe, competition, which produces differentiation and complexity based on it, has not and still does not operate in the region. A sense of interdependence, corresponding to the Western model, has not evolved. Isolation and the atomization of the society are just the opposite of what is usually understood as civil society. In addition, the sense of social responsibility as a corollary of interdependence could not develop to a very great degree. As indicated earlier, economic development, historical traditions and cultural background produce extremely great differences within the region.

If the new East Central European movements, seeing themselves as the manifestations or the builders of civil society, prove unable to create chains of interdependencies and to evolve and spread a set of values adequate for mutual dependence, they will also become part of the process of de-civilization already on the way. The ability to have a long-range vision is not yet a strong feature of some of the movements emerging in Hungary in the present phase of transition. The task is, of course, gigantic: the social conditions, the mind set and the values of the present favour contrary processes, particularly in the countryside. Put in the most general terms, the individual will not be encouraged to regulate his/her behaviour with growing differentiation, consistency and reliability if strong competition and the rules safeguarding such competition are missing.

In Hungary, for example, the lack of an exact and rapid flow of information, the merger of rural, semi-feudal structures with the Stalinist system of dictatorship, and the consequent mechanisms of dependency and fear combined with the pressures involved in living a constant lie, which these mechanisms maintain, did not allow for the development of broadening circles of interdependencies. Cunning, considered intelligence, was mingled with ignorance which was camouflaged as knowledge and with provincialism all of which reproduced narrow-mindedness. And as self-reflection and perspective are missing, the whole image is simply pieced together allowing its own reproduction. It is usually put this way: "this is not Europe anymore".

We can produce the external shell and the ornaments of modernization. Behind this, however, all too frequently exist the Balkanized conditions of slowness, lack of culture and petty domineering. While the world pays homage to appearances and begins its false recitals for approaching the West and belonging to Europe, its ability to adapt itself does not develop. The horizon of East Central Europeans is broadening only with difficulty and does not make them really attractive partners.

This culture of "stage props" does not spare the alternative organizations either. The society, educated by the historical experiences of the past forty years, is indifferent to words, and particularly to slogans full of promises. It is suspicious when it hears about democratization and reform.

It can be feared that the new alternative organizations and parties will float above the heads of society. According to Mihály Vajda, they do not as yet have real programs. He says they have only slogans like "political pluralism," "a multi-party system," "free elections," "a self-regulating market economy."<sup>46</sup> A real political program would be the formulation and articulation of solutions leading

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<sup>44</sup> Norbert Elias, *A civilizáció folyamata* [The Civilizing Process], (Budapest: Gondolat, 1987).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 677.

<sup>46</sup> Mihály Vajda, "Politics after Ideology?" Manuscript (October 1989).

to the concrete realization of objectives. The similarities of the programs of the numerous new organizations and parties is not accidental.

Having overcome the phase of infantile disorder and the process of crystallization, these new social organizations hopefully will be able to make real politics. In the words of Vajda, they may be able “to create a dynamic balance among the various forces of society.”<sup>47</sup> But first the social forces “below politics” will have to articulate themselves: their needs and objectives should be voiced according to the norms of modern policy-making in non-violent, social conflicts. If this step is missing, there will be no civil society and the authorities will easily settle their score with the new movements. The outlines of new, apparent compromises and of false consensus are already visible.

The transition process – at least in Hungary and to a significant extent in Poland, not to mention separatist Slovakia and backsliding Romania – is more and more determined by a narrow – minded nationalistic, scapegoat-seeking, often anti-intellectual and anti-semitic atmosphere. This atmosphere can easily be turned into action, as we have unfortunately witnessed and are still witnessing in 1990. The intolerant, anti-democratic and anti-communist rhetoric can easily turn into demagoguery directed against otherness, be it against Jews, Romanians, intellectuals or any other minority inside and outside the related country. And even if this does not lead to bloodshed or fascistic movements, hatred between social and ethnic groups, and the spread of uncertainty and hysteria can seriously damage the process of democratization and civilization.

At the same time, this will push East Central European societies further and further away from their dream, from the successfully integrated Western part of the continent. The new social dialogue and political discourse which brought optimism and hope to the entire semi-continent and which embodied the revolutionary promise of civil society is withering away. Those external and internal social, political and economic forces which could stop this deterioration and turn the process around are not yet ready to make a united effort. All that we have at the moment are words, promises from the West with some comments about the necessary preconditions for capital investment and the profit motive, combined with the often narcissistic self-justification of the new liberal parties. “Didn’t we tell you, these are underdeveloped, non-European, anti-semitic, nationalistic people, whose only concern is not to allow us to lead their country!” And what we have at the bottom are the increasingly marginalized masses which are moving further and further away from any kind of democratic policy-making or politics, and a downwardly mobile middle class which in some cases still has hopes and is involved in public affairs for political and ideological reasons.

The presence of old, pre-war political and ideological clichés combined with religious and nationalistic rhetoric emanating from the rapidly expanding church and the new conservative government can be felt today even more than in 1988 when Joseph Rotschild wrote about the survival and resurgence of political continuities during the interwar period. Rotschild observed significant similarities in styles and degrees of political participation, in the “operational codes and cultures of political elites,” in the process of recruiting these political elites, etc. We can agree that the tension between the principles of continuity and of change are the motor of history and that this can be particularly felt during great revolutions. But he also warns that the threads of continuity, not only survive but resiliently reassert themselves even after the seemingly most disruptive and revolutionary upheavals.

“This is true in the case of East Central Europe, whose political patterns in the 1980s look more continuous with those of the 1930s than seemed conceivable in the [...] 1940s and 1950s [...] like the rulers of the 1930s, those of the 1980s are satisfied with merely ritualistic, symbolic, overt – even pretended – gestures of ratification. In a sense, these modes of mass political participation are really a kind of depoliticization of public life. The real decision-making process remains just as remote from these

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

spurious mass celebrations, just as much a monopoly of a small, self-selected political elite as it was in the 1930s.<sup>48</sup>

With their revolutionary movements and upheavals the societies of East Central Europe said “NO” to their suppressive, authoritarian regimes which called themselves “socialist”. The democratic, civil societies, however, were not born with the free elections. This period, 1989–1990, is a starting point from which different roads lead in different directions. One can only hope that these first, awkward steps will not push the related societies back (or forward) to the past; that the continuity with certain elements of the past, including nationalistic and racial ideas, submission and subordination to authoritarian rules and ruthlessness in fighting adversaries, will become less and less and finally disappear.

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<sup>48</sup> Joseph Rotschild, *Return To Diversity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1989), 223.

# THE UNFINISHED REVOLUTIONS OF 1989:

## THE DECLINE OF THE NATION-STATE

There was a turning point in world history in 1989. The security system and bipolar logic of East–West relations for the last four decades, which so rigidly divided Europe and the world, disintegrated in a matter of months. The old system had been merciless but comfortable because it was predictable. It successfully kept certain issues, like radical political change in Eastern Europe, off the agenda. Even at the beginning of 1989, the message of Western social scientists dealing with Eastern Europe never went much beyond saying “don’t go too far.” Hence, the events of the summer and autumn of 1989 resulted in real psychological and intellectual shock. This shock experienced by people in the West could be one of the factors which lead to the export of these feelings, in terms of economic shock therapy, later to Eastern Europe.

The impact of this shock can be seen in the views of various political experts which range from euphoria to skepticism and depression. The global meaning of 1989 and the end of the Cold War is usually interpreted as the world-wide victory of capitalism over socialism. Francis Fukuyama, the deputy director of the policy planning staff of the U.S. State Department, elaborated this perspective. According to Fukuyama, not only has the Cold War ended, but history itself is over. History is finished because we have reached the final point in the ideological development of mankind and the universalisation of liberalism. While nationalism or national conflict might appear in this post-historical world and possibly pose a danger to liberalism, such conflicts are dependent on the existence of large nation states that are disappearing.

This view is particularly disturbing and inapplicable to the newly freed nations of East Central Europe who feel that history has only now begun for their nations after decades of enforced economic stagnation and political crisis. In East Central Europe and the Soviet Union, we are now experiencing the profound expressions of the desire for the creation of new nation states and the increase of virulent nationalisms, in contrast to the weakening of borders in the West and the diminishing of the imperatives of nationalism.

The moment is historic, but not in the sense that it marks the end of history.

## 1989: Transformation to What?

In one year, the Iron Curtain was opened by the reform communists, the velvet revolutions occurred and the Berlin Wall fell. But what really happened?

Three great revolutionary processes developed in 1989: 1) The political democratisation, induced by Gorbachev’s *perestroika*, strengthened national demands for independence and symbolised the beginning of the collapse of the Soviet Empire. 2) As a result of less dogmatic politics and internal social fermentation, primarily peaceful revolutions took place all over East Central Europe and prompted rapid changes in the system. 3) In East Germany, the anti-Communist slogan, “WIR sind das Volk”, [WE are the People (nation)] was transformed into the positive demand “Wir sind EIN Volk” [We are ONE nation]. One simple change in emphasis and

the substitution of an indefinite for a definite pronoun signified that the dual hegemony of the Yalta system was no longer valid in Central Europe. German reunification began and strengthened the illusion of a quick return to Europe for all of Central Europe. But, by 1991, these revolutionary processes have changed momentum and have dramatically slowed down. Although they have not halted completely, they are evidently unfinished and their future is unclear.

According to de Tocqueville, the most dangerous period for a bad government is when it begins to reform itself. In 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev took over, the Soviet Union entered the most dangerous period of its history which was the beginning of the end. By accepting 1989, Gorbachev gave up the Western periphery of his empire and provided space for opposition movements demanding a change in the system. The 1984 Zaslavskaja Report on the state of affairs in Soviet society indicated the rapid decline of the Soviet Union after years of stagnation. When Gorbachev announced *perestroika* in 1985, he was already talking about radical reforms, new thinking in foreign policy, etc. Yet the failure of his anti-alcohol campaign in 1986 must have made him realise that nothing can be dynamised in a passive society. This was only further supported by the accident at Chernobyl.

*Glasnost* was designed to vitalise the *Homo Sovieticus*, to involve him in public life. As it turned out, these were processes no one could control, especially when the economic crisis was accompanied by the demands of various republics and nationalities for separation and autonomy. The first massive strikes and protests began in Armenia in February 1988 over Nagorno–Karabakh.

They were followed by national movements in the Baltic Republics, Georgia, Azerbaijan and the Ukraine.

The right of self-determination and independence could not be refused in the spirit of *perestroika* and this put Gorbachev in a difficult position.

In response to attacks from party conservatives, he tried to more and more radically implement social democratisation and economic liberalisation. But, in doing this, he was unable to give a definite or positive reply to those who were demanding autonomy and separation. Because of his controversial and tactical steps, he lost popularity in the Soviet Union. By 1989, the time of the forced introduction of his dual power arrangement, his popularity hit rock bottom. In the autumn of 1989, rumours of a military coup could be heard throughout Moscow. The possibility of a declaration of a state of emergency loomed. In reality, however, the only thing which was increasing was the chaos and the fears of authorities towards a society which had become accustomed to increasing levels of freedom and which could no longer be constrained. Through the formation of civic social movements and new political parties, *perestroika* turned against its own creator. The violent actions against the Baltic Republics in the midst of the Gulf War reminded East Europeans of 1956. Hence, Gorbachev lost much of the trust he had won from the West.

The hard line and the return to older structures in the Soviet Union brought a different conclusion. The Soviet Union can preserve the danger of war within the borders of its crumbling empire for a long time. This justifies the ideology of military build-up in the republics instead of their peaceful, democratic development. In turn, this can put an end to economic, market-oriented development and keep foreign investors away. The Soviet Union would remain the empire of violence, chaos and unreliability.

When there is a violent refusal of national demands for independence, nationalisms will become more militant and aggressive. Old grievances are accompanied by new hostilities, all of which make problematic the peaceful separation and possible rearrangement of the Soviet Empire on a democratic, federal basis.

The small states of Central Europe are very sensitive to internal changes in the Soviet empire. The most direct meaning of 1989 was that the self-limiting revolutions of Central Europe cannot be treated as separate from the internal crisis of the Soviet Union. These revolutions surfaced as a result of the confluence of the crises in the societies and political systems of the region. These crises have reoccurred and resurfaced cyclically. They also developed beneath the surface, severely weakening the Soviet Empire and fostering the growth of new, reform-minded politicians. At the same time, the conservative turn in the Soviet Union after 1989 had an impact as well.

## Internal Conflicts, External Expectations

All across East Central Europe and in parts of the Soviet Union old national resentments and quarrels are violently erupting under the new conditions of “free speech” and “democracy.” In former Yugoslavia, for example, in Slovenia and particularly in the Republic of Croatia, violence has escalated into civil wars as a result of the confrontation between the drive towards self-determination by the republics and the Serbian interests in exercising more centralised control over the republics. The crisis has also revealed the inadequacy of Western European institutions. They have been unable to face the crisis, let alone provide concrete proposals for the solution to the conflict which can easily spread, igniting other national resentments in other regions.

In Hungary, one of the most ethnically homogeneous states in the region as a result of the post-WW II Paris Peace Treaties, the process of transition has been infiltrated with euphoric and anti-semitic discourse about what is “real” Hungarian identity. Anti-semitism, like anti-gypsy sentiments, is pervasive throughout the region and on the increase, exacerbated by the increasing economic difficulties which necessitate the creation of scapegoats. In Czechoslovakia as well, national issues are forcing a redefinition of the nature of government and many Slovaks are in favour of more autonomy or even independence.

Western Europe’s relatively successful integration and economic prosperity have served as a counter-balance to some of the most extreme tendencies in the region (in Slovenia and Croatia, simultaneously with demands for sovereignty, comes the expressed desire for “joining Europe” which in many respects necessitates a loss of national integrity). But if hopes of receiving more immediate and significant Western aid, and the prospects for integration with the West dissipate, then this counter-balancing factor will lose its efficacy. The further removed the troublesome areas are from the West – both geo-geographically and politically – the more these hopes decrease and the greater the role played by “substitute” ideologies like aggressive nationalisms. There is no intermediation and no regular communication among the East Central European nations and the Western powers.

Nationalist sentiments, artificially silenced for decades, have not emerged unaltered from the ruins of the party-state. Nationalism plays a new role which makes it more similar to the contemporary, economically calculated German nationalism: it fills the ideological gap left behind by the nomenclatura and Soviet troops. Nationalism, racism, anti-semitism and anti-gypsy sentiments successfully serve as scapegoat-identifying strategies, as ideological substitutions in the hands of weak, half-legitimate and uncertain governments and power-hungry, militant political and social forces.

While the short revolutions of 1989 were celebrations of democracy and self-determination, first and foremost they were the self-celebration of the new power elite. Yet, the societies of the region are still captured by fear – fear of yesterday, fear of today, and fear of tomorrow. The people in these countries suspect that their impoverished democracies will die young. In a very short period of time, they have come to the realisation that the representatives of the new political alternative do not have a clear way out of the trap of East European underdevelopment and increasing social chaos.

In addition, it has become clear that the West prefers to send minor loans accompanied by encouraging words rather than general assistance. The EEC is not following the same policy towards the transitions of East Central Europe that it did *vis-a-vis* the transitions in Spain, Portugal, and Greece. After a short phase of uncertainty, Jacques Delors and his company decided that a more general assistance program would hinder EC integration. Yet the conservative message is even harsher: “Let’s see what all of you can do on your own first!”

New conflicts between the East and West may also arise as the result of new waves of refugees which are threatening the already fragile social fabric of the East Central European region because borders at the moment (and this is already changing) are relatively open. These economic refugees,

and not political refugees, are moving or rather trying to move towards the West and certainly, West European integration can be negatively influenced by the unstable and unpredictable situation in East Central and South Eastern Europe. A good example of this is the flood of refugees which unexpectedly arrived not from Romania or the Soviet Union, but from Albania. Because of the disastrous and ever worsening economic situation and the uncertainty of existence, there is little hope of stopping or reducing the new migration from the East in the near future. If the West responds to this with more restrictive immigration policies, a new barricade between the poor East and the rich West will be raised to replace the Iron Curtain. All of this could bring the process of pan-European integration to an end. The situation of transit countries like Hungary will worsen, and, in the long run, West European integration will be threatened.

The small states of Eastern Europe, therefore, have to embark on their transitions to democracy in the midst of their own regional crises, a chaotic and collapsing and therefore unpredictable Soviet Union and a cautious, hesitant Western Europe. This is a world of post-communist anarchy and chaos where neither old nor new rules are at work. Between the natural response of “we will do it our way” and the Western message of “do it on your own,” there are a plethora of political strategies. Although we can still hear slogans for compensation, clarification, punishment and the “continuation of the revolutions” throughout the region, the bottom and middle stratum of the nomenclatura have held on to their positions. This was facilitated by a timely transformation in their political ideology and by the fact that their replacement was made problematic by a general lack of expertise (or bureaucratic ability termed “expertise”). Their political transformation could not have been very difficult since they were the ones who best knew the absurdity of the old system. So their changing of political colours may even be genuine. But most of the time their hold on their positions is guaranteed by the continuation of rigid, hierarchical relations. This is true despite their continual pro-mises for radical reform, etc. Therefore, the initiatives and rational suggestions coming from below are usually rejected by them with the most encouraging words. This old nomenclatura which survived 1989–1990 and was never open to public scrutiny now makes the best use of this post-communist anarchy by playing the role of the new rational bureaucracy and securely holding on to their old positions. These positions were strengthened by the external and internal chaos and uncertainty of the new political parties as well as by the conservative turn in Soviet policy. This social layer is the natural ally of right-wing conservative groups which are themselves working to keep and extend their power; and because the popularity of these groups is decreasing at the moment, they need the support of those elements of the nomenclature.

This alliance will probably only be temporary and hopefully will not destroy the basic accomplishments of 1989. But, for the time being, the alliance strengthens the authoritarian-bureaucratic characteristics and structures of the East European transitions. In the short run, its distortive impact could cause further political de-mobilisation. Although in a more muted form than in the USSR, all of this will strengthen the political instability and unreliability in the region which could, in turn, discourage Western investment and capital. It will also impede involvement in the process of pan-European development. This alliance will support the creation of hostile social images, cause aggression and provide a basis for irrational ideologies. The helplessness caused by the continuity and/or deterioration of institutions may give rise to hysteria, witchhunts and racist tendencies. Instead of the promised and expected spirit of democratic liberalism, the prevailing atmosphere is neo-Darwinian and the “survival of the fittest” mentality is turning one group against another. These kinds of symbolic politics, discriminatory ideologies, nationalism and racism all pose a serious threat to democratisation; and the entrenchment of the old-new nomenclatura, who directly benefit from these tendencies and whose survival is dependent on serving these interests, contributes as well to the blocking of radical economic change and social democratisation. Although 45 years of Soviet occupation could not constitute the *Homo Sovieticus* in East Central Europe, the *Homo Comeconicus* or the man of the small, slowly sinking Comecon islands will stay with us for a while longer.

The crisis zone of Eastern Europe includes the eastern part of Germany where, after reunification, the problems inherent in their hopes of a quick catch-up with the West have already



made people forget the “Wir sind ein Volk” euphoria. East Germany is fluctuating between aggression and depression; the words “Ossi’s” and “Wessi’s” are becoming more frequent in colloquial speech.

As frustration increased, the popularity of the reunification chancellor decreased. In March of 1991, tens of thousands of unemployed miners demonstrated against him in Leipzig, shouting: “Kohl, this was not what you promised!”

Despite increasing taxes, decreasing living standards and the resurfacing of the not easily resolvable East–West conflict, Germany remains the most dynamic and strongest European power. Its strong national resolve can threaten the advancement of Western European integration. The Germans are facing a dilemma: on the one hand, they could return to the traditional concept of the nation-state which would imply a shift in emphasis towards Eastern Europe and away from the West; or, on the other hand, they could continue to participate fully in West European integration which would mean abiding by a common West European policy towards Eastern Europe and, by extension, partially giving up their potentially leading role in the region.

Yet promoting a quick take-off of only the East German economy at the expense of other ex-socialist countries would be a step that Germany could not easily justify politically and unresolvable tensions would result. It is a fact that within the new Germany of superpower status, unresolved East–West tensions have strengthened the discriminatory tendencies against foreigners and expanded the social base of extremist nationalism throughout greater Germany.

And to the East of its borders, the countries of an economically unstable region, without general western assistance, will look to it whether it is the center of a new Atlantic-European system which includes Eastern Europe or a strong, self-determined nation state. This latter possibility can lead to the peripheralisation of Eastern Europe, which is clearly not consistent with images of catching-up with the West. Unfortunately, East Central Europe has a long tradition of falling from the arms of one big brother into those of another.

Parallel to the elimination of the Soviet military presence in East Central Europe, the obstacles to German hegemony in the region have disappeared. If Germany behaves in a restrained fashion, it will be because it has decided to do so. This is especially true now that NATO and the EU are providing Germany with enough space to manoeuvre. Peter Glotz, the German Social Democratic theoretician, is not the only one, however, to state that Germany must be very careful not to increase the Rapallo-complex in the West or to give the Russians reason to fear German nationalism.

## Promises and Illusions: Where Lies the Road to Europe?

While the great revolutionary promises of 1989 were unfulfilled and some of the radical changes have been halted or reversed, West European integration has developed more or less smoothly over the past 5 years. The EU has reached the point of an economic-financial union with an internal market of 320 million people. In addition, the groundwork for a common foreign and domestic policy has been laid down. All of this, however, does not necessarily mean that a common, supranational state structure is being established. This is true despite the fact that more and more European politicians have begun to use terms like the “United Europe” or the “United States of Europe.” Although supranational, regional and sub-regional structures have been successfully constructed in Western Europe, it would be meaningless to talk about the death of the nation state in the region. The dynamism of West European integration is based precisely on the tension between the nation states and supranational institutions. On the other hand West Europeans have realised that the nation-state is no longer able to completely fulfill its classic functions.

Without precisely coordinated and regularised cooperation, they will not be able to protect their environment or ensure their security. They have also concluded that the nation state alone is not

competitive. Likewise, they have realised that they can handle problems, like the influx of refugees from the East, much more easily together. These realisations regarding interdependency have led to the voluntary limitation of the absolute sovereignty of the nation-state; or, in the words of Alexander Langer an MEP from South Tyrol, the necessity of self-limitation in the exercise of the right of self-determination. But the nation states are still strong enough to prevent the creation of a supranational, unified West European politics. The relatively weak European Parliament, for example, faces strong national governments.

East Central Europe fought its revolutions against the Soviet empire and the Yalta system on the basis of national identity and the realisation of the total sovereignty of the nation-state. Understandably, after 1989, the vacuum in security and politics began to be filled by 19<sup>th</sup> century conceptions of sovereignty. Such conceptions had been banned for some time and reflected ideas which were never fully actualised for long periods in the region. The fundamental question is still unanswered: After the final withdrawal of the Soviet Army, who will guarantee the security of the region and how? The socially atomised societies of the area, with weak or non-existent internal cohesion and their unfinished but probably revitalisable revolutions, can only guarantee uncertainty and unpredictability. It is still unclear whether West European supranational forms can provide an alternative to the exclusive nation-state or whether the East European processes are in fact slowing down the development of integration. In either case we are making history, even in Fukuyama's terms.

The rebirth of East European nationalism on the ruins of state socialism is impeding the successful implementation of pan-European integration.

According to certain Western political scientists, East European nationalisms can legitimise and aid the nationalist-extremist tendencies in the West. In this way, East Central Europe is seen as a potential source of danger rather than a partner in a large market for investment or a region to be integrated.

After 1989, military conflicts cannot be expected between NATO and the countries of the already dissolved Warsaw Pact. Instead, the possibility for conflict exists between nationalist-bureaucratic states and nations over their respective independence and sovereignty, and between minorities and the nationalist-bureaucratic state's homogenising projects. The Balkans and the Baltic Republics were the first examples of such conflicts which could escalate into regional fighting and even "civil" wars which is true today in the former case. But the novelty of these conflicts is relative – they are new only in terms of the previous bipolar logic. The roots of these suppressed, badly managed and undemocratically "solved" conflicts drive us back into the past.

## The Nation State in Eastern Europe: Accumulated Wounds, Recurring Failures

Nationalist emotions and ethnic conflicts are difficult to understand in East Central Europe without a knowledge of their historical complexities.

In East Central Europe, nationality is defined by cultural heritage and a shared common language. Conflict, therefore, is not usually between one nation state and its ethnic minority. It is embedded rather in the interwoven character of different nation states and their ethnic minorities. From a psychological perspective, rational and irrational fears strengthen each other throughout the region. The undiscussed past, unsolved historical grievances and deeply-rooted suspicions all serve to maintain well-elaborated enemy images. The increased visibility and importance of national symbols today is evidence of this.

Social scientific explanations usually go back to 1918 and the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy. But the structure of the Empire as the birthplace of different nation-states and as a hotbed of national hatred is itself a widely debated issue. Some argue that the disturbances in the region were not caused by the Habsburg Monarchy, since it was also a product of disturbances, but

that they were caused by the collapse of the Polish, the Czech and the Hungary states during the period between the 16th and 18th centuries.<sup>49</sup>

According to R.W. Seton-Watson, the dissolution of the Monarchy was due to “formidable natural forces.” Nothing can survive in the long run, he adds, which contradicts the principles of nation building.

One of the most ardent opponents of nationalism, the radical Hungarian sociologist Oszkár Jászi, considered the collapse of the Monarchy as a tragedy. His concern was not with the end of an empire, but with the failure of the Danubian confederation plans which remained utopian. The emergence of the new nation-state, therefore, was not as organic or natural as Seton-Watson saw it.

Stephen Borsody, the Hungarian diplomat and historian, is correct to emphasise that those who idolised the program of creating new nation-states were mainly the oppressed nationalities who owed their triumph over the Habsburg Monarchy to the victory of Western powers over Germany. Professor Borsody’s warning in 1960 about the unquestioned glorification of the successor nation-states is justified today in the cases of the Czech and Slovak Republics and in evaporating Yugoslavia. The main thrust of his argument is that similar to the Habsburgs, the new nation-states also failed to create a new stable order in “Zwischen Europa,” i.e., between Germany and the Soviet Union.

After WW I, the people of Europe and mainly those of East Central Europe, were theoretically given the chance to find a way towards civilised, democratic coexistence and to demolish their destructive nationalisms. But from the various post-monarchy alternatives, the ideology of the nation-state and its political interests were the first to surface. The result? In place of the collapsed monarchy, economically weak rather than strong nation-states emerged. These small, minor countries lost the possibility for a natural division of labour due to the imposition of new borders. The conflicts which ensued were easily predictable. More than 3 million Hungarians became members of the newly established neighbouring nation-states; 3.5 million Germans became part of Czechoslovakia, a nation-state whose founders were Czechs simply because they composed 50–60% of the population. That was the ideological basis for the conception of the Czech-Slovak nation. Ruthenes, Rumanians or Poles are not mentioned at all in this conception.

The construction of the Polish state, after a 150 year interval, was also highly problematic from the beginning - Ukrainians in the East, Germans in the West, Lithuanians in the Northeast. For centuries, the Yugoslav state forced people of Byzantine and Islamic cultures to coexist with culturally Western groups. As we can see from the current Yugoslavian crisis, the Yugoslav state fits into the nation-state category least well of all of the states established from the Paris Peace Agreement.

Although any real possibility for creating pan-European peace quickly disappeared, things were initially very encouraging. On October 26, 1918 a communiqué entitled “Declaration on the Common Purposes of Independent Central European Nations” was announced in the very same room that the American Constitution had been presented. Thomas G. Masaryk, who later became the president of the Czech-Slovak Republic, sat in the seat of George Washington.

Woodrow Wilson’s aides and other East and West European politicians who were fixed on the idea of the nation-state, however, and were able to talk Wilson out of his notion of the autonomous development of the post-monarchy nations. Hence, the new European peace system induced another world war in less than twenty years. And after this second war, the superpowers, determining the new map of Central Europe, did not have to change their conception of the nation-state at Yalta or Potsdam. It was not necessary since the extension of Soviet influence over the region meant that the area’s nascent nationalisms would be kept in check. A well-known method was used for this purpose in the region – the method of mass deportation which also appeared in Babylon, Assyria, the Tartar and Turkish empires. It was, of course, perfected in Russia after Tsar Peter I and later termed “national purification” by Stalin. Soon it was introduced in

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<sup>49</sup> This argument has been developed in depth by István Bibó in his famous essay, *The Poverty of the Small States of Eastern Europe* [A kelet-európai kisállamok nyomorúsága].

Hungary and Slovakia. In post-WW II Europe, more than 20 million Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Hungarians and German personally experienced its effectiveness.

The Yalta system was never accepted by the societies of East Central Europe. Their series of suppressed and tragic but periodically recurring uprisings led to the events of 1989. The paradox of history is that the revolutions which freed the region from Soviet domination were fought under the flag of national identity. For the primary victims of the Yalta system, the small East Central European states, 1989 marked the end of WW II. East Europeans consider their 1989 victory as the triumph of the 19th century idea of absolute national sovereignty. It is in this spirit that they want to return to Europe. But the Europe that East Central Europeans so desire is already passed. Even if there are remnants of ethnic conflicts, Western Europe has moved beyond the 19th century notion of absolute sovereignty. The idea was never completely destroyed, but Western Europe slowly outgrew it. It is still unclear whether the societies of the region of East Central Europe have enough strength left to face this paradox and to construct new European structures.

None of the post-war settlements or redistributions created ethnically homogeneous nation states in East Central Europe due to the fully mixed character of the region. According to federalists like Jászi and Borsody, the best solution would have been the confederation of sovereign nations in the region, within which the defence of minorities would have been secured by the confederate structure itself. However well-intentioned, logical and politically desirable this may have been, this view did not seriously consider one crucial factor: the lack of consciousness and willingness to forge a common citizenship. Although confederate solutions to minority and ethnic problems in the region are highly unlikely today, the very core of the idea, close cooperation instead of permanent conflict, is more pressing today than ever before.

The dominant insistence in the region on the absolute sovereignty of the nation-state does not lead to European integration. Nationalist sentiments, which are spontaneously filling up the ideological space, are also being appropriated and strengthened by those political forces which cannot find any other way out of the general crisis. On the basis of suppressed, unclarified and never analysed “national injuries,” conflicts are reborn and tensions are raised within these ethnically mixed “nation-states.”

Discrimination or assimilation become normal and aid in the creation of enemy images. The fixation on national borders, the need for an increased national population, the vision of a “clean, homogenous” society and the over-emphasis on natural, cultural values are all indicators of the lack of a social or individual identity. The defensive nature of these processes is indicative of the general inclination towards voluntary separation and away from interdependency. The continual references and escapes into the past reveal an inferiority-complex and an unwillingness to take responsibility. The way this is achieved is by constantly asserting that we were once somebody and, because of this, we must still be somebody. One can treat these identity-based nationalisms as the infantile disorders of the transition, but the question remains: can we be “cured”, or will we remain “sick” forever?

## The Nation-state and National Sovereignty After 1989

When theorising about the meaning of 1989, a number of Western authors conclude that the East European revolutions did not encompass any new intellectual discoveries. The expert of the French Revolution, Francois Furet, and the East Euro-pean traveller, Timothy Garton Ash, both take this approach. Reacting to this, Ralf Dahrendorf, in his essay, “Reflections on the Revolutions in Europe,” asks whether we really need new ideas in order to term a revolution “real.” If the case is simply one of the destruction of an unbearable political system, I think the answer to Dahrendorf is no. The ideas of democracy, civil society and the free market cannot be called “new.”

Yet their renewed content was attractive enough for East European societies to rid themselves of the forced Soviet system. This act was one of the necessary but insufficient preconditions for a return to Europe. If the case is such, however, that there is an active construction of something new and/or an active participation in the construction itself, then the answer to Dahrendorf is yes. In general, it is true that East Europeans know very well what they do not want without knowing precisely what it is that they do want or how to obtain it. Instead, their attachment or return to Europe is a nostalgic vision based on pre-war memories, historical explanations, half-truths and partial information; it is a loud political program which is not sufficiently based on actual conditions. For political reasons, East European politicians too often cannot or do not want to hear the polite but inflexible Western message: "Not for the time being and not at all in this way!" This breakdown in communication costs East Central Europe a great deal. The leaders of extremist, nationalist, populist and racist parties and movements and their supporters can easily ruin the long-term possibilities for the region through their short-term struggles for power. Their fixation on the 19<sup>th</sup> century notion of the nation-state and absolute sovereignty will not only ensure further inter-regional political conflicts, but will also mean a step backwards *vis-à-vis* the main trends of West European social and political development. In this way it can undermine the recently begun democratising processes of East Central European societies.

The complexity of the issue is rooted in the fact that while visions of the small, sovereign states helped East Central Europe to break away from their peripheral dependence on the Soviet Union, once released these conceptions could only impede their participation in those processes necessitated by West European integration. The reappearance of 1920s and 1930s styles of virulent nationalisms, the over-emphasis on national injuries, pride and identity as well as the refusal of West European-type interdependency and mutually limiting sovereignties for common purposes have, since 1989, all increased the distance of East Central Europe from the processes of West European integration. This is how the political elite turned the possibility of 1989 for European integration into a "wild eastern hustle," jockeying for position in order to confirm old political positions and obtain new ones. This can be traced to their general lack of expertise, their provincial political outlook as well as their fear that there was no ideology as attractive and understandable as nationalism. At the same time, this new power elite is experiencing a great shock now that the West is not intervening in local conflicts and does not give particularly high priority to its historical injuries. Because of this, East Central Europe has lost the bargaining power it had as a result of its special situation in 1989. Western Europe is facing the task of establishing European identity and integration and it cannot do too much with a region that uses the politics of symbols and artificially inflates national-ethnic identities in order to facilitate discrimination while simultaneously asking to participate in integration. Of course, this disintegrative process can be halted. But the later we begin to work on it, the more difficult it will be.

An irrational, symbolic politics creates images of the enemy on a passionately emotional basis. The objective of such a politics is always self-justification and never consensus-building. These enemy-images are usually mutual – this unrecognised mutuality is the main element of nationalism. Its spiritual reserves are the clichés of the interwar period; it shadows the region with visions of a Greater Bulgaria, a Greater Romania, a Greater Serbia and a Greater Hungary. These images do not have to become official government policy in order to instill fear and hysteria in the neighbouring countries or in the ethnic minorities living in a given region. Just one bad analogy made by a second-rate politician or an officially unrefuted slanderous comment is enough to prompt such hysteria. Instead of a common consciousness, the circular East Central European unconsciousness is being reorganised as a result of this fear. It is circular because it harms and exposes new surfaces to attack in every direction; it is circular because it concentrates only on itself; it is circular in the most vicious meaning of the term as it reproduces itself without the slightest chance of going beyond itself; and, most importantly, it is circular because it entraps thinking in a closed system rather than extending it into an open society. Such irrational-symbolic political discourse is always a monologue. Its fatal enemy is the logical and meaningful dialogue for this could easily destroy its prejudices.

The insistence on 19<sup>th</sup> century conceptions of the nation state and the repetition of nationalist waves have aided in the reversal of the self-limiting revolutions of 1989 and in the establishment of characteristically authoritarian-type democracies. The hysteria of a crowd demanding Serbia's separation, the celebration of Tiso and the attacks on Havel's car all indicate that the "velvet revolutions" were only strong enough to break the old system. They were not strong enough to create the necessary consensus in the new system. The same phenomenon happened *mutatis mutandis* in the new Hungary, Poland and the republics of disintegrating Yugoslavia. We need new ideas in order to ensure that the radical changes, the democratisation processes and the creation of civil society which began in 1989 are not halted or aborted. Theoreticians and historians will probably prove that there will be nothing particularly new in these fresh ideas, but the same thing can be said of the French Revolution. Their newness will come, as always, from their articulation in a given historical context and from their integration into the real, disordered, chaotic and controversial social and economic situation.

## As Things Stand, and Where They Could Go

As a result of 1989, only authoritarian democracies have been formed in East Central Europe for the time being; the tendencies towards centralisation are still alive; and, overall, the old nomenclatura kept their positions while remaining relatively unaffected by the few personnel changes that have occurred in key positions. Nationalism has become the new state religion.

Where it has not, as in Czechoslovakia, extremist and separatist movements are filling the void. At present, exclusive national discourse is drowning out those voices representing an open society; they are drowning out exactly those voices that had such an important impact on the preparations for 1989 and in initiating the regional and national discussions. The promise of an open society which 1989 brought to East Central Europe has remained only a promise.

There were many components to this promise: the involvement of the societies of the region in the institution of European citizenship; the emergence of European or rather international (or to use Dahrendorf's term "world") institutions of civil society; the process of national borders becoming superfluous; the integration of a Europe of multiple regions; and, most importantly as a guarantor, the creation and practical implementation of a new, democratically integrated European security system. All of these were illusory. In the decade preceding 1989, the independent, and in this way opposition, movements of East Central Europe seriously participated intellectually and politically in the creation and analysis of these ideas.

The semi-legal webs of East-West and East-East connections not only supported this discussion but were at the root of this international civil society which extended across national borders. The forum initiated by Charter '77 in 1987 later became the Helsinki Citizens Assembly in 1990 which directly participated in the European program for an open society through its debates with the "civil society in power." The members of this forum have realised that it is time for Europe to return to the supranational order, to multi-state, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural structures. For this, new concepts of state and citizenship are required.

If East Central Europe wants its own place in Europe, those heralding the idea of an ethnically pure, homogeneous society must realise that small states will not be able to respond to the challenges of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In other words, the law of self-determination and the idea of sovereignty must be re-thought. While the Slovaks, Slovenians, and Croats want new states, new borders and new currencies, West Europeans are already paying in ECU and have introduced a European passport, and soon citizenship as well.

If the spirit of supranational, across frontiers cooperation does not take hold in East Central Europe, the new democracies of the region will not be able to "find a home" in a Europe where different national and supranational centers are controlling and limiting each other in highly

complicated ways. Pan-European integration is only possible when the citizens of Europe become accustomed to the mixture and peaceful coexistence of different nationalities and ethnic groups. In this learning process, East Central Europeans have a great deal of catching-up to do. For instance, they must understand that the creation of nation states is not necessary in order to protect ethnic and national identity and culture. In other words, not every ethnic group needs its own state organisation. The superimposition of a collective identity undermines the guarantee of individual human rights and replaces the old notion of state socialist collectivism with an old–new collectivism based on the homogeneous nation-state. It is also time we begin to consider the right of self-determination in terms of a social and legal norms rather than a political principle.

Peter Glotz suggests that our state organisations should become two-dimensional. In order to prevent Europe from becoming a mechanistic, co-existence of nation-states, it should be transformed into a federation of territories and personal alliances.

One of the hidden components of the complexity of pan-European integration is that the relational categories of big, middle and small powers are still undefined. There is not a valid and established routine which would help lead East Central Europe towards integration.

The consciousness of a European identity cannot be formed without the destruction of Eurosclerosis or without the clarification of the most disturbing points in the collective European consciousness, i.e., Yalta, Potsdam, 1953, 1956, 1968, 1980–1981. Without a European identity, the European citizen will only be able to apply for an inferior status in a new empire.

This region can be blamed for many things, but its inter-mediary position is not only its own fault. After the collapse of the Yalta system, East Central Europe was placed in this uncertain position. It will remain “Zwischen Europa” if it continues to be characterised by political uncertainty, the violation of human rights and threats of aggressive actions like pogroms and civil wars.

A security system which could manage the conflicts of the region needs to be developed. Furio Cerutti convincingly argues for a new, more integrated conception of security which encompasses economic, energy and ecological considerations. In other words, it should be broader and more democratic than the current notion of security.

The concrete steps towards the creation of a more complex and democratic security system can be seen in the development of regional organisations. The integration process to Europe can happen through regional networking among different groups of states whereby groups can be linked to one another by one particular state. East Central Europe is naturally connected to the concept of the Europe of regions: the Pentagone, the Threes (Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary), the Baltic cooperation, etc. Each group has a member who is simultaneously a member of a neighbouring organisation which facilitates the principle of horizontal organisation.

The decline of the nation-state began with the acceleration of integration in Western Europe which has been successful. This does not connote the complete destruction of nation-states and their connected identities. Instead, it implies their transformation and, in a certain sense, a decrease in their importance. The nation-state is a product of European history. The process began here and, in response to global challenges, the process was restructured here. Interdependence across borders exists and is gaining strength. The web of interdependency, despite the dramatic and mounting conflicts, is becoming more dense and unavoidable in the Eastern and Central parts of the continent as well. In this region, however, representatives of old and new perspectives are facing the prospect of longer and more serious conflicts. It will be of major importance whether this part of Europe, which is in a much more difficult situation today, can deal with its problems as modern social conflicts, i.e., through peaceful negotiation and compromise. It is also crucial whether the region will be able to exchange short-term political success based on discriminatory, nationalist, racist, “enemy seeking” movements for precise, long-term solutions.

An East European Reconciliation Forum could play a major role in destroying these enemy-creating images by calling all sides together to discuss their grievances in serious, public discussions in order to establish a consensus. This can only be accomplished by the East Central Europeans themselves. The longer this is postponed, the more distant the nations and minorities of the region will move from a consensus and, clearly, this would decrease the chances for a successful

continuation or revitalisation of the democratising processes in the societies of the area. If East Central Europe remains characterised by turbulence, unpredictability and flourishing irrational and infantile passions, the chances for creating a common, regional economic and financial infrastructure and the prospects for obtaining the necessary financial support for them will be close to non-existent. All of this can easily lead to the delegitimation of the major slogan of 1989: non-violence. The first signs of this tendency have already surfaced over the last few months in the spontaneous, mass rebellions and in the attempts of certain political forces to exploit them in order to strengthen their political positions. In doing this, they support the failure of the peaceful, self-limiting revolution and destroy the potential promise of 1989.



III. THE LESSONS  
OF TRANSITION

# THERE ARE SEVERAL CAPITALISMS:

## THE DEMOCRATIC, OPEN SOCIETY IS NOT A SYSTEM

Those who think about society as a closed system tend to believe that they know the answer to any kind of question that comes up. This is the kind of standpoint that is criticised by the liberal Dahrendorf, the most consistent representative of the theory of open society after Karl Popper, who in this way rejects Marx's class theory as well as the similarly "absolute" theory of the dogmatically anti-socialist Hayek. The way to freedom, he says, is not the way leading from one *system* to another, but the one that leads to the open spaces of an infinite number of possible futures. History is born exactly out of the competition of these possible futures that appear as alternatives.

Hayek, and more importantly for us his followers in Eastern Europe who have switched from the dogmas of a planned economy to the dogmas of a free market, believe that the so-called natural system of "market order" demands only that the rules of the game should be obeyed. Economic experts are the people who are most qualified to take the role of the supervisor.

We have witnessed many expressions of this totalitarian liberalism in the periods that immediately preceded and followed the "change of the system": "Let the mechanisms of free market take control, and everything will be solved." Later on they added; "sooner or later", and that "naturally there is a price to be paid".

Free market, which is nothing else than ideological or theoretical construction, does not solve anything, primarily because it does not exist. What exists, instead, are transnational or multinational companies, lobbies and pressure groups with political and economic interests, and more or less controlled local regional and global markets. Facing them -according to the level of organisation of the given society, its degree of "civilisation", and the strength of civil institutions – we find interest groups, organisations whose aim is to protect interests, a more or less free media, and the general public that it influences. These economic, political, and cultural conflicts are responsible for re-drawing the actual appearance of modern societies over and over again. Therefore, democracy is not a given, stationary institution that slightly changes in shape every four years, and it is by no means identical with a multi-party system or the existence of a freely elected house of representatives. It is much more a self-correction process that requires *constant* control, public openness, accountability, and responsibility. Through slow and sturdy battles and a great number of compromises it might reach the broader layers of society, but through the repression of control and public monitoring, the withering away of accountability and responsibility it might also recede and die. With weak, almost non-existent interest protection groups that are at a low level of democratisation, and with a lack of solidarity and readiness to cooperate, society will react in a historical and disturbed way to the challenge of a "free market". Western European social democracy, a descendant of several centuries of democratisation-civilisation, has become successful exactly because it has been able to balance and correct the most outstanding contradictions caused by market circumstances without limiting competition itself. Its decay, its continuous crisis ever

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\* The most frequently used expression in Hungary for the transition from communism to democracy.

since the middle of the 1970s is due to the fact that it has almost completely carried out its duties. Its institutions have become overweight, and a certain amount of time needs to pass for it to revive and adapt to the new environment.

The situation in Eastern Europe, however, is different. It is well-known that democratic traditions are weak, that the web of civil society is slack and full of holes, and the institutions representing solidarity, cooperation and social control are feeble. The main barriers of the development of an open, democratic and free society are still in people's minds: the tendency of continuity has proved to be stronger and more persistent than what had been expected.

The shortage of free individuals for half a century has resulted in the almost perfect lack and the degeneration of personal responsibility. One of the "attractive" characteristics, or the skilful policies, of the Kádár era was that it took this lack of responsibility into account: it turned it into a collective board game, successfully achieving an infantile form of society. People have grown used to a state of affairs where they are *sure to receive something*, even if little, and in exchange they have accepted that they cannot have a decisive say in the running of their affairs and the shaping of the circumstances of their lives. "It's no use making a fuss, you can't do anything anyway" – this is what we heard each and every day between 1968 and 1988. It seems that it is very hard to break away from this kind of attitude and behaviour, as it is very comfortable, unbinding, and it guarantees the sweet freedom of irresponsibility. Freedom and democracy are frightening, because they require constant responsibility on the part of the individual, as well as adaptation to a different kind of situation all the time, or in other words an unusual kind of flexibility; besides, on the one hand it demands solidarity and credibility in collective negotiations – one should always make sure that the given word is worth the credit, and on the other hand the kind of individual and collective mentality that expects given promises to be fulfilled. Until today it is not this open, democratic, civil spirit that has actuated transformation processes in East Central Europe.

Anti-democratic, hierarchic, non-transparent institutions call themselves autonomous, as if they were declaring that as far as they are concerned, the process of transition to democracy has ended. Those who grumble below, but always expect solutions to come from above stand uncounselled and bewildered in front of the crumbling institutions that they had always believed to be permanent, as if the greatest problem would be that there is nothing *secure* that one could adapt to. A political culture and mentality from before the Second World War conquers positions and institutions, and squeezes out independent, autonomous initiatives wherever possible. However inaccurate the terminology may be, it is no accident that historians and sociologists speak of post-feudalism and tendencies from the old system of estates.

Naturally, there are counter-examples. The struggle between believers of socially founded democracy and anti-democratic forces has not been decided. According to certain signs the political crises exert pressure on opposition parties to change to a more open, more cooperative politics that *serves* the interest of society. The conservative-liberal dogma, according to which the political activity of civil society is unnecessary in-between elections, now lies in ruins. Even if in a clumsy way, the largest opposition party is still open towards "the civil sphere," and at least some social democrats are now starting to realise their historical responsibility.

There are several "capitalist" societies that run an economy that is market- and profit-oriented. Capitalism is too broad a category to describe existing societies: the range from Scandinavia through Turkey to South Korea and Latin America is too wide. We are not saying very much about social processes and the level of democratisation, therefore, if we state that Hungary is headed from socialism to capitalism.

Of course abstract thinking cannot go without generalisations, and the building of models that arise from it. These models might even be called systems, and they might help us understand functioning mechanisms, especially in the area of the economy. Problems start when economists, social researchers, and their prisoners, the politicians who use their arguments and terminology, decide to judge and try to treat existing social processes according to the logic of models. One result of thinking in terms of "systems" is that if one system fails, it only needs to be replaced by another system that is built upon the opposite principles, and everything is solved by itself: both in politics and in the economy. According to this black-and-white, simplistic logic it is not possible to

understand, for instance, that planning itself was not the problem, since it is carried out at a very high level by the most effective multinational companies. The problem was caused by the pointless central planning that was unaware of reality, used no feedback mechanisms, and served primarily as a form of ideology, just like the ideas of a “free market” or a “third way”.

The expression “transition” has a similar ideological connotation, too. It implies that we are coming from a bad state of affairs, and we are heading towards a better one, even if we encounter some difficulties. Unfortunately, we do know that it is possible to go from one bad situation to another bad one. Even if imperatives are evident, the choices are also given. The great challenge for social sciences is to identify and articulate them.

1989 has opened the doors wide for free thought and independent research. New workshops and institutes have been formed, old ones have begun to change, and to adapt to new international requirements. What is incredibly similar to the irresponsible waste of national values before the changes is the abolition of independent intellectual workshops, or their integration into non-independent institutions, the counter-selection of new initiatives according to unprincipled lobby interests, and generally the undermining of cultural and intellectual life with reference to material difficulties and mystical budget recommendations. As opposed to certain new cultural policy experts, I do not recommend the identification of those who are responsible, or their impeachment. It might still be possible to stop the destruction and the brain drain if we start an open public discussion about this issue. It could be another step on the thorny path of democracy.

## PRAISE FOR THE “N-TH” ROAD

*The complexity of the task facing us is akin to transforming a Trabant into a Mercedes while speeding down a highway.*

Elemér Hankiss (1989)

Only a few countries have ever made the “Big Leap,” or rather gradual rise, from the periphery to the center of the world economy. Even in these few successful countries, however, the process was not always accompanied by the democratization of society as in South Korea, for example. In those countries where both processes succeeded (e.g., Spain and Portugal) it was due to a fortunate constellation of different political, geopolitical and cultural factors. This kind of harmony is not characteristic of the Western periphery of the collapsing Soviet empire. The situation of East and Central Europe was made more difficult by the fact that it remained a “bloc” although compulsory military, economic and political ties connecting these countries to the late Big Brother and one another have been torn apart. It is still a crisis zone, but the countries of the region are not fighting against Moscow this time. Instead, through various ethnic conflicts suppressed for 45 years, they are threatening each other and/or their own minorities. Unless radical improvements are made this process will also endanger the success of European integration. Despite their significant differences, the societies of this region still exhibit common characteristics in their recent history, particularly of the past 50 years. The daily news convincingly proves that the region shares common negative characteristics, but the new political elites and Western experts emphasize the advantages of regional differences. There is continuity both within national borders and in the whole region historically.

The loss of perspective after the euphoria following the disintegration of the Soviet empire played a key role in the explosion of long-suppressed tensions or, in Claus Offe’s terms, in the “ethnification of politics.” The hopes of East and West European intellectuals articulated in literary essays were followed later by the activities of eastern and western social movements, and then by the promises of politicians. These political declarations were popular throughout the period from the early 1980s to the velvet revolutions of 1989. They did not survive, however, after the collapse of the Berlin Wall. The real East Central Europe, without political romanticism and nostalgia, lost its attractiveness. In the old days, exotic East European intellectuals rang the doorbells of their Western friends and colleagues, had good times in their company, and published their banned articles in prestigious western newspapers and journals. Today, the cheap East European labor force is flooding in endless lines towards the West in order to have a share in the blessings of welfare-capitalism.

The issue of immigration has become especially acute in Germany due to its liberal, post-WW II immigration law and high standard of living. Now it has not only to face the problem of ex-East Germans demanding equal rights and wages, but the highest number of other East European workers: Poles, Hungarians and Russians. When refugees from the Serbian-Croatian-Bosnian war then appeared in the country no one could stop the anti-immigrant sentiments and atrocities which harbored the silent support of the local populations. The hatred against foreigners, the racism and the neo-Nazi tendencies (although to a less brutal extent) have also gained strength in France, Austria, Italy, Spain and in some parts of Scandinavia. It has become obvious that the East European crowds invading the West are more than *personae non grata*. The actions of skinheads and restrictions on immigration and settlement will not solve this problem. Regulations can be

circumvented. The smuggling of people and the number of illegal entries have increased. "Paper curtains" cannot substitute the "iron curtain." Eastern Europe joined the network of international mafias as an active and efficient market of consumption and supply, especially in the areas of illegal weapons, the drug trade and prostitution. Despite the geographic proximity, price levels are dramatically different. This gap offered the possibility of easy access to wealth for the really "original" accumulators of organized crime.

Hence, the East European pressure on the West is vast. According to estimates, between 3 and 4 million people want to immigrate, a number which will be increased by the approximately 40 million unemployed from the ex-Soviet republics. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is not simply an insignificant symptom. It is not just a popular desire to quickly utilize the new opportunities to get rich. Millions have lost their jobs and even more people have lost their perspective and the societies of this region have become increasingly polarized. This means that the number of people who see no possible improvement in their situation has grown in absolute terms.

What happened in the last three years?

Western investments have been constantly declining due to the heightened chaos and uncertainty caused by the nationalistic tendencies and the prolonged war in the south. No economic or infrastructural cooperation has been actualized within the region either. Moreover, the possibility for cooperation has worsened due to new borders and the increase in mutual distrust. East European national economies are too insignificant by themselves; the local conditions for investment are frightening for foreign capital. The ties of East-East trade broke suddenly and simultaneously. East European products are not competitive on Western markets or, when they are, they are boycotted by the producers in the European Union. If the region remains neglected, it is possible that this temporary decline will become structural underdevelopment and the possibility to break out of this vicious circle will be postponed into the unforeseeable future. The transition to market economy can not be realized while the semi-peripheral, inferior position of the region remains or worsens. In this case, however, the transition from dictatorship or an authoritarian regime can lead smoothly to another, albeit ideologically different, anti-democratic political system. To use Philippe Schmitter's terms, certain *democraduras* can emerge where democratic institutions exist only in theory, while in practice they represent the continuity with the totalitarian past.

Analyses of the transitions warn that initially implemented structures play a key role because those structures become solidified quickly and unnoticeably. Hence, it is dangerous to argue that the mistakes made at the onset can be easily corrected later on and that the poisonous political and social conflicts will disappear by themselves like childhood diseases. If something can be learned from the history of the transition attempts so far, it is that there is no general law which can guarantee the implementation of a prosperous market economy and a consensual democracy at the same time. Although the countries of the late Eastern bloc are different from each other, the average living standard has fundamentally declined everywhere, except in the former East Germany. Production has decreased, unemployment has increased. Today a very significant part of the population lives under visibly worse conditions than during the years of inefficient centrally planned economy.

Success is not, therefore, the result of automatic mechanisms. It can be achieved by the conscious formation of external and internal conditions, and their consistent and effective coordination. The best example of this is Western Europe after WW II (and Germany, awakening from the cruelest dictatorship). Reconstruction following the war was based on the elaborate system of control and regulation. Inflation and wages were regulated. Interest rates and prices for basic necessities were kept at a standard level. Collective property was maintained. Through decades this system was reformed very carefully, until a balance could be maintained by market forces alone. The Marshall Aid which came from the U.S. was just as crucial because it provided Western Europe with foreign currency after the initial absence. Without that money the reconstruction and development of production capacity and infrastructure would have been impossible. One important element of the Marshall Plan was that the countries receiving aid had to prepare a detailed program for the reconstruction of their economies. The Marshall Plan also provided the financial basis for West European integration. This made it possible to avoid bilateral commercial reconstructions

through creating multilateral commercial balance among the countries concerned. Had they faced the transition programs of East Central Europe today, it is almost certain that post-WW II West European development would not have been a success.

It can be added, however, that the issue in Western Europe was reconstruction after a relatively short period of war. East Central Europe today wants to return to a market economy after a compulsory, nearly half century long break. This process is complicated not only by the destructive impact of the long break, but also by the fact that the political, social and economic transformations must be accomplished simultaneously and in the context of a world economic recession. It is precisely these diverse difficulties that are depicted in Hankiss' metaphor. These extremely difficult external and internal conditions make a second Marshall Plan for East Europe necessary. Following the initial interest of the West, however, every suggestion concerning new kinds of regional cooperation was ignored or refused by Strasbourg, Brussels and Washington. Meanwhile, the economic, social and political situation deteriorated in the region. Political stability is weakening and the danger of possible escalations in the Balkan war is now beginning to influence, both directly and indirectly, the formation of West European integration. If this trend is not stopped and overturned it will mean the complete failure of the post-1989 EU policies regarding Eastern Europe, which also implies the halting of pan-European integration indefinitely.

Comparing the internal processes of transformation in East Central Europe to the post-WW II Western strategies, fundamental differences surface in the areas of regulation, planning and the participation and intervention of society and the state. The objectives of East European economic policies regarding the transition to a market economy are characterized by the same illusions. One of the most characteristic illusions is that the destruction of central planning and the introduction of private property will automatically create market mechanisms to provide the necessary and basic conditions for welfare. Prominent Western experts on the East European neo-liberal economic policies, such as Adam Przeworski and Egon Matzner, have argued that it is a misunderstanding of the mechanisms of market capitalism to believe that the total liberalization of prices and production and the introduction of private property will create effective market relations. The sad irony of the situation is that Western experts warn us, East Europeans, that the market is a social institution which has been formulated through conscious policies over centuries and thus can be understood only in its socio-economic context, not as an abstract dogma. To ignore these interdependencies, which in our case means the seriously injured social texture and economic conditions, will unavoidably lead to failure, and sometimes even to tragedy. The general conclusion is that even if neo-liberal reform packages induce successful economic policies, they usually weaken democratic institutions.

Even in those societies where shock therapy was not or was only partially introduced, as in Hungary, the strength of socially insensitive liberal political forces has been on the decline. The only serious argument supporting this ideology, namely the promise of a quick improvement, belongs to the past. Claus Offe is correct when he says that the "Golden Capitalist Future" does not seem to be attractive, believable or culturally digestible for the major part of local societies in the Eastern part of Central Europe.

The sense of an increasingly frightening future contributes significantly to the growing popularity of ideologies centering on the past. In the period just prior to the velvet revolutions and thereafter until the brief euphoria ended, it seemed as though the reconstruction of national identities would not only tolerate a regional, Central European identity but even the modern dimensions of a culturally broader European identity. Moreover, the three identities could mutually support each other and organically unite. This hope, however, like others, vanished due to the growing ignorance of the European Union and the inability of East Central European countries to establish real cooperation. Those projects which envisioned a strengthened national community inducing democratic and open societies due to the perfect harmony of these two processes failed as well. Most civil societies in the region are still weak. They are unable to control the relationships between individuals and state-power monopolies by intermediating between them. The initially positive national sentiments were quite successfully manipulated by extreme political forces. The macro-level economic and institutional crisis and the micro-level (individual, local community)

crisis were accompanied by a normative vacuum due to the collapse of old value systems and the lack of new ones. This phenomenon illustrates the weakness of civil societies very well. Because of this tendency, the different anti-democratic, authoritarian and fundamentalist movements soon gained popularity (in Poland, the church; in Slovakia, the National Party, etc.) and they began to fill the vacuum left untouched by democratic movements and initiatives.

According to empirical research conducted by Edmund Wnuk-Lipinski, the texture of post-Communist Polish society resists radical change. This only confirms the general conclusions that despite the political regime-change, “socialist mentality” still exists: the refusal of real competition, the avoidance of responsibility, the lack of initiative, the fear of risk, authoritarian attitudes, and the concentration on short-term interests. In general, continuity is juxtaposed with radical changes by infantile thinking and patterns of behavior. Offe is again correct when he says that because of the underdeveloped civil societies, post-Communist societies remain atomized. Instead of an organic reconstruction of civil societies and democratic national communities, national ideology began to function as a substitute to civil self-organization. As different, forward-looking strategies lost their credibility, nationalism, which glorified the pre-Communist era, became increasingly attractive.

This nationalist ideology began to take on anti-democratic characteristics and became an easily malleable tool of power in the hands of most new political elites. Primitive enemy images built on historic clichés proved effective to distract attention from serious and unresolved social and economic issues. On several occasions they were also utilized to mobilize frustrated crowds against ethnic minorities and the “mother countries” of these minorities. The conservative nationalistic and exclusionist discourse of the 1920s and 1930s was revitalized in public life, as was the atmosphere of discrimination, fear, hatred and hysteria which accompanied it. Naturally, these nationalist tendencies do not surface everywhere in the same way, and they prevail to various degrees in countries with different levels of development. It is, however, sufficient to look at the complicated ethnic map of the area and the newspaper headlines to acknowledge the validity of this statement.

It seems contradictory that in the economically less developed part of the region, i.e., the “outer half circle” where demagogic nationalism prevails, the former Communist parties have not lost their influence. They continue the same practices under new names. The common elements of the two ideologies, anti-individualism and intolerant collectivism, enabled ex-Communist politicians to gain new popularity by following aggressive nationalist policies. The Communist leaders in the periphery of the Soviet empire gained some social legitimacy by trying to take advantage of strong national feelings. They were (or at least they represented themselves as) internationalists only rhetorically.

Nationalist ideologies, appropriating strong anti-Communist slogans, are well-suited to those middle level leaders who try to maintain or improve their positions, and hide or forget their pasts by orchestrating loud anti-Communist arguments. After WW II a new democratic social consensus based on an evaluation of the Nazi past was not established, nor did it happen in a social-psychological sense. Similarly, since 1989, a real coming to terms with the 45 year long Communist past has not occurred, no responsibility was taken. The root of the unprecedented identity crisis in East Central European societies lies in their accumulated, multiplied and unconfessed past. This unexplored collective unconscious induces neurotic symptoms, historic amnesia, ethnic or religious hatred centering on “otherness,” which can turn and has turned into public hysteria. The causes of this behavior lie beyond rational argumentation.

András Lányi has made an important insight that in such an ethnically diverse region as East Central Europe, different malfunctions in identity are not based on the refusal of otherness but rather on the refusal of similarities. This thought is valid in a realm broader than that of ethnic conflict. The complexities, contradictions and paradoxes of the vast transformation which began in 1989 can be connected to the loss of and search for identity.

The ideology of the “Golden Past” similar to that of the “Golden Future” does not signify a real alternative route out of the crisis, even if it has become temporarily popular. The common element in these approaches is that none of them attempt to solve economic and social problems concretely and constructively, but are rather based on ideological common-places.

Clearly the “Third Way” ideology cannot provide us with any solutions. These can only come from the construction of social and economic policies which are sensitive to the sacrifices of



society, policies which induce necessary and unavoidable competition, while also attempting to establish cooperation within and outside the borders. Instead of blindly appropriating ready-made philosophies for a “quick-fix,” the goal should be to find the “N-th Way.” No one has ever taken that road and the task is extremely difficult. On the one hand, it necessitates the reconstruction and strong reorganization of the civil sphere. On the other hand, it requires political parties with higher level of social responsibility and sensibility. And last, but not least, it also needs the institutionalization of relations between the two spheres which works in both directions.

PARTICIPATION AND  
DEMOCRACY:  
  
THE METAMORPHOSIS  
OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN  
HUNGARY

The historic background of the renaissance  
and development of the concept of civil  
society in East Central Europe

After WW II, in the shade of the victorious Red Army and driven by a curious missionary spirit, the Communist parties in East Central Europe considered it to be their duty to cut the horizontal fibers of civil society, or to hinder their development. Society, as it was envisioned kneaded into an atomized mass, would deliver reliable and obedient subjects. The state, intertwined with the Communist party, was engaged in demobilizing society by many different means; by the dismantling of democratic and social actors; by monopolizing interest intermediation through the “etatization” of trade unions, the liquidation of the Constitutional Court, etc. The most effective means of demobilization was the atomization of society. Between 1930 and 1940 there were around 30,000 clubs and associations in Hungary. After 1945 their number dropped to less than 1,000. The destruction of social networks and associations led to the destruction of social identities and the destruction of value systems. The special exercise of power created a constant state of fear and uncertainty in society. This introduced a common sense of total vulnerability and the corresponding psychological escapism which helped to conceal a sense of humiliation. Political indifference, being forced to live in permanent lies, and the total loss of responsibility with regard to public welfare, became permanent features of social existence.

The liquidation of civil society was fortunately not completed; undercurrents in civil existence were never eradicated from the collective social consciousness. Social networks survived in semi-latency and semi-legitimacy. In the mid-1960s the slow regeneration of social networks started. The attitude of the Hungarian ruling elite was ambivalent. Given the trauma of the 1956 revolution and the subsequent unwritten compromise between the state and civil society during the Kadar-regime a certain degree of liberalization had to be tolerated. From the very beginning this process was highly contradictory. The elite prepared and began to implement reforms, but frightened by the possible political consequences, it started to impede the process and reinforce its position of power. The swinging between initiating and abandoning reforms was a political sleight of hand: a particular mixture of liberalization and paternalism. The results were only temporary and conditional extensions of freedom without any guarantees of rights.

This modern version of paternalism or enlightend socialist absolutism which was in harmony with the permanent precariousness and transitory character of Eastern European history, kept society infantile by reinforcing the “without us but for us” syndrome. People felt and were told constantly that they have little to nothing to contribute to the decision-making processes, but at the

same time they wanted to believe (or truly believed) that their interests were taken into consideration by the “gods above”, who were at the end doing things **for** them but **without** them.

The seemingly successfully played game of “give and take” from the 1960s to early 1980s, when the deepening economic crisis of the Soviet bloc countries coincided with the erosion of the political system and encouraged by the development of the most powerful working class movement of 20th century, Poland’s “Solidarity,” Hungarian society started to mobilize itself.

The lesson of the 1956 revolutions in Hungary and Poland taught independent-minded East Europeans to look for alternative methods in order to democratize their regimes and build up more autonomy and political, social and cultural freedom within the still stable framework of the bipolar world order. The first alternative *vis-à-vis* the romantic but hopeless upheaval and revolutionary war of small nations against the Yalta system, maintained and supported by the superpowers, was the introduction of economic reforms and a cautious, state-controlled opening towards the world economy without political changes in the 1960s in Hungary. The initial success of the “New Economic Mechanism,” significantly exaggerated by the western media, provided Hungary with the reputation as the “most cheerful barrack of the camp.” The internal contradictions of this reform experiment reached a climax in the early 1980s and led to the end of the unwritten compromise between state and society when the artificially maintained image of the country as an economic success story became untenable. This was the historic turning point for Hungarian society that then started to rid itself of the superimposed social muteness and political paralysis.

Self-mobilization from below, in different forms of grassroots activities, gradually emerged. Parallel with the increasingly open and evolving political and economic crises, the culture of silence and clandestine meetings were step-by-step replaced with a more open dialogue among formerly isolated circles of independent-minded intellectuals. Cautiously, the media got involved in the new critical discourse. The long list of taboo themes began to shrink. In other words, a new public arena emerged to discuss social, environmental, cultural and, in a restricted way, political issues openly and critically. A modern critical discourse of dialogue was born in Hungary.

In Poland, “Solidarity,” an alternative, non-communist trade union of shipyard workers in Gdansk quickly became a nationwide, self-supporting political, cultural, social and economic network and a metaphor for an emerging civil society containing and partly controlling official authorities. The political philosophers behind the movement deliberately built their strategy on non-violent actions, involving the party-state and their local authorities into a dialogue with the representatives of the officially unrecognized movement. The enforcement of dialogue, in the form of systematic negotiations, and radical demands were tempered at the same time with the readiness to compromise. Non-violence and strong solidarity characterized this unique East Central European social movement. The adjective “civil” was reborn and referred to those characteristics. “Civil” also meant autonomous, independent, non-military, and non-official.

The very existence and pervasive success of Solidarity proved throughout the region of the Eastern bloc that there was a chance for a peaceful challenge to the authoritarian-dictatorial Soviet type regimes and their apparatus *from below*. Naturally, the forms of organizing civil movements differed from country to country according to historical traditions, the nature of the dictatorship, political culture and social structure. A wide variety of civil initiatives, movements and associations emerged at the beginning of the 1980s in Hungary in the absence of a large and strong independent moral authority like the Catholic Church in Poland, which was an integrating umbrella movement. There was, however, a strong tendency for cooperation and solidarity among these civil groups, called “alternative social movements,” at the early stage of their existence. There was a unifying and consciously shared concept of civil society that had its origin in the tradition of Hungarian political thought. István Bibó, a prominent and independent political writer and historian, introduced the metaphor of “small circles of freedom” in one of his essays written after WW II. This concept was then used and developed further by the emerging student movement, the environmental and peace groups and the mushrooming civil initiatives, from the populist writers to the first independent trade union (established in 1988).

The vision commonly shared by the alternative movements and new civil organizations was the natural growth of these “small circles of freedom” into interdependent networks and alliances.

They gradually emerged and became a common denominator by the second half of the 1980s.<sup>50</sup> This period, 1985-1988, can be seen as the “golden age” of the emerging civil society in Hungary. None of the actors of the emerging civil sphere questioned the mission behind the program and even if they put the emphasis on their individual and unique existence, they expressed a great deal of solidarity with each other. Rivalry among these groups was of secondary importance in comparison to the unifying force of challenging the authorities of the party-state. It was often the case that there was an overlap in their activities and membership since most of these initiatives had a dual character: they had a tendency to present themselves as West European-type “new social movements” (one issue movements etc.), like the Danube Circle of environmentalists or the Dialogue peace movement, and some of their leadership and rank and file insisted on the non-political, “professional” character of their activity, even in moments when their political role was obvious. Others participated in order to find appropriate indirect forms of challenging the system. This dual character made the new social movements less vulnerable *vis-à-vis* officialdom, at the same time it hindered the crystallization of a new value system and ethical base for the emerging civil society.

## Revitalization of Democracy:

### The Emergence of Civil Society and the Opening up of Political Space in East Central Europe

The emergence of civil society in Hungary from the mid-1980s resulted in a broader mobilization and the gradual participation of increasing parts of the population. There was an obvious change in social and political attitudes, especially among citizens in larger cities and a growing discontent in the rank and file and middle-rank leadership of official mass organizations that were controlled by the party and the secret police, such as the National Assembly of Trade Unions or the People’s Patriotic Front. This process of self-mobilization and the erosion of official monopolistic organizations reached its climax when the Communist party’s open-minded and reform-oriented members started to organize their own internal “reform circles” in 1988–89 against the will of the more conservative majority of their leadership.

Despite this enormous breakup and the spread of civil movements, the majority of society still did not believe that fundamental changes could take place and continued to live in skepticism or fear. Many of the new initiatives were fragile, vulnerable and uncertain about their future. They were early targets of threat, intimidation and penetration by secret agents. In the fall of 1987, another new social movement, the Hungarian Democratic Forum was launched by populist-nationalistic writers and intelligentsia in the presence of Mr. Pozsgay, then the most reform-minded member of the Central Committee of the Communist party.<sup>51</sup> The quasi-independent character of the movement and the very fact that some radical, prominent representatives of the non-nationalistic, so called “urban” democratic opposition were excluded provoked a fatal cleavage in the opposition. This split had serious consequences for grassroots movements in general, as well as for the future project of civil society.

During the 1980s, there were great expectations from representatives of Western social movements and intellectuals interested in East-West dialogue, that these new initiatives and grassroots movements, the predecessors of velvet revolutions, were going to deliver much needed

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<sup>50</sup> Besides single issue movements, a whole set of colourful initiatives oriented more directly towards actual social and political issues also came into existence. By the mid-1980s, discussion circles and study circles known as the “Club Movement” and the “Movement of Special Colleges” emerged all around the country. Communication and “networking” among these new groups occurred naturally and created a special spirit for civil society and civilized dialogue. The strong feeling of togetherness and the new experience of increasing freedom of expression released creative energies and blurred or hid political, cultural and ideological differences among participants.

<sup>51</sup> The official name of the party was the “Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party.” (*MSZMP*).

fresh air, innovative energies for the West and would vitalize the somewhat alienated and overbureaucratized West European democracies. These expectations generally led to disillusionment for different reasons. First, the activists, organizers and political philosophers of the democratic oppositions and new social movements were themselves unprepared for the fundamental systemic changes and defined the ideologies of their movements according to the traditional political patterns of the inter-war periods or, in the best cases, followed Western political patterns. In other words, a lack of intellectual and political innovation characterized the changes in the political system and the process of party-building in Hungary and elsewhere in East Central Europe in 1988–1989, when the rapid political party-building process began. The only movement that was able to reveal the obvious signs of social and political innovation in Hungary instead was an umbrella movement, the Network of Free Initiatives. The Network was primarily organized by those independent intellectuals and activists who were excluded from the quasi-independent Hungarian Democratic Forum because of their “urban” radicalism and cosmopolitan attitudes. Instead of taking one definite ideological stance, the Network defined itself as an umbrella organization with the clear mission to offer shelter, moral and political support for other social, grassroots initiatives and to provide networking possibilities among them. This was certainly a new and fresh approach, completely missing from Hungarian political tradition. In fact, the organizers of the Network were themselves puzzled about their own undertaking. Surprisingly, this new idea proved to be attractive and within a few weeks thousands of individuals and groups joined the Network. This unique initiative, however, was unable to avoid the fate of others and despite its early success and popularity, a small but influential faction of its elected leadership turned it into one of the liberal, political parties at the height of the party-building fever.<sup>52</sup> Although the Network died, the idea of horizontal cooperation among independent actors survived and still has potential as yet not utilized at both the domestic and international levels.

Another innovative and promising initiative was the regular cooperation among East Central European oppositional and alternative movements in order to strengthen each other’s case and support each others’ activities.<sup>53</sup> This rather risky and unprecedented enterprise bore fruit, including a growing regional, i.e., Central European, awareness about a shared, common identity and strengthened the need for solidarity. Cooperation occurred not only among the main democratic oppositional movements, such as Charter ‘77, Solidarity, and the Hungarian democratic opposition, but also among smaller movements and groups, like the environmentalists, peace groups and professional circles. In order to protect the emerging civil society and its new social movements throughout East Central Europe, Vaclav Havel, the spokesman for Charter ‘77, suggested to establish an alternative European Parliament for social movements. Multilateral discussions about the proposal in Prague were constantly interrupted by the police and it was only after the collapse of the *ancien* regimes that the initiative could materialize. The Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly, established in 1990 in Prague, is the only international institution of civil society which is an offspring of the efforts to create civil networks across borders in the 1980s that shows a significant amount of continuity in protecting human rights and supporting local grassroots initiatives for democratization.

## The New Stage of Institutionalized Democracy

Rapid party formation and the first free elections resulted in the establishment of new institutions of representative democracy that radically changed the dynamics of civil society. An overwhelming majority of former civil society activists became members of the new political elite and occupied

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<sup>52</sup> The Alliance of Free Democrats was created out of the Network of Free Initiatives in November 1988.

<sup>53</sup> Id. Mary Kaldor, p 8 (manuscript)

the highest positions of leadership in the newly established or redefined institutions and political parties. In their new positions, their perception of civil society versus state relations changed dramatically. The leaders and the ideologues of the new political elite claimed, already before the first elections, that the time for social movements was over. They played their historic role, stating that grassroots mobilization was unnecessary, if not dangerous, to the new democracy; and the well-articulated field of political parties provided an efficient arena for the competition of ideas, ideologies and social-political alternatives. According to this credo, everyday political involvement of citizens is unnecessary; their role should be restricted to maintaining the functioning of the new institutions and to legitimizing the new political regime by giving their votes every four years in “fair and unharrassed elections”.

The emergence of new parties, at the final stage of the collapse of the one-party system, was an absolute historic necessity as well as part of the process of institutionalization of social movements at the end of their initial phase of mobilization. Alan Fowler correctly identified that civil society is the place where interest groups turn themselves into political parties, competing to become the ruling regime<sup>54</sup>. In the case of Hungary, as well as in other countries of the region, one has to alter this general truth according to the special socio-economic and historic context. A gap developed historically between rulers and ruled due to the lack of strong middle classes who after the phase of saturation of wealth would act as mecenass and support the social and cultural sphere. In the absence of a strong democratic culture, the values of solidarity, social responsibility and citizenship could not develop. Citizens view themselves and were indoctrinated to view themselves as helpless, exposed subjects at the mercy of the state and its authorities. For good historical reasons citizens (who are still called state-burghers) and official authorities were – and still are – mutually suspicious of each other. This special relationship between rulers and the ruled is important in order to get a realistic picture of the present state of civil society in East Central Europe. Power is still often seen today as a special type of private property and not as a socially determined relationship that includes a set of duties towards the community and based on permanent feedback mechanisms and interdependencies.

Although this attitude towards power has changed significantly in the transition period, the paternalistic and authoritarian elements are identifiable as significant determinants of the relationship between civil society and the political elite. Any direct challenge of party leaders or government representatives is seen as improper, outrageous or scandalous. This also applies to journalism. Direct speech, e.g., questions directed to accountability, transparency and any form of civil control are still socially unexpected and rare phenomena in the everyday social practice. The lack of answers or bagatellizing the questions from the side of authorities is accepted as normal behaviour and is largely tolerated by the local population as well as the media. Fact finding and investigative journalism is almost entirely absent and scandals that reach the public usually die out or are without consequence or proper explanation. Generally speaking, politics and politicians are still seen by the majority of society and their related organizations as untouchable, alien terrain, something out of the competence of the public. The “it was always like that, and it remains so, what can we do?” attitude which characterized the pre-1989 period was seriously challenged and shaken-up by the new social movements of the 1980s. After the first democratic elections in 1990, the new government and the political elite, represented by the parliament, did their best to restore old cliches and attitudes. Continuity is a strong element of public institutional life. The restoration of authoritarian patterns of behaviour between citizens and their institutions is a strong and powerful tendency in 1997.

This “fallback”, happened relatively fast and smoothly in an almost unnoticeable way. “Things went back to their normal track” – an early joke says – “the only difference is that we are ruled by *six* parties instead of *one*.”

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<sup>54</sup> Alan Fowler: “Strengthening Civil Society,” in Transition Economics ; NGOs, Civil Society and the State, *Building Democracy in Transitional Societies*, ed., Andrew Clapton, (INTERAC, 1996).

Theories of transition largely agree that after the first unharrassed free elections, the process of implementing democratic institutions need a phase of consolidation.<sup>55</sup> Usually, social movements and organizations which previously played a vital role in mobilizing society and increasing the participation of citizens in public affairs, become institutionalized or coopted by the new regime. Civil society can express itself in a large variety of forms, from individual initiatives through social movements, clubs, associations, societies and other organizations. It is, however, never a mechanical total sum of these existing or potential formations. To quote Alan Fowler, “civil society is the location from where legitimacy must be obtained if one is to talk of a democratic political system.”<sup>56</sup> Civil society in this sense is rather a philosophical concept than a set of organizations.

It is the terrain of social-reflection, self-articulation and autonomy which inherently presupposes and necessitates a special self-organizing version of the public arena, where the critique, the control and containment of any existing and prevailing power-monopolies, such as the state, the army, the police or transnational organizations like multinational companies (World Bank, IMF) can be practised. Civil society has to be seen as a potential, *ad hoc* melting pot and battleground of diverse interests and actors, ranging from public individuals to international NGOs. This public arena is, therefore, never homogenous; it rather constitutes itself as a permanent regrouping and renegotiating process between and among newly born and old actors. Its non-constant social fabric and catalized interdependencies are built on the autonomous and voluntary will of the individual who actively takes part in social and political affairs. The uninterrupted social need for civil society stems from democracy-deficiencies. This special social space or public arena assumes citizens’ participation in social processes and interactions as well as a strong consciousness of being a citizen. This interrelatedness is correctly emphasized in recent literature on civil society and NGOs. Lars Jorgensen for example envisions civil society as a “meeting place for debate and common endeavour” the basis of which is “the right of each individual to participate in the workings of society, and the recognition that periodical elections and referendums [...] are not sufficient.”<sup>57</sup> Mary Kaldor suggests that “the advantage of the language of civil society is precisely its **political** content, its implications for participation and citizenship.”<sup>58</sup> In other words, there is nothing stable and mechanistically identifiable in civil society, especially not as far as “institutions’ are concerned. In East Central Europe, many newly born so-called “non-governmental” organizations declared themselves as advocates and embodiments of civil society. The term NGO is in itself a negative concept and can be seen as an attempt of delegating welfare-state responsibilities to society. It is often the case that duties, and tasks, which were previously seen as unquestionably governmental, now have been delegated to non-governmental agencies.

The breakdown of the communist party-states in East Central Europe, coupled with the crisis of the welfare states in the West naturally gave birth to NGOs both in theory and practice. The negative definition of NGOs, similar to terms like “post-communism” or “post-Cold War,” refer to the lack of something, to the given chaos, uncertainty and unpredictability of our transitory epoch. This situation naturally comprises positive tendencies and possibilities like the further articulation of the need for social democratization and participation of citizens in decision-making, and a further articulation of civil societies as mentioned above. NGOs could play an important and vital role in buttressing and facilitating these tendencies. This positive scenario, however, is far from being an absolute necessity and is only one among other, more negative pictures. In many cases in East Central Europe, they are not at all genuine agents of an authentic civil society. More often

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<sup>55</sup> See Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transition from Authoritarian Rule. Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, (The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986).

<sup>56</sup> Alan Fowler, “Strengthening Civil Society in Transition Economies – from Concept to Strategy: Mapping an Exit in a Maze of Mirrors” in: *NGOs, Civil Society and the State: Building Democracy in Transitional Societies* (An INTRAC Publ., 1996), p. 25.

<sup>57</sup> Lars Jorgensen, “What are NGOs doing in Civil Society?” In: Andrew Clayton, ed. *NGOs, Civil Society and the State: Building Democracy in Transitional Societies*, (Intrac: 1996), p 36.

<sup>58</sup> Mary Kaldor, “Transnational Civil Society,” Manuscript (Sussex European Institute, 1997), p 23.

than expected, they are creatures of governments or politics or individuals who are using them for power struggles, or hiding illegal activities, sometimes personal interests.

## Challenges and Possibilities in the Era of Globalization

Recent research on civil society and NGO development draw attention to the fact that NGOs represent only one group of organizations within civil society and that they are not necessarily able to build alliances with other organizations like mass movements and human rights groups. This is a global, not only East Central European phenomenon. Andrew Clayton points out, that “many NGOs have been reluctant to take a more political role in relation to the state and prefer to focus on service provisions.”<sup>59</sup> Drawing some conclusions from the Hungarian experience of the transition period, we have to agree with Clayton that NGOs do not necessarily strengthen civil society and in certain cases they can even lead to its marginalization and destruction.

One of the main problems with the newly born NGOs is their legitimacy in local societies. The legitimacy problem stems from the scarcity of resources and local mecenases. Therefore, NGOs either turn to the state, automatically accepting control and interventions from authorities or look for external resources. In both cases accountability and transparency become questionable. It is also very often the case that western (mostly American) donors, sometimes led by the best motives, are unable or reluctant to analyse local social, political and cultural conditions and, therefore, are unable or reluctant to select the most appropriate candidates. In most of the cases those who receive internal financial support are those who are already in the external circle of a global NGO elite. They possess not only the necessary English, Internet and application-writing skills, but are able to talk “civil society” using the most trendy NGO-language and fashionable buzzwords.

These anomalies and internal contradictions are worth mentioning during the very sensitive phase of civil society development after the period of mobilization for democracy and the emergence of grassroots initiatives and alternative social movements. Certain categorical distinctions seem to be necessary. First, the transition from the “movement phase” to institutionalization does not include NGO development exclusively. Membership organizations, trade unions and human rights groups can contribute to the strengthening of substantive social democratization without considering themselves as NGOs. Second, many of the 50,000 registered NGOs in Hungary seek other interests – political, profit or personal prestige – while “talking” civil society. These negative tendencies must be mentioned, since the temptation to idealize NGOs as new panacea remedying the state is rather high.

NGOs are creatures of the post-1989 world disorder, characterised by the weakening of the welfare-state, the collapse of the socialist party-state and the crisis of the nation-state. As such, they certainly have a potential role to play in the emergence of a new social order with new rules of interaction whose structure is still difficult to envision. As the concrete examples of East Central European NGO and CSO (Civil Society Organization) developments show, there is a significant amount of positive potential to become conscious about the role in strengthening democratic values, mobilizing society for participation, contributing to a new civil culture of decision-making and dialogue in order to strengthen each others’ bargaining capacities with authorities on local, national and international levels. It is important to stress, however, that we are dealing with a potential and not with unavoidable necessities. Lars Jorgensen formulated this precisely:

“There are some risks in taking on civil society. It is of course perfectly legitimate for NGOs not to be openly political or to take sides in whatever constellation of parties or factions which is forming at a given moment, but they must recognize that their

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<sup>59</sup> See Andrew Clayton’s Preface to NGOs, *Civil Society and the State*. Op. cit., p. 8.



work has political aspects and relate to the authority of the state and to the political development of their society”.<sup>60</sup>

With some cautious optimism, we can say that similar to the case in many Southern countries, in East and Central Europe many NGOs are

“beginning to see themselves less as project implementors and more as civil society actors. Some are moving from supplementing service delivery projects with advocacy, others are set up explicitly as influencing organizations, in order to further develop certain social values. In conclusion, we may say that there is a potential for NGOs to become even more important players in their societies and ultimately to attain greater results than they can by limiting their work to providing services”.<sup>61</sup>

An undemocratic relationship, based on new dependency between western donors and eastern NGOs can seriously undermine and bias this potential. Therefore, a critical assessment of their relationship and its development during the transition period is of crucial importance. Sometimes, but not always, well-intentioned donors superimpose their values or policies on recipients who then act rather as dependent agents than genuine actors of their local civil sphere. Because of the scarcity of domestic resources, a growing dependency on state support and an uneven, rather dependent relationship with western donors, combined with a growing rivalry rather than solidarity among NGOs, the very vision and program of civil society has a strong tendency to fade away in Hungary. This tendency is parallel to and often reinforced by the emergence of a global and local NGO elite with a high level of technical skill and “networking capital.” This tendency contributes to the fake image of a “virtual” civil society.

“Talking civil society” can provide the common denominator for western donors, the new NGO-elite, and local governments who want to coopt them. It can be a lucrative method to display the “right” liberal democratic values and at the same time avoid the uncomfortable consequences of strong and genuine civil societies. Coopting and over-taking means surpassing and weakening. A new network of dependent NGOs rather undermines than serves the interest of civil society.

## Mapping Institutionalized Civil Society: Political and Economic Intertwinings in Hungary in the Late 1990s

It is difficult to differentiate between positive and negative examples provided by real quasi and fake NGOs. There is a long list of acronyms about existing organizations which call themselves NGOs and civil society organizations. A good number of variations from real NGOs to Quasi-Phantom (QUANGOs), Donor-driven (DONGOs); Money-making (MONGOs); Mafia-led (MANGOs); to simply *Fake* (FANGOs) “nongo-vernmental” organizations can be identified in social practice.

QUANGOs are quite typical in Hungary as semi-indepen-dent organizations, financed and/or protected by political parties or state authorities. By the time the new and uncertain political parties realized after their *Sturm und Drang*-years that they still need regular contacts with the “civil” world, the civilian support-base has seriously eroded or disappeared.

Certain political parties, like the ruling Hungarian Socialist Party, successfully dominate “civil organizations” that originated before 1989 and whose structuration shows a significant continuity, where as others are trying to create new organizations in order to access donor support.

Motivated by power struggles and elections, political parties have a tendency to approach organizations which try to represent less mobile and rather marginalized groups of society such as

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<sup>60</sup> Op. cit. p. 52.

<sup>61</sup> Op. cit. p. 53.

pensioners, The National Federation of Large Families, the Society of Those Living below the Subsistence Level, the Association of Hungarian Women, etc., with considerable success.

The strongest intertwining occurs with some of the so-called umbrella organizations such as, the Federation of Civil Associations<sup>62</sup>, the Civil Parliament or the Civil Roundtable. Although they do not have concrete and identifiable programs, they enjoy a significant amount of public financing and media cover. Very often there is a personal overlap in their leadership. TESZ is the legal successor of the People's Front Patriotic, an archetype of fake civil (FANGOs) organizations of the ancien regime. It takes advantage of the "old boys network" in fundraising and maintains a nationwide network of local offices. Their representatives refused to answer questions when we tried to interview them about their perception of civil society and about the practical methods they employ to reach their goals. The reluctance of their representatives to appear publicly and the fear of accountability reveals a total lack of perception or indifference to what civil society is or should be. Their ability to survive and fundraise within the circle of old-new apparatuses reflects the fakeness of the officially supported NGOs and explains the lack of enthusiasm in society for the "NGO sector".

Fake and quasi non-Governmental and "civil society" organizations provide an obvious opportunity for pre-1989 *apparatchicks* and politically discredited figures, such as the former General Secretary of the official Peace Council in the 1980s, to cleanse themselves and regain legitimacy in the domestic and international arena. FANGOs and QUANGOs are responsible for the discreditation of the program of civil society and the growing skepticism concerning NGOs among the population.

Another umbrella organization, the Civil Union, has 86 members whose activities range from social, humanitarian issues to health care and the protection of the environment. Upon request they deliver background material and reports to ministries. During the 1994 election campaign they supported predominantly socialist candidates who, after being identified, organized a Parliamentarian Club to discuss legal and civilian questions.

A typical organization of survival and continuity is the Association of Hungarian Women. It was founded in 1989, the year of miracles as the successor to the Hungarian Women's Council, an archetype of state-socialist fellow traveller institutions. The program and the value system supported by AHW is very much in the mainstream of progressive women's organizations. They organize short courses for all categories of women throughout the country to make them conscious about their rights as equal citizens both in the home and at their workplace and condemn the conditions leading to prostitution, instead of condemning the prostitutes themselves. In sharp contrast with their frequent appearance and high profile in the international arena of civil organizations like the last UN Womens Congress in Beijing, their grassroots activity is unnoticeable and they have virtually no recognizable impact on civil society. In other words, they do not exist as a reliable advocacy group even if the density of their network and the level of formal institutionalization is relationally high.

QUANGOs like this have no chance of becoming genuine grassroot organizations of civil society. Based on historical experience of dictatorship and authoritarian rule, Hungarian society is highly suspicious and skeptical of officially sponsored institutions that claim independence. In the majority of cases they are institutions of continuity with an obvious tradition of organizational style, network and clientele. They are civil organizations or NGOs *from above*, which alienate rather than attract people. They serve the interests of the state and the political parties, not civil society, at the same time, giving the impression of an active NGO world with a high organizational density.

The new-old political elite was eager to select their favorite NGOs and CSOs securing their budget and creating artificial cleavages among organizations, by discrimination. The leadership of the favorite FANGOs and QUANGOs is recruited mostly from second rank, discredited politicians or marginalized officials of the *ancien* regime, although ambitious activists from the younger generation are also ready to play the game. Once in position with a firm financial background FANGO and QUANGO leaders are *talking civil society* but behind their rhetoric, a post-

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<sup>62</sup> TESZ: Társadalmi Egyesülések Szövetsége.

communist version of neo-corporatism is taking shape. The world of CSOs and NGOs has doubled: beneath the hierarchy of the official or officially-controlled and dependent organizations, one can identify genuine and efficient CSOs and NGOs as well.

Although it is possible to find positive examples for real NGOs and civil society and human rights advocacy groups, neither their number nor their actual influence on the sphere and the political constellation seems to be strong enough to change the picture in a significant way in the short run.

An outstanding example is the Hungarian Foundation for Self-Reliance<sup>63</sup>. Their major concern is the development of the most deprived and marginalized social and ethnic group, the Roma community. They support those Roma groups, who have an income-generating plan. They lend money to those who have a proper vision about their existential survival and are able to show enough responsibility to realize their own plans.

The Foundation is exceptional in its international recognition, thanks to its founder, Mr. András Biró.<sup>64</sup> It was heavily supported by big American foundations such as the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund from the beginning.

Among the human rights advocacy groups the Legal Defense Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities, The Martin Luther King Association, the Raul Wallenberg Society and the Hungarian Human Rights Center are the most effective and the best recognized ones. The Legal Defense Bureau supported by the “Otherness” Foundation concentrates on the violation of human rights of the Gypsy community. It is engaged in fact-finding, visiting clients, collecting documents, providing legal advice and initiating legal procedures.<sup>65</sup>

The Martin Luther King Association and the Hungarian Human Rights Center protect the human rights of foreigners living and studying in Hungary who are victims of ethnic discrimination mostly based on color or their religious conviction. They provide legal aid and representation.

## Conclusions: Searching for New Alternatives

In the post-Cold War period one of the greatest challenges for civil societies and its institutions is globalization. To be able to give adequate answers to this challenge local NGOs and CSOs in Hungary and elsewhere in East and Central Europe have to be able to link and integrate their domestic activity into a global – or at least regional – context. Coming out of the somewhat narrow and parochial framework and political climate in which they are entrapped today, they should be able to find those donors who are able to cooperate with them as partners and equals for commonly shared values and goals in the global arena. This new stage for networking is already present, however its potential has not been entirely discovered or utilized.

The combination of local, regional and global activities is a necessity stemming from the fact that local governments and states are constrained by transnational financial institutions, multinational companies and other agents of the globalized world market and are less and less able to solve burning social, environmental and human rights issues. This is true even if in many cases they refer to these tendencies as an excuse for their inefficiency, incompetence and ineptness. This is ironically the case in the newly democratizing countries of East Central Europe such as Hungary, where previous political leaders of the former communist regime came back into power as postcommunist or social democratic politicians who talk about the “iron law” and the lack of alternatives to global capitalism. Not so long ago this “lack of alternative discourse” was targeted

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<sup>63</sup> In Hungarian: *Autonómia Alapítvány*. It was established in 1990 and has supported about 250 projects throughout the country.

<sup>64</sup> In 1995 András Biró won the Alternative Nobel Prize for his activities and achievements.

<sup>65</sup> About 300 complaints were submitted to the Bureau over the last three years (it was established in January 1994) and about 100 proved to be cases of ethnic discriminations. Proceedings have been initiated in several of these cases. See *White Booklet*, 1996 (The Legal Reference Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities, NEKI, Budapest, 1997).

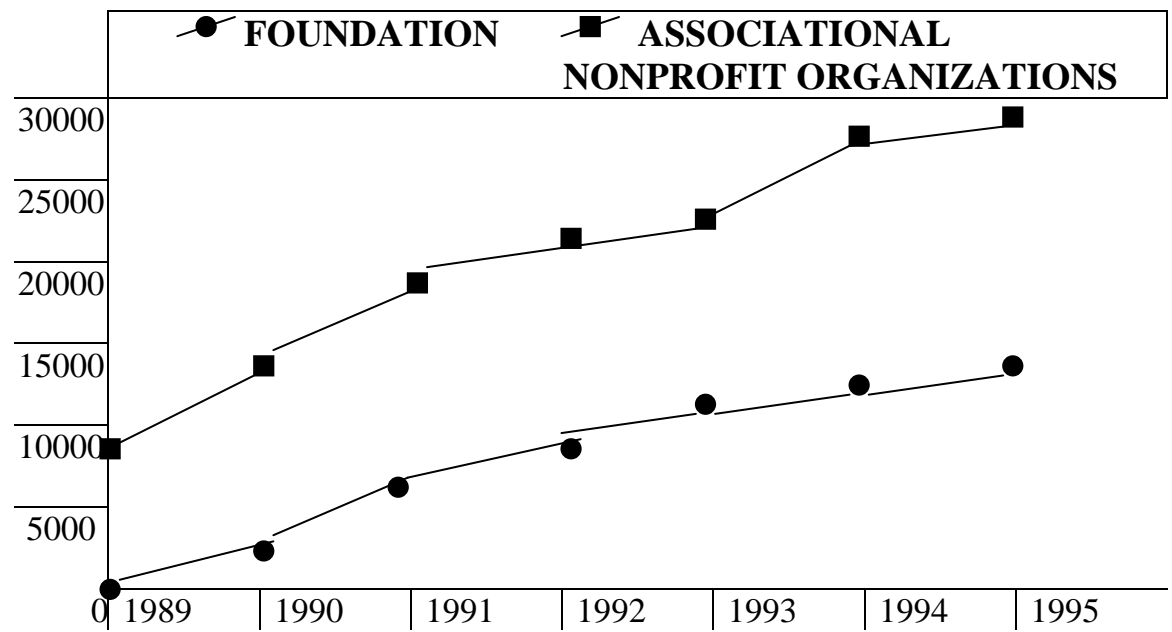
on the hegemony of the socialist world order and its local representatives, the Communist parties. The overlap of the diametrically opposing ideologies expressed by the same actors is not an accident. It is based on the same worldview and political philosophy of powerholders who have little to nothing in common with the basic values of civil society. Their message is today as it was before 1989: “We are not responsible for anything, it is the Soviet Union and the state of affairs in international class struggle (yesterday) and the World Bank and the iron law of global capitalism (today) who decide, we try to do our best for you but you have to understand: there is no alternative.”

If the emerging NGO-world in Hungary and elsewhere in East and Central Europe is to work for strengthening democratization and civil society, they must formulate, express and represent alternatives themselves. This is possible if they act as independent and autonomous agents in our chaotic world.

## The Number of Nonprofit Organizations in Hungary between 1862–1995

YEAR	FOUNDATION	ASSOCIATIONAL NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS	TOTAL
1862 <sup>A</sup>	..	319	..
1878 <sup>B</sup>	..	1.917	..
1932	..	14.365	..
1970	-	8.886	<i>8.886</i>
1982	-	6.570	<i>6.570</i>
1989	400	8.396	<i>8.796</i>
1990	1.865	14.080	<i>15.945</i>
1991	6.182	17.869	<i>24.051</i>
1992	9.703	21.528	<i>31.231</i>
1993	11.884	22.926	<i>34.810</i>
1994 <sup>C</sup>	14.216	26.107	<i>40.323</i>
1995 <sup>C</sup>	15.650	27.685	<i>43.335</i>

The Growth of the Number of Nonprofit Organizations in Hungary between 1989–1995



## The Number and Distribution of Nonprofit Organizations by Activities, 1995

Group of Activities	Foundations		Associational Nonprofit Organizations		Total	
	Number	Distr. %	Number	Distr. %	Number	Distr. %
Culture	2.471	15,8	1.856	6,7	4.327	10,0
Religion	831	5,3	285	1,0	1.116	2,6
Sport	999	6,4	6.091	22,0	7.090	16,4
Leisure, Hobby	422	2,7	6.622	23,9	7.044	16,3
Education	4.265	27,3	350	1,3	4.615	10,6
Research	525	3,4	378	1,4	903	2,1
Healthcare	1.419	9,1	330	1,2	1.749	4,0
Social care	2.357	15,1	791	2,8	3.148	7,2
Retire and Health Insurance	26	0,1	268	1,0	294	0,7
Civil Defense, Fire	60	0,4	1.111	4,0	1.171	2,7
Environment	377	2,4	542	2,0	919	2,1
Urban and Rural Development	721	4,6	781	2,8	1.502	3,5
Economic Development	339	2,2	226	0,8	565	1,3
Legal Defense	86	0,5	427	1,5	513	1,2
Public Safety Defense	315	2,0	763	2,8	1.078	2,5
Divers Aimed Charity, Nonprofit Unions	38	0,2	647	2,3	685	1,6
International Relationships	252	1,6	328	1,2	580	1,3
Professional, Economic Defense of Interest	53	0,3	5.374	19,4	5.427	12,5
Politics	94	0,6	515	1,9	609	1,4
Total	15.650	100,0	27.685	100,0	43.335	100,0

IV. A NEW EUROPE  
TAKES SHAPE



## REDEFINING (EUROPEAN) SECURITY

*European security can not be guaranteed through the use of traditional patterns of thought, or by isolating Europe from the rest of the world, a world that has become so small both in terms of space and time, since famine, the nuclear threat, and environmental risk has turned future generations into a mute presence in the politics of our time.<sup>66</sup>*

The concept of global and European security along with other well-used and ill-defined categories of the social sciences and political practices, needs to be re-thought and hopefully redefined in a time of fundamental break-ups and turbulence. The post-1989 world is certainly chaotic. Even conventional social scientists have had to recognise, after a few years of cheerful applause and mainstream-tailored academic optimism, that the great promises of President Bush's New World Order and the beginning of universal liberalism were nothing but a passing dream, an outcome of an ideology which functioned well for most of the century basically against totalitarian and authoritarian rule. 1989, however, brought not so much the end of Communism, as this ideology would like us to believe, but rather the end of the era of universal promise of modernisation and the welfare state.<sup>67</sup>

1989 is a milestone, since the two main actors of the bipolar world order, and the "Yalta System," could not play their previous, half-century-long role any longer. On the surface it seems that one of them, the Soviet Union, collapsed because it was unable to bear the financial burdens of "star wars," a peculiar type of arms race superimposed by the United States. According to mainstream interpretations, this was also the victory of good over evil, liberalism over communism, freedom over serfdom, prosperity over stagnation, and market economy over command economy. The optimism created by this interpretation raised serious expectations (called "illusions" today) among societies which unwillingly belonged to the Soviet sphere of influence for more than half a century. For societies in Central Europe who view themselves as European on the basis of history and culture, it seemed natural to re-join Europe in political terms once again after 1989. For them, thanks to the black-and-white thinking successfully propagated by domestic oppositions and the Western media, democracy meant prosperity and economic progress, after a short period of painful transition.

Long decades of paternalism and etatist tutelage also left its imprint on the social attitudes in the region: people opted out of state socialism, but in fact they wanted to benefit from a redistribution of wealth. Instead of the emergence of a new and more efficient welfare state, *à la* the Swedish, German or Austrian model, the welfare part of the state (higher education, health service) started to crumble in the East and has seriously eroded in the West. The old Thatcherite model and shock therapy of a neo-liberal state ironically has been propagated and implemented in the East by former Communist party leaders.

### The New Rising Wave of Nationalism

As a reaction, the attractiveness of liberal ideology seriously diminished from the beginning of the 1990s. Not only liberalism, but the two other main ideological streams, socialism and conservatism,

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<sup>66</sup> Furio Cerutti and Rudolfo Ragioneri, eds., *Rethinking European Security* (London: Crane Russak, 1990), p. 23.

<sup>67</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein argues convincingly about this point in his most recent book, *After Liberalism* (New York: The New Press, 1995).

have also faced a severe crisis, since they were unable to give appropriate and credible answers to the emerging international disorder and to the lack of the envisioned economic take-off. The economic crisis coupled with the crisis of ideologies and an increasing uncertainty about the future was topped by growing violence in former Yugoslavia and the non-peaceful disintegration of the former Soviet Union. In the lack of viable options and experiencing the weaknesses or emptiness of the optimistic slogans of 1989 concerning a “Common European House” or any serious preparation for the enlargement of Europe, many of the frustrated masses turned towards fundamentalist ideologies. Even more simply, they fell back to their immediate and collective memories and revitalised half-forgotten enemy-images. As Shlomo Avineri says, “The collapse of Communism elevated national and ethnic identity as the readily available unifying symbol.”<sup>68</sup>

Exclusive nationalisms based on the idea of ethnically homogeneous “organic communities” called nations, spread at high speed throughout the region, bringing fear, hatred, xenophobia and an identity-crisis in their wake. Without any other convincing model-building strategies, new nation-states *via* violent or non-violent secessions became the dominant answer to the challenge of disintegration and the general security vacuum created by the collapse of the post World War II international order. This new wave of exclusive nationalisms has not remained the marginal political philosophies of some frustrated social groups. It became, in different forms and intensities, official ideology. Ethno-politics still dominates the state-society and inter-state discourse in East Central European countries such as Rumania, Slovakia, Ukraine (not to mention the republics of former Yugoslavia acting as new nation-states). Ethno-politics in Hungary as an official discourse was dropped after 1994 when the post-communist socialist party gained power, but the unsolved minority questions in all of the neighbouring countries (except Slovenia and Austria) are among the most serious of the hidden agendas of Hungary’s regional foreign policy.

The new ethnic revival has not left Western Europe untouched either. Steadily growing unemployment and serious cuts in the welfare state budgets add up to the fear of massive immigration and refugee problems and altogether provide a hotbed for xenophobia and racism. 1989, here too, proves to be a milestone: with the existence of the Berlin Wall and the bipolar world system, it was relatively easy to propagate a tolerant value system of liberal capitalism and market economy towards societies beyond the Iron Curtain. Most likely, many of the people living on both sides of the Wall truly believed the propaganda. The affluent society of West Germany, after the obstacles were removed from the free flow of labour coming from the Ostländer, changed their attitudes almost overnight. Democracy, ethnic and cultural tolerance can be experienced more easily under the conditions of economic security and restricted immigration. If this is so, then how do we deal with the universalist credo of the liberal welfare state and the undefined enlargement of European integration? Who is let in, and who is left out? And what is more important, who decides?

The security of the continent is not identical with the security of the EU. Some of the main ambiguities of the last seven years came from unclear perspectives and were a consequence of divergent interpretations of the main tendencies of the integration process. Until recently, there was no clear answer concerning NATO and/or WEU enlargement (the proposed date is 1999 for a selected number of candidates) and it is still unclear and a matter of internal debate within the EU whether the Visegrád countries can count with an early (2002) EU-membership or whether this will be postponed for an additional 15–25 years.

Speaking of the “continent,” the future internal threat, i.e., for the EU is the external threat today: candidates from South East and Central Europe with greater or smaller chances for EU-membership in the foreseeable future. This very threat is actually the main achievement of the EU: the free flow of labour which today takes the form of illegal or unregistered migration. Ethnic conflicts, resulting in steady political instabilities and civil wars or “only” the permanent threats of civil wars is another threat to European security.

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<sup>68</sup> Shlomo Avineri, “Paradigm Change,” in Werner Weidenfeld and Josef Janning, eds., *Europe in Global Change* (Gutersloh: Bertelsmann Foundation Publishers, 1993), p. 25.

“If you have a problem, solve it!”

The main problem here is the complexity and widespread interrelated nature of existing (or potential) ethnic conflicts and political instability which is based on mutually exclusive ethno-politics. If, for example, Hungary would become a member of NATO and the EU within the next few years, without Slovakia and Rumania, it would most likely enhance the chances for ethnic conflicts provided by the approximately 3 million Hungarians living in a minority situation within the borders of Slovakia and Rumania. Does NATO and the EU want to inherit that kind of built-in conflict-potential? Hardly so. There is no recipe to solve these easily ignited questions and, what is worse, it does not seem that any credible authorities or international governments with the requested authority can provide the necessary framework for such a solution. EU advocates and bureaucrats have a tendency to avoid such delicate issues on their lecture tours in East and Central Europe which focus on the glorious perspectives of the “New Europe”. One remarkable and typical answer when this question is posed is: “If you have a problem, solve it!” The argument goes even further: “If you want to do something for Europe, do it! Don’t wait for Europe to do something for you.”

## The Nation-state is dead! Long live the Nation-state? The Central European Scene

The deepest irony of the new wave of nationalisms and the general will to erect new nation states in East Central Europe is that all this turbulence is happening when EU member states are giving up a significant part of their national sovereignty. This is the main paradox of what is called the “transition,” or lately “transformation”. If we look deeper into this paradox we find a deteriorating dynamics: the longer the enlargement is postponed and the more unclear or numerous the “conditions” become, the less the chances are of those to enter who are now in the second or third wave of candidates. In other words, the meaning of Europe for them may become or is already an evaporating concept surrounded by frustration, disappointment and unfulfilled hopes. If this already worn-out part of Europe faces further peripheralisation under rapidly declining control, their related nation states will further disintegrate politically and economically. There will be more maffianization, social polarisation, and uncontrolled immigration towards the West. If this happens an unfulfilled promise is going to contribute in a significant way to undermining the already scrambling security of the entire continent.

### *“Europe des Etats”*— or a Pan-European Security System?

Among the viable options concerning a new post-1989 European peace order, two scenarios remained realistic. The NATO-centred, “Atlantist” solution had very strong opponents like France, Spain, Italy and Greece. Its critics pointed out correctly that it is based on a lack of creative thinking and the inertia and survival capacities of existing institutions and, as such, it would not address the main challenges which exist since the fall of the Yalta System. This “reformed NATO” scenario would not only retain US hegemony over European affairs, but it would not match the security needs of East and Central Europe, including Russia.

Another scenario called the West European Defence Community is built on a hitherto unprecedented cohesion of Western Europe and has a strong support base among the opponents of the Atlantist solution. This scenario, too, seems to neglect the serious and complex security challenges coming from the east of Europe and rather suggests the institutionalisation of new, emerging cleavages on the continent. By the end of 1996, both scenarios seem to have lost their power to convince, although elements of these models can still be identified in current debates.

In the still popular scenario, “*Europe des Etats*,” the bipolar hegemony of the two superpowers is replaced by a new political and security arrangement based on European nation-states.<sup>69</sup> Instead of supranational integration, this model is based on intergovernmental agreement. This is supposed to guarantee the eminent position of middle-ranking powers like France. This scenario was first formulated by de Gaulle and still serves as an alternative *vis-a-vis* the federalist approach represented by Jacques Delors. During the 1980s it was highly propagated by Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Powell and is, even today, highly popular among those mostly conservative right-wing politicians who still believe in the efficiency of the individual nation-state and its unlimited sovereignty. One of the strongest arguments, attractive for a larger audience, is that this model presents itself as the best guarantee not only for the political independence of the continent, but also as a guarantee for cultural diversity. The argument says: Free cooperation among independent sovereign states in a bloc-free Europe is possible for the first time since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This fails, however, to take into consideration two factors: a) the fragmented security system it provides is far behind the possibilities of a more integrated Europe’s security potential so it would diminish Europe’s diplomatic and other bargaining position *vis-a-vis* the US and Japan, and b) the process of integration and the delegation to certain elements of sovereignty to supranational governments already went too far to be reversed. In other words, according to the very essence of their philosophy (conservatism) the protagonists of this scenario fail to understand that the 200 year victorious period of the modern nation state as a universal paradigm and an absolute and exclusive unit of analysis is over with 1989. This of course does not mean that there would no longer be nation-states nor that they would have no power, only that they are unable to control decisive economic, environmental and military processes and that there are other emerging decision-making centres of a different, e.g. supranational character.

One of the strongest counter-arguments put up against the polycentric model of *Europe des Etats* is that it could easily lead to the Balkanisation of European politics and instabilities characteristic of the old “balance of power” system which led to World War I and World War II. Adrian Hyde-Price gives us a concise summary of that argument:

“In an *Europe des Etats* – without firm supranational structures that can help institutionalise cooperation – nationalist rivalry, envy and mistrust could well increase. To rely on loose forms of limited inter-governmental cooperation might not be sufficient to generate a durable commitment to long-term cooperation. Without formal structures for collective decision-making and common action, national rivalries could re-emerge in Western Europe.”<sup>70</sup>

The fourth scenario of the Pan-European Collective Security System has a strong support basis in the former Eastern-bloc countries since it equally guarantees security, national independence and democracy for all countries in Europe. Instead of building upon the absolute sovereignty of the nation states and their free interactions, the emphasis in this model is on a collective security system provided by the CSCE framework. The visionary idea was first formulated by Vaclav Havel and Jiri Dienstbier in 1990 and then elaborated further by Western politicians like Danish foreign Minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen and President Mitterand, who introduced the idea of a European Confederation based on collective security: “Why not a flexible structure, more flexible than the EC, where one could discuss economic and cultural questions, start talks on security and where everyone would be equal.”<sup>71</sup>

Although CSCE has made considerable progress in the last years, it still does not possess efficient enforcement and decision-making mechanisms. The great vision needs more political support.

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<sup>69</sup> About the different scenarios, see Adrian Hyde-Price, *European Security beyond the Cold War*, (London: Sage, 1991).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted by A. Hyde-Price, *ibid.*, p. 216.

## NATO and Eastward Expansion

With the end of the bipolar logic in international relations, it became clear that new approaches to security are needed. Since the very meaning of security changed dramatically, institutions tailored for the Cold War need to be restructured, their roles redefined or new institutions established. Adrian Hyde-Price correctly formulated that it was no longer possible to focus exclusively on the military dimension of security overlooking the broader spectrum of vulnerabilities and threats to which post-1989 Europe is exposed. He clearly noticed that the main challenge for future European security is to create and implement institutions and mechanisms which are able to harmonise different, often contradictory interests and dynamics of West European integration and East Central European transition processes. Unfortunately, the central issue “how to force an organic bond” between the two halves of the continent, separated from each other in an artificial military way for half a century is still unanswered after 7 years of “transition”. Despite the early warnings of many intellectuals and some politicians, new division lines are becoming crystallised in the eastern and south eastern regions of the continent. Their legitimacy this time is rather economic and social than political and ideological.

The existing institutions of the previous security system could not give adequate and efficient answers to the quickly emerging challenges: the security and power vacuum developed under the wreckage of the Warsaw Pact and the former Eastern bloc was rapidly filled with ethnic cleansing, genocide and civil war in former Yugoslavia and with less violent ethno-politics and a new wave of aggressive nationalisms in other parts of the region. Although the foreseeable violent secessions, and 4 years of tragedy seriously undermined the credibility of NATO and WEU, carefully orchestrated eastward expansion could provide an appropriate framework to guarantee peace and security in the newly democratising countries of Europe. This expansion, however, cannot mean expansion in military terms only. The expanded concept of security in our post-1989 world has to be based on political and social guarantees. The societies of Eastern and Central Europe are indeed too “European” in the historical, cultural, and geographical senses to tolerate their further and possibly final marginalisation by the West. But they are too vulnerable at the same time to solve the tasks ahead of them out of their own resources alone.

Hyde-Price’s suggestions from 1991 should be seriously reconsidered today at the close of the historic moment, maybe in the spring of 1997, when NATO announces eastern expansion. The principles for a new European security system should continuously be based on the principle of complex and institutionalised interdependence in order to assure closer interstate cooperation and peaceful competition. One of the core elements of the new European stability will be psychological in origin, and that is trust-building. Not only are former Eastern-bloc countries trying to push each other out of the waiting room of the EU, there is also a lack of trust and sufficient will for cooperation between former Eastern and Western countries. The very first step might be to drop the old and indeed obsolete terminology of “East” and “West” (Is Greece more “Western” than Czech Republic or even Slovakia?).

On the basis of long-term and common interests and interconnectedness of European countries and societies, even the existing supranational institutions could provide an appropriate framework for a gradual and planned “catching up” transformation process of the former Eastern-bloc countries. With more effective enforcement mechanisms, CSCE would emerge from the present chaos as a form for pan-European security dialogue, and the WEU as a real defence component of the EU with a clear sense of purpose and identity. It might become a bridge between the EU and NATO. Since, as Simon Duke has suggested in a recent article, WEU has a great responsibility to set an example of unity through consensus because of its dual (NATO, EU) status.<sup>72</sup>

As it looks today, the most recent WEU meetings were unable to cure the major weaknesses of the organisation and WEU remained more or less dependent on NATO’s goodwill. A hidden agenda here is the tension between Washington and Brussels and the, in many ways, unclarified relationship between the US and the EU.

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<sup>72</sup> Simon Duke, “The Second Death (or second coming?) of the WEU,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* (June 1996).

A one-sided expansion of NATO towards the east without a concerted EU-enlargement would create new tensions among East Central European countries and could create new centres of conflict in the region.

Unfortunately, we are still far today from Hyde Price's suggestion for a European security system "based on interlocking and overlapping structures with no institutional hierarchy"<sup>73</sup> which would guarantee the survival and effectiveness of specific traditions and dynamics of European development. This model clearly set up against the conventional military system, with a clear institutional hierarchy, could appropriately handle regional differences and incorporate hither-to vague and over-stretched institutions such as the Central European Initiative (the former Pentagonale).

## The CSCE could be a Solution in the Case of Russia

If there is a country which has to find its place in the emerging European peace and security order it is certainly Russia, the large, disoriented and frustrated remnant of the not so long ago fearful and gigantic Soviet superpower. Although it has inherited a significant military potential, its army could not escape the overall political, economic and moral disintegration and, as the recent Chechen crisis has proved, it is practically unusable for major operations. Russia today possesses 4/5ths of the former territory of the USSR and little more than 50% of its population, and its 1990 GNP is that of a medium-size power. It knows less than ever before in its history where it belongs.

In the present turmoil of global regrouping, Russia's main challenge is to find an appropriate balance between its traditional eastern and western orientation. In the shadow of its neighbours, such as an increasingly strengthening and economically prosperous China and the economic superpower Japan, further reorientation towards Asia is inevitable not to speak of the futility of a one-sided Western orientation. The nearly 10% Muslim population living in Russian territories also binds the country to the South.

As Sergei Karaganov and other experts point out, however, this partial turn to Asia does not necessarily mean a retreat from the West.<sup>74</sup> Although Western aid was surprisingly modest compared to rhetoric, there is widespread belief in the United States and Western Europe that European security cannot exist without Russia being an integral part of the new cooperative framework under construction which is suppose to preserve and extend Western European security. In a recent study, Catherine McArdle Kelleher formulates western fear and the imperative concerning Russia concisely:

"No greater threat exists than a Russia that reverts to an autocratic, expansionist regime, especially when it retains large stocks of nuclear weapons and advanced conventional arms. Perhaps no single state can contribute more to future European security and to a new global security regime than a Russia that adopts a policy of cooperation with the United States and the major European allies on key diplomatic and military agendas. A Russia moving toward democracy, committed to stability, willing to assume security responsibilities in Europe and outside in accord with Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe principles – that must be the long term and overriding goal for American and European policy."<sup>75</sup>

To stop further disintegration and an irreversible escalation of anti-western nationalism, Russia has to become a responsible and reliable part of the international community. Due to its severe economic and political weaknesses and the deep psychological shock felt as humiliation as a

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p. 251.

<sup>74</sup> Sergei Karaganov, "Russia: Towards Enlightened Post-Imperialism," in Werner Weidenfeld and Josef Janning, eds, *Europe in Global Change* (Gutersloh: Bertelsmann Foundation Publishers, 1993).

<sup>75</sup> Catherine McArdle Kelleher, "The Future of European Security: An Interim Assessment," *Brookings Occasional Papers*, (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995), pp. 139–140.

consequence of the last superpower glory, it would be a dangerous and destructive step to leave Russia alone without offering partnership besides financial aid. On the other hand, it would also be illusionary to expect western-type political and social democracy in Russia in the foreseeable future. Karaganov is right by suggesting an “enlightened post imperial course,”<sup>76</sup> in order to avoid the politically extreme alternatives of neo-imperialism and neo-isolationism. This is, however, hardly possible without a significant amount of authoritarianism, etatism and nationalism. It is in the common interests of Russia and the western world to keep a dynamic balance between ongoing democratisation, liberalisation, and the related institutionalisation, on the one hand, and the strengthening authoritarianism, on the other. Perhaps social scientists and political decision-makers have to take into more serious consideration the importance of socio-psychological aspects in the cases of cataclysmic and complex change such as Russia and other East European societies have to face. In that situation, gestures might mean more than usual and can serve as better stabilising factors than aid in itself and could multiply its effectiveness. The ambivalent and often self-contradictory Russian reactions to the idea of the enlargement of NATO towards the East, in other words, to the Russian borders, have to be interpreted from this angle, since neither Russia’s joining NATO, nor its entering the EU is realistic. It seems that the realisation of the NATO-Russia agreement within the Partnership for Peace and the EU’s Partnership and Cooperation agreements would strengthen the existing but rather weak links and create new ones between Russia, Central Europe and the West. An unstable, increasingly hostile and anti-Western Russia, governed by a disintegrating state and even stronger maffias, would not only jeopardise European security in general, but would ultimately undermine the chances for Central Europe to stabilise civil democracy and stop and reverse social disintegration. That would be the beginning of the end for a comprehensive and complex security on the continent.

## Towards a Complex and Comprehensive Concept of Security

Central European societies with growing, but still not clearly defined chances of joining the EU, should grow into the partnership role and get rid of their paternalistic inferiority complex *vis-a-vis* Western Europe. Instead of relying on the mere goodwill of a supposedly more understanding new Big Brother, they should carefully formulate their own conditions concerning the Common European Project, including the security of the continent, since it has to be clear that such an ambitious aim cannot be realised among unequal partners pursuing unequally expressed interests. It has to be stated that Western Europe is going to benefit from rejoining and uniting with Central Europe in every sense: culturally, politically and economically, as it did benefit from the cooperation in the past and does in the present. The reverse is also true: a further disintegration and peripheralisation of Eastern and Central Europe would have serious negative consequences on Western European developments and could lead to an isolated and only temporarily and militarily secure “Fortress Europe.”

To avoid the negative alternative an immediate elaboration and implementation of the strategy based on a complex concept of security is inevitable. Instead of the conventional military components, the emphasis in this new strategy should be on social, economic and psychological elements of security. A first crucial step in this direction would be to link NATO expansion in an organic way to EU enlargement. There is some good news. Recently there were some hesitant steps taken in this direction. The harmonisation of the different components of security in the case of the new candidates should be seriously developed further along the lines of the interests of the related countries as well. The involvement of the related societies in public debates about their future seem to be a necessary and easily implementable condition: openness and transparency concerning the future European peace order.

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<sup>76</sup> Karaganov, p. 127.

Re-conceptualisation, demilitarisation and humanisation of the concept of security has significantly progressed since the end of the Cold War. The notion of human security presupposes new ways of cooperation between individuals, social groups and people within and across state borders.<sup>77</sup> This is an obvious shift in the emphasis from the state to civil society and its main concerns are the growing deterioration of the environment, human rights (including the right for well being), household security, the fear of violence in civil wars, from epidemic disease or further economic and existential deterioration. All of these issues are beyond the scope of the traditional concept of the security of states.

## Paradigm Change

A new, enriched wisdom is needed to handle all of the “security” problems accumulated at the turn of the millennium. The traditional roles of politicians, strategic experts and lawyers prove to be more and more ineffective. A new, integrated knowledge to understand more about complexities and perplexities, the up and coming chaos of the 21st century, out of which new order(s) will arise. The “New Middle Ages”, a metaphor introduced by Umberto Eco, expresses the fragmented nature of our world. We probably need new metaphors at the dawn of the 21st century to construct a more suitable one. That requires, as a first step, rethinking facts, re-conceptualising old notions, questioning out-dated clichés (such as the enemy images and cultural “otherness” as an elusive factor) and redefining concepts that appear to be self-evident. The social sciences, which also need serious re-conceptualisation, can and should play a leading role in creating this new language by creating more adequate metaphors and possible paradigms.

This immense task will not be fulfilled in a peaceful, planned and linear way. It will be rather turbulent and will provoke serious scientific, ideological and perhaps political skirmishes. Conflicts of this type, however, can help to give birth to new paradigms or theoretical frameworks. Redefining global and European security might be one possible step towards this accomplishment.

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<sup>77</sup> This concept was introduced and defined by Emma Rotschild at a meeting of the Common Security Forum in South Africa. See, *Program on Peace and Security Newsletter* (Chicago: The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation), fall 1996 (no. 3), p. 4.



CENTRAL EUROPE  
*ANTE PORTAS:*  
A NEW EUROPEAN ORDER?

## The Liberal World Order and the Grand Narrative of European Unification

According to the critiques of the “Post Cold War Chaos” theory we still live in a stable liberal world order which arose after World War II and which has become “stronger than ever.” One of the champions of this approach, John Ikenberry, believes that the United States, the main architect of the liberal world order is “at the center of a world of its own making” and does not have to worry about forging a durable world order again or reinventing the basic rules of world politics, since the end of the Cold War meant not the end of a world order but only the collapse of the communist world.<sup>78</sup>

This stable Post World War II world order based on the Atlantic Charter (1941) has successfully secured the functioning of its principle elements: free trade, equal access to natural resources, international economic collaboration, employment security and social welfare. The main characteristics of this model were economic openness, joint management of the Western political-economic order, liberal democracy with constitutionalism.

The security dimension of the liberal world order, provided by NATO, has successfully accomplished its major task: to keep the Russians out, the Germans down and the Americans in. At the same time it paved the way for Germany’s and Japan’s reintegration. As Ikenberry summarizes the glorious march of the Western world:

“The problems the liberal democratic order confronts are mostly problems of success, foremost among them the need to integrate the newly developing and post-communist countries. Here one sees most that the post-Cold War order is really a continuation and extension of the Western Order [...]”<sup>79</sup>

For Ikenberry after, 50 years “the Western liberal democratic world is robust, and its principles and policies remain the core of world order.”<sup>80</sup>

Replacing America-centrism with Euro-centrism, Timothy Garton Ash warns us about the dangers of a newly-born Grand Narrative that he calls the “ideological-teleological discourse of European unification.”<sup>81</sup> Apart from being obsessed with Europe, Ash represents the same *status quo* conservatism as Ikenberry: “In fact, what we have already achieved in a large part of Western and Southern Europe is a new model of liberal order.” He believes that what he calls “an extraordinary achievement” is endangered exactly because of a forced march to unity. Timothy Garton Ash’s solution is rather to consolidate this liberal order and to spread it across the continent. “Liberal order, not unity, is the right strategic goal for European policy in our time.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> See John Ikenberry, The Myth of Post-Cold War Chaos. In: *Foreign Affairs*, (May-June 1996), p. 91.

<sup>79</sup> Ikenberry, The Myth of Post-Cold War Chaos. In: *Foreign Affairs*, (May-June 1996), p. 91.

<sup>80</sup> Op. cit. p. 89.

<sup>81</sup> See Timothy Garton Ash, Europe’s Endangered Liberal Order. In: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 7, Nr. 2. (March–April 1998), p. 52.

<sup>82</sup> Op. cit. p. 52.

Timothy Garton Ash believes in the survival of the European nation-states and he stands for a non-hegemonic liberal European order instead of the “unification” paradigm.

This liberal model is a result of a success (post-World War II) story, which is mainly a European achievement. Its main building blocks, the EU, NATO, the Council of Europe and the OSCE are well established institutions. In this system the United States can continue to play the role of the external hegemonic balancer, since its key element is internal freedom for the regrouping and the realignment of the individual nationstates.

Paradoxical as it is, the model suggested by Timothy Garton Ash reflects a deep mistrust in the liberal nation-state. His main concern is obviously Germany, who under the disguise of the European Union has a greater chance to play the role of the hegemon than under the external control of the United States supported by an internal alliance of European nation-states. In other words, reunited Germany, the economically strongest nation-state of Europe can benefit more from the unification process pursued “in the name of Europe” than by being kept under the control of the Anglo-American Alliance. This may be true, but with this argument we remain entrapped in the old paradox of the nation-state.

With a continued process of unification, lead by a strong Germany, “Europe” could enter the world stage as a single power – and this is what Timothy Garton Ash and many others want to avoid.

“To consolidate Europe’s liberal order and to spread it across the whole continent is both a more urgent and, in the light of history, a more realistic goal for Europe at the beginning of the twenty-first century than the vain pursuit of unification in a part of it. Now finally, is liberal order a less idealistic goal than unity. For unity is not a primary value in itself. It is but a means to higher ends. Liberal order, by contrast, directly implies not one but two primary values: peace and freedom.”<sup>83</sup>

*Vis-à-vis* the American and European champions of the liberal world order paradigm, the Brussels-based think tank, the Forward Studies Unit, led by Jerome Vignon, elaborated five scenarios for the 21<sup>st</sup> century emerging world order:

1. The Triumphs and Markets Scenario:

This represents the victory of neo-liberalism. As a consequence, urbanization, crime, centralization, polarization, poverty will continue to expand in Europe; at the same time political projects are declining. The EU enlargement will be fast but integration will remain loose.

2. The “Hundred Flowers” Scenario:

Globalization slows down; disobedience against Big Business and Big Politics increases, such as the refusal to pay taxes, low turnout in voting; growing number of local initiatives. Societies are fragmented, the New Feudalism, or New Middle Ages paradigm dominates; connections between social “islands” are mostly held by internet; social cohesion is weak.

In the case of this scenario the EU is unable to fulfill its task, and the member states do not cooperate efficiently.

3. The Shared Responsibilities Scenario:

Civil society and the NGO sector becomes stronger and more visible in every level of social existence; the public sector undergoes a significant reform and gains accountability and transparency. The role of regional organizations grows; cosmos is being built and overcomes chaos; unemployment decreases, new social values surface: more social protection and reduced income-gaps, etc.

Europe is a real success story; the 27 member states plus 12 candidates cooperate well. The EU becomes a model for the rest of the world.

4. Creative Societies Scenario:

Non-market activities play a vital role; green and human capital grows. The creative potential of Europe attracts foreign capital investment; the economy is dynamic, globalization continues.

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<sup>83</sup> Op. cit. p. 65.

Politics becomes more cooperative; subsidiarity will be realized; as a consequence Central Europe becomes more important. Regionalization overtakes globalization.

At the same time, EU enlargement slows down. Political union is possible; the EMU and the single market are working.

#### 5. Tumultuous Neighborhoods Scenario:

There will be growing tensions concerning resources, even war could break out for the control of water supplies; societies are aging; governments are isolated, and have to increasingly defend themselves against growing international crime, terrorism, etc.

Europe is helpless: the international scene is dominated by big power rivalry; reforms are cut; inequalities grow; the state comes back, globalization slows down. Societies become more passive; economic performance is mediocre.

The EMU and the single market remain on track, at the same time the influence of regional blocks grows.

Even these rather general and sketchy scenarios show a high complexity of challenges that an integrating Europe has to cope with. They also indicate that simply relying on the good old Liberal Order will not be sufficient for those who were not part of it before 1989. The end of the Cold War does represent a cornerstone in world history: the game has opened up, and as a consequence a growing number of states and societies want to share the advantages of a democratic liberal capitalism in a time of decreasing natural resources. We have to understand and analyze the Eastern enlargement of the EU and the endeavors of the candidates accordingly.

## 1989 and after: Towards a New Balance between Reason and Identity?

Even if it is true that a New World Order, let alone a New European Order, was not built immediately upon the ruins of the Berlin Wall, 1989, the *Annus Mirabilis* is a cornerstone in European and world history. Communism collapsed with all of its well-known consequences.

Fundamental changes, however, did not occur exclusively in the Eastern part of Europe. The end of the Yalta system and its bipolar logic also meant the end of a protected, safe and geographically limited development of West European integration. The West was unprepared for the velvet revolutions and even less prepared for what followed.

There is good reason to believe that the war-economy and later the bloc system of the Cold War undermined the absolute sovereignty of the nation-state. It is also true that the development of the welfare state in the West and its Eastern counterpart, the socialist state with the enforced cooperation within the Soviet bloc, rendered the likelihood of nationalistic rivalry minimal. But it did not mean, however, that the search for ethnic identity, even in the forms of radical nationalisms, were eliminated in Europe.

The Cold War was comfortable for Western Europe. The Soviet Union as a negative integrator and the U.S. as a positive integrator contributed in a large way to the materialization of the grand vision of Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman. Marshall Aid secured the planned and long-lasting economic, financial and infrastructural cooperation and paved the way for economic integration for a well-defined part of Europe. The Iron Curtain secured the unharnessed development of the “Blue Banana,” of the highly industrialized part of Western Europe. This unique, spectacular and fast development of integration among previously hostile nation-states was significantly determined by the political will and economic and military might of the United States.

But as Timothy Garton Ash correctly argues, beneath the thin, new layer of the newly established “*de facto* solidarity,” national interests survived. As many authors claim today, the nation-state became obsolete but at the same time it has remained obstinate.

On the other side of the European coin, the Cold War did not help Eastern and Central Europe. The partly successful communist strategy of atomization and the elimination of

autonomous civil organizations turned the respective societies, in George Schöpflin's words, "into civic deserts, where the micro level patterns of behaviour were governed by mistrust."<sup>84</sup>

After the Cold War the situation changed dramatically for both parts of Europe. The West lost its comfortable position and was forced to match its ideology with reality. There was no obstacle anymore for the extension of liberal democracy and economic welfare to the rest of the continent. There was a lot of talk in the West and even more hope in the East about a second Marshall Aid. It seemed logical. If the West – as it was said according to its own interest – wants to extend integration it should provide a similar framework to what it was provided with some four decades before. This did not happen since there was no unanimous political will to make such a decision. Instead, disappointment, frustration and uncertainty ruled the political scene in "newly democratizing" societies. Retrospectively it seems natural that in the lack of any other realistic perspectives Eastern and Central European societies turned to their national identities which were artificially suppressed during the previous regime. Although nearly all of them declared their will to join "Europe," in reality most of them practiced ethnopolitics.

Although Western Europe was marching towards Maastricht, the single European market and the Economic and Monetary Union – partly as a reaction to ideologies coming from an "alien" center – a stronger social support of ethnic and national identities can be observed in many Western societies.

The supranational institutions of the European Union are not able to provide a real identity for Western societies in a period when the welfare state has withdrawn and uncertainties (unemployment, migration, etc.) began to grow as a result of the end of the Cold War.

George Schöpflin brilliantly observes that the Cold War, with its temporary artificial division, created an imbalance between the politics of "reason" and the politics of "identity." In the post-1989 period, after the dividing line was lifted, the search for identity gained momentum again.

This happened more vigorously and brutally in Eastern and Central Europe, where artificially united multi-ethnic states broke up and where suppressed and undisputed historic grievances surfaced in anarchic and intense ways. In the lack of a proper framework and real political and economic perspectives, in Freud's phrase "the narcissism of minor differences" ruled the imagination of politicians. But the examples of Ireland, Scotland, Belgium, Spain and Italy show us that the search for old and new ethnic and cultural identities does not leave the realm of politics intact even in the already well-integrated EU countries.

## The Crisis of the Nation-State and the Elements of a New European Order: Territoriality vs. Non-territoriality; Intergovernmentalism vs. Supranationalism

Pan-European and federalist movements seeking an escape from the vicious circle of nationalistic rivalry, based on the universalistic notion of the modern nationstate, only surfaced after the hitherto unprecedented massacre of World War I. The movements initiated by Count Coudenhove-Calergi and the French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand in the 1920s, and the powerful speeches and articles of Winston Churchill in the 1930s, did not have a real impact on mainstream political relations. In 1933 the Nazis banned all pro-Europe associations; but paradoxically the consequences of Nazi dictatorship undermined the unrestricted belief in the absolute sovereignty of the nation-state both in the public opinion and in the thinking of the political elite in Western Europe. World War II and the conclusions drawn from it strengthened and deepened the recognition that the modern nation-state is unable to give adequate answers to the great challenges of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, cultural and historical identification with the "nation" has remained a key dimension of post-World War II European development.

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<sup>84</sup> Schöpflin, G., Nationalism and Ethnic Minorities in Post-Communist Europe. In: Schöpflin, George (ed. with Nancy Wood), *In Search for Central Europe*, (Policy Press, 1989), p. 153.

Nation-states in Western Europe can be called more or less “successful” political units until the World Wars (or the second 30 Years War) of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The new nation-states, in Central and Eastern Europe, created and superimposed by the victorious big powers after the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, were sources of permanent hatred, unsolved disputes, fruitless rivalry and unfulfilled hopes. After the long interlude of the Cold War the suppressed nationalistic tensions surfaced again and were combined with new waves of nationalism.

From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, progressive Central European politicians and radical democrats such as Oscar Jászi and Milan Hodza believed that only federation or confederation would solve the problems of the Danubian region. Any attempts at creating nation-states would result in creating new national minorities, which in the lack of a democratic and tolerant political culture would be the sources and targets of aggressive and violent nationalisms.

What Jászi and his followers had in mind was a democratized and federated version of the former Habsburg Empire. They clearly saw the advantages of a larger economic spectrum with naturally developed and inviolate divisions of labor between agricultural and industrial areas and the advantage of the lack of state borders which could only cut populations who culturally and linguistically belonged together. Unfortunately, their voice was not strong enough *vis-à-vis* the supporters of the nationstate solution. The Peace Treaties after World War I implanted the seeds of new nationalistic rivalries and made the newly created nation-states of Central Europe hostile to one another, an easy target for Nazi propaganda.

During World War II and the Cold War, the system of nation-states went through dramatic changes in Europe. Against the expectations of Jászi and the Danubian federalists, federalism gained momentum in Western Europe. The process of integration at the expense of national sovereignty occurred in a geographic region, the boundaries of which were identical with the boundaries of the Holy Roman Empire of Charlemagne. One can argue as Timothy Garton Ash and others, that the first six members of the European Economic Community were seeking to realize their national goals: the Germans were interested in securing conditions for reunification, the British wanted to cure their weak economy, the French were interested in finding legitimate ways for “a certain idea of France.” This maybe the case, but nevertheless they succeeded in creating something that had never before existed. By institutionalizing “*de facto* solidarity” among themselves, the possibility of war was eliminated and economic and political integration became irreversible. At the same time their perception of the future of individual nationstates in a new Europe and about their mutual relationship was significantly altered.

Germany has been constantly trying to get rid of or minimize the importance of its national symbols in order to make the world forget about its aggressive military past. It emphasized the transcendence of the politics of national interests and represented an ideal form of “integrationism.” Whereas British foreign policy strongly emphasized the continuity of “realism.” Longing for intergovernmentalism, based on De Gaulle’s notion of the “Europe of nation-states,” the traditional French insistence to the centralized state has survived. Representing different approaches and visions of integration, one thing was clear: they all gave up a significant part of their absolute national sovereignty that was delegated to a yet unidentifiable higher unit.

## The “Two Europes” Paradigm and the Soft Empire Model

The history of post-war European integration was characterized by duality between the national and supranational, the territorial and non-territorial, the decentralized and the centered. What has emerged from the Cold War period is a new multi-national entity with a historic mission to dissolve national exclusiveness. Just as Jászi suggested to democratize the old Habsburg Empire, many contemporary authors are going back to the empire model when they attempt to grasp post-World War II European development.

Pierre Hassner points out that the fluid and mobile character of the relations between the internal and the external, the intergovernmental and the supranational – represent a break with the modern conception of political territoriality.

Similarly, Ola Tunander argues that the pre-modern empire model is more applicable to post-Cold War Europe than the modern nation-state model. He describes the post-Cold War European Order as a synthesis of a “bipolar Friend-Foe structure and a hierarchic cosmos-chaos structure.” The West European-American (EU-NATO) “cosmos” is confronted with an increasingly chaotic Eastern Europe and Russia, therefore the former Friend-Foe divide is replaced with a cosmos-chaos divide. Although the state remains a central actor of the game, its role is increasingly undermined by transnational forces.

“The coexistence of state and non-state actors, of territorial and non-territorial forces, of universalist claims of cosmos and the cultural divide of the Foe is characteristic of post-Cold War Europe.”<sup>85</sup>

The new “Order” will be based on new types of power-structures in which the state’s exclusive control of territory is given less weight and the precise delimitation of territory between neighboring states will be blurred. The empire metaphor seems to be a useful analytical tool for post-Cold War European development, characterized by the crisis of the nation-state.

According to the German historian, Reinhardt Kosselleck, Germany is more ready to adapt to a federal Europe or even serve as a model for it, since it never really has been a nationstate. It was rather characterized by the multiplicity and interpenetration of various types of political units and loyalties (from medieval corporations via principalities to Länder).

Can we suggest that the Holy Empire is being revived in the disguise of the European Union (which would then be an empire without an emperor)? The picture is more chaotic and contradictory.

The stage of post-imperial nation-state formation passed away a long time ago in the West, but was never completed in East and Central Europe, where the formation of new nation-states is still progressing and is disturbingly combined with post-national integration. Ernest Gellner, however, clearly warns against employing clichés: it is true that deterritorialization in the West runs parallel with the territorialization in the Eastern peripheries. There are powerful tendencies for reterritorialization in the West and deterritorialization in the East.

Tunander eloquently formulates this undefined, elusive character of the new emerging order:

“The power structure of the post-Cold War era appears as a two-headed eagle, flying in space and beyond space. The two appear almost independent of each other, but they coincide in the peripheral nationalists’ fight for territory and the European centralizing forces’ escape territory – between Serbia and Croatia, between Slovakia and Czechia, between Russia and Europe. The medieval prince – as a metaphor – can illustrate this cloven territorial-non-territorial power. He strides forth, carrying the sword in one hand and the book in the other.”<sup>86</sup>

Certainly what we see at this stage is the drama of transnational forces in opposition to the European territorial nationstate. This play is rather characterized by paradoxes than by linear development. As Tunander concludes, to synthesize the old debate of Stanley Hoffmann and Ernst Haas about the future of the nation-state, it is both obsolete and obstinate. Meanwhile, as the crisis unfolds, nationalism and separatism are on the rise. Transnational forces, at work all over Europe, are accompanied with fragmentation. Subnational and transnational actors both gain from the break-up of the nation-state. Growth of cosmopolitanism and the rapidity of change have created the need and search for stability and identity (Schöpflin), for roots and self-closure. The increase of chaos and corruption strengthens the demand for a stronger state.

One of the less definable elements of this “unidentified object” is its geographic scope. The European Union is now certainly at a crossroads in more than one meaning of the word. Its crisis is

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<sup>85</sup> Tunander, Ola (et. al. ed.), *Geopolitics in Post-War Europe. Security, Territory and Identity*. PRIV, (SAGE, 1997), p. 19.

<sup>86</sup> Op. cit. p. 59.

a particular crisis of territoriality – demonstrated by its enlargement. This ambiguity will remain with us in the longer run. Turning to Hassner again:

“The Europe of European integration is bound to remain ambiguous in its geographical dimension. It cannot be conceived without borders but the borders are bound to remain moving and contradictory”<sup>87</sup>

Certainly, from an Eastern, Central European or Balkan point of view Europe appears as a magnetic center which represents a higher set of values with which one should identify, and at the same time one can feel rejected, excluded and marginalized by it.

As champions of the empire-paradigm emphasize, the degree of control diminishes, and sovereignty blurs, as one moves from the center towards the periphery.<sup>88</sup> The most immediate question for the East and Central European countries is exactly whether they are making up a new-old gray zone of the European Empire, or they are able to integrate themselves closer to the core.

This is why it is legitimate to say that Europe is at crossroads at the turn of the millenium, facing the Eastern enlargement of the European Union which will inevitably lead to internal institutional reforms.

The characteristics, paradoxes and perplexities of the emerging post-Cold War European Order, for the time being, take the shape of chaos and disorder. Yet within this chaos and disorder the following constitutive and dynamizing factors must be mentioned:

- ❑ the coexistence of state and non-state actors; that territorial and non-territorial forces conclude in the crisis of the nation-state and the crisis of territoriality;
- ❑ thanks to the challenges of growing uncertainties the need for identity and cultural roots is growing;
- ❑ thanks to the unidentifiable character of the emerging Europe, integration and centeredness are accompanied with fragmentation and marginalization;
- ❑ as a consequence of the above-mentioned factors a sort of “Neomedievalism” is emerging, Europe is taking the shape of a “soft empire”;
- ❑ The social dimension: the process of European integration undermined the absolute power of national bureaucracies and opened the space for multi-perspective groups and networks of civil society. This unprecedented situation provides a social framework for further “enlargement” which in turn is likely to enhance the level of unpredictability and ambiguity.
- ❑ On the other hand, the released energies of previously oppressed social forces in former Eastern-bloc countries can contribute in a decisive way to the development of a new European identity and to the construction and stability of a new type of multinational and quasi-federal political unit.

The newly released and creative energies accumulated within the societies of East and Central Europe are usually not taken seriously into account as a potential dynamizing force by the main architects of the EU. Therein lies a danger, since if these social, economic and political energies are not channeled and utilized properly, they might turn into disintegrating factors for the European integration process.

This is true in the case of conventional and non-conventional social groups as well. In the unidentified post-Cold War Europe, new social groups with ambiguous and incomplete status have emerged and have become significant players: Gypsies, refugees, permanent residents, European citizens, etc.

The new configurations of communities and societies are characterized by the search for non-territorial identities and citizenship.

If the process of identification remains a one-sided effort, representing the interests of a supranational elite and bureaucracy, if feedback mechanisms are not effectively and partly institutionalized, then the superimposed symbols and rhetoric can cause alienation and counter-tendencies, even disintegration of the potential social base.

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<sup>87</sup> Hassner p. 48.

<sup>88</sup> See Tunander, p. 255.

This danger which is already present in the societies of the EU member states can become more intense in the case of the candidate countries. Pierre Hassner warns us that uncertainty and ambiguity are going to be with us for a while:

“All identities and communities, all roots and borders are constructed and fragile. But the need for identity and community [...] is not. If this need is negated or humiliated, it only comes back with a vengeance. Yet, needed mediating frameworks are [...] weak or even absent.

In this sense, the fate of the territorial nation-state, which is both obsolete and obstinate, and the fate of the European Union, which may be neither, could serve as two opposite examples of a common reality characteristic of our time: dissociations without recomposition, contradiction without synthesis.”<sup>89</sup>

## Central Europe *ante Portas*: Towards a New European Security Order?

There is a general consensus among experts that in its present state the European Union would be able to continue and even extend the *Pax Americana*. The main question today is whether the first wave of the eastern enlargement is going to provoke fundamental changes which would have a strong effect on the future of European integration.

Attitudes and expectations concerning eastern enlargement both among EU member states and among candidates were far from being harmonious during the first post-Cold War decade. Understandably, more similarities can be found among the candidates than among gatekeepers.

The priorities of the three major European powers as discussed earlier differed largely. They did have, however, one thing in common. None of them possessed the power nor the vision with the necessary social and political consensus to carry out a straightforward policy in the same way that the US initiated and dominated the NATO enlargement debate after 1994.<sup>90</sup>

WEU could offer nothing to aspirant states beyond “associated partnership” as its territorial defense guarantees remained the responsibility of NATO.

It is very hard, if not impossible, to predict how candidate countries of Europe in 1998 will behave around 2005 when they might possibly enter the EU. But it is certainly true that guarantees of stability in political, social and economic terms should be secured now, during the period of preparation which is going to be a decisive experience for the future of enlarged integration. NATO security is not very helpful in the face of new threats and challenges for the candidate countries. They would rather need a kind of EU security: economic stability, the further consolidation of democracy, the strengthening of social cohesion. What has been done up until now in that field is insufficient.

In addition, the “first wave countries” have not tried to gain much bargaining power either *vis-à-vis* the EU and the supranational decision-making organizations. They fear taking on the role of being accused of provoking chaos and crisis. Socialized by the Big Brother Syndrome, the political elite of the candidate countries have not put their own visions and scenarios on the negotiating table (primarily because they don’t have any). Being afraid of slowing down the enlargement process by making a bad impression, any public criticism of the EU and the enlargement process has been avoided by the Hungarian government and the mass media. (During the NATO referendum campaign, official propaganda suggested that NATO membership is instrumental for EU enlargement and that it will be economically beneficial for the country.)

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<sup>89</sup> Hassner, P. p. 58.

<sup>90</sup> See Rees, G. Wyn, *The Western European Union at the Crossroads. Between Transatlantic Solidarity and European Integration*. (Westview Press, 1998), p. 110.



Temporarily, East and Central Europe is stabilized through an unbalanced relationship with expectations of Western Europe. In other words, the magnetism of Europe's "one-center" works. "Central Europe has been strongly 'disciplined' by virtue of the close proximity to the EU," says Ole Waever.<sup>91</sup> But he also warns that this security system can only function "when new members move closer to the EU neither too quickly nor too slowly,"<sup>92</sup> otherwise the magnet does not work, or the EU loses its coherence.

From that point of view the Amsterdam Treaty of June 1997 could not be called a success. As Martin Kahl argues, it was "an exercise in cautious compromise, a 150 page reflection of the defensive, inward looking mood of the Union."<sup>93</sup>

During the summit it became clear that leaders of the European Union could not agree on reforming the policy-making institutions and the basic operating rules – a crucial precondition for enlargement. The Treaty of Amsterdam also illustrated that old and diverse clichés of the leading Western European states concerning foreign and defense interests survive. On the one side of the foreign and defense policy spectrum is Germany, claiming for a fully integrated union with a common foreign and defense policy and a call for an eventual integration of WEU into EU; on the other side of the spectrum we can find Britain with its insistence to a loose inter-governmental union and corresponding foreign and defense policy.

One can agree with Kahl, that "with completion of the internal market, the economies of the member states have been fully Europeanized, but for some years ahead legitimacy still will be drawn from the nation-states."<sup>94</sup> That means that EU membership will not have a strong impact on political identity.

If there is a weak sense of community within the EU itself, what can we say about the possible identification of the "first wave" candidates? A strong identification with better living standards, higher salaries and a "European" lifestyle can be easily observed within East and Central European societies. Identification with European issues as their "own" problems in terms of responsibility-taking, however, is far from being on the agenda.

A crucial question of enlargement will be in which direction the candidates are going to turn the balance: are they going to reinforce the inter-governmentalists or will they be ready to delegate their newly born national sovereignty to the altar of the post-nation-state system. There is no general answer to these questions. We can only have a vision of the main conditions, major players and emerging structures of the complex process of enlargement. One can agree with Jerome Vignon, that Eastern and Western Europe need to construct a new dialectic of deepening and widening together, based on the IGC, EMU and the transformation of NATO.

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<sup>91</sup> See Waever, Ole pp. 69–70.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> See Kahl, Martin, European Integration, European Security and the Transformation in Central Eastern Europe. In: *Journal of European Integration* vol. XX. no 2–3. Winter–Spring, p. 177.

<sup>94</sup> Kahl, Martin, op. cit. p. 183.

V.  
CONVERSATIONS  
AND CONSIDERATIONS  
ABOUT EAST CENTRAL  
EUROPE

# THE STRANGE DEATH OF LIBERALISM

## A CONVERSATION WITH IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN\*

*In an interview ten years ago you saw the 1990s as a very important decade, in which a great deal would be clarified concerning the future development of the world system. I would like to ask you how you see the changes of these past ten years in Eastern Europe or, if you prefer, the changes over the last twenty years.*

I have a vision of what happened in Eastern Europe which is not that of most people – either those in East Central Europe or the rest of the world. First, the rapidity and ease of the transformation or collapse of communism was made possible by Gorbachev’s fundamental change of policy. Of course, others have argued this. But, in my view, Gorbachev’s fundamental change of policy was the consequence of U.S. weakness rather than U.S. strength. This is the first of my unusual points of view. The second is that the collapse of communism is far from being the triumph of liberalism, but rather represents the collapse of liberalism as an ideology. Let me try and explain both. The first is a view about a middle-run reality and the second a long-term reality.

The middle-run reality is that, after 1945, the U.S. was the hegemonic power of the world system. It was the strongest country economically, politically, militarily and even culturally. It more or less dominated the world for 25 or 30 years in terms of its ability to achieve what it wished. In this situation, its relationship to the Soviet Union was not one of real conflict but of stylized, fake conflict in the sense that the Yalta “deal” really was a “deal”. The deal was basically that the U.S. and the Soviet Union agreed that under no circumstances would there be violence in Europe. The Soviet Union would have an area which was politically its own and would not expect any kind of economic aid in reconstruction, while the U.S. went about reconstructing Western Europe and Japan. This part of the deal is usually forgotten.

*Do you consider that this Yalta deal was violated – because East Europeans think it was. I am thinking, say, of Ferenc Febér’s article on the long revolution against the Yalta system.*

Well, it depends what you mean by violated. If you assume that it was ever to mean free elections in Eastern Europe, then of course it was violated. But I do not think it ever meant this.

*What about violence? You said that the deal was that there should be no violence.*

I meant inter-state violence.

*Well, even that is questionable as far as Hungary or Czechoslovakia are concerned.*

No, I think from 1945 to 1990 we have a period of exceptional interstate peace. The boundaries and the borders are absolutely sealed and troops do not cross them. That was the arrangement and it was respected at all points and time.

*You don’t consider 1956 or 1968 as a breach?*

No, 1956 and 1968 were exactly part of the deal. The deal was that the Soviet Union would take care of any problems it might have within its own territories and the U.S. would not intervene. There was plenty of rhetoric, but the U.S. did not move in 1953, 1956, 1968, 1980 or 1981 (in

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\*This interview was made in 1991.

Poland). At none of these points in time did the U.S. make a single move. Quite to the contrary – the U.S. made it very clear to the Soviet Union and the world that the U.S. would not move. It was part of the deal. And what the U.S. got for it was that the Soviets kept order in that area of the world. So, in that sense, I consider the Soviet Union to be a sub-imperialist power of the U.S. for 45 years, keeping order in its part of the world.

Now, Yalta was a deal about Europe. This will take us away from Eastern Europe, but the disorder in the world during this period was not because of the Soviet Union or the U.S. but rather because of the Third World. It was not discussed in Yalta and assumed to be weak; but they would not respect this order and created a great fuss. This is another story.

From the late 1960s on, U.S. power began to be undermined. This was due first to the natural economic rise of Western Europe and Japan, which made the U.S. incredibly less competitive. Second, there were the transformations in the Third World and the long stagnation in the world economy as a whole which made the U.S. increasingly even less competitive. Finally, it had to engage in military Keynesianism throughout the 1980s and got into an enormous debt situation. All of this was part of the relative decline of the U.S. And once the U.S. began to decline, the Soviet Union could no longer count on it to maintain this kind of tension which was the basis of Soviet power both inside the country and in Eastern Europe. I see Gorbachev as having figured this out by 1985 and saying “I’ve got to save the pieces for Russia (or the Soviet Union, whichever phrase you wish to use) as a state and a power in the world”. I see him as having said to himself that he had to do three things. First, he needed to liquidate the costs of the Cold War – for it was economically impossible. He planned to do this by forcing the U.S. into a disarmament agreement which basically he did by unilaterally taking steps that the U.S. had to match. Second, he said to himself that he was no longer getting anything out of the East European empire: “I get nothing economically, it is now a big political burden so let’s get rid of it and allow them to do what they want.” Of course, he preferred certain things rather than others.

*But there was in fact a decline in Soviet power, wasn't there?*

Of course. But Soviet power had been based to a great extent on that of the U.S. Finally, the third thing Gorbachev realized was that he needed internal reorganization. Therefore, what changed in the late 1980s was not the desires of the people in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Bulgaria to overthrow the communists or to get rid of the Russians as a sort of imperialist neighbour. They had that in the 1950s and 1960s. What changed was not the desires of East Europeans but rather their political possibilities. Gorbachev said he would not send in troops and at that point the local communist parties had no strength and collapsed. This is what he was trying to explain to people like Honecker and Jakes. They were too dense to understand. The Hungarian communists were a little more intelligent about this, as were the Polish communists.

So, to sum up, I see the sequence as first the decline in U.S. power, Gorbachev’s reaction to the U.S. decline and therefore the ability of the countries of East and Central Europe. Now that is a relatively short sequence, taking us from 1945 to 1990 – the rise of the U.S., the decline of the U.S. and its consequences. The rise, then, involved the Yalta agreement while the decline involved the end of Yalta.

But when you look at this from a longer point of view, from the point of view of the world system since the French Revolution. I want to argue that the collapse of communism and the death of Marxism-Leninism as an ideology is in fact the collapse of liberalism. This is true despite the fact that everybody in East Central Europe speaks the language of liberalism and the market, etc. But this is to misunderstand what liberalism is. Liberalism is not the operation of a relatively freer market. The market never disappeared in the actual calculations in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. That is another long story. But obviously the market is freed from a number of constraints. There is now private ownership of the means of production and outside investors have the ability to invest (up to a point). But that is not liberalism. Liberalism is an ideology born out of the French Revolution and modernity which had a *Weltanschauung* that political change is normal because we live in a world of progress. Liberalism was the ideology which said that we have to manage normal change in order to make it as rational as possible. It is a good thing. We accept it and have to move it along by our rational decision-making process. Freeing the market from various constraints was often seen, but not always, as part of this rationality, so liberalism tended to be for freer markets. I

do not know how much English history is really known in Hungary, but I would remind you that in the 1840s one of the great issues of English history was the Corn Laws. This is always presented, correctly, as a removal of various protectionist constraints and therefore a freeing of the market. But the very same people who supported and put through the abolition of the Corn Laws were also the people who put through the first factory acts. These were restrictions on the rights of owners of factories so that they couldn't employ people for more than x number of hours, etc. The social legislation was also liberalism because it was part of the rational control of the process of change.

Liberalism now became the central ideology of the world system. It had on its flanks conservatives who wanted to slow things down as much as possible and socialists who wanted to speed things up as much as possible. In point of fact, my basic thesis is that 19<sup>th</sup> century liberalism had a program – to integrate the working classes in society in order to make possible rational change without disruption. This program had two parts. The first was to give them eventually the vote and the second was to give them part of the surplus value. In both cases, the idea was to do it in such a way that they would not want to change the system fundamentally but would rather legitimate it and accept it, having received part of the pie. The irony is that, historically, this liberal program was not implemented by the liberals but by a combination of sophisticated conservatives who realized that it made sense and by the socialists whose militant demands were expressed by parties, trade unions, etc. They, in fact, turned to the state for just these kinds of reforms. By 1914 they had more or less achieved the basic framework.

At that point, we come to the 20<sup>th</sup> century and we have the new form of liberalism which is Woodrow Wilson. This was an attempt to do the same thing on a world scale, i.e., no longer just in Western Europe but to incorporate the working classes of the rest of the world. At that time, this included those of East and Central Europe. His program was the self-determination of nations which is the logical parallel of suffrage on the world scene. Then Roosevelt came along in the Second World War, proclaiming economic development for all countries which is the logical parallel of the welfare state on the world level.

*May I interrupt you here and go back to 1918? At the end of the Great War, the collapse of the Habsburg Empire basically offered two opportunities. The first was to create new nation-states to replace the Empire. The other, more appealing to Wilson, was to create a democratic federation or confederation. The Czech nationalist politicians convinced Wilson and his advisors to opt for the creation of nation-states. This was, of course, absolute nonsense from the beginning.*

Someone said that Wilson's program of the self-determination of nations is logically nonsense, for in order to have nations self-determine, somebody has to determine in advance which are the nations.

So, from the beginning, there was confusion as to what the list of nations were which would have self-determination. Wilson does not have a real position on that. It is a matter of indifference to him whether the nation is Czechia, Czechoslovakia or Danubia. What he said was that there should be a state which should be a member of the League of Nations and therefore independent and have equal rights with others – as if to say that whichever solution you people figure out (may it be Czechia, Czechoslovakia or Danubia) is OK with me as long as it did not disrupt things too much.

*But it did. This option had to sound irrational – Yugoslavia is as nonsensical a nation-state as Czechoslovakia. They never became integrated nations.*

Well, perhaps. But notice that this not only happened in East Central Europe but also in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. That is to say that as of 1914 there would have been no historian or social scientist who could have predicted with accuracy the boundaries of the member states and nations. In some cases the boundaries were defined very narrowly and tightly in terms of linguistic frontiers and in some places not. But this is unimportant for the theory of self-determining nations. The important thing is that they should be sovereign states in a family of sovereign states which is the world system. The actual boundaries were a function of power politics at the moment of decision-making. Various great powers sometimes got into the game because for one reason or another they preferred to see Yugoslavia united than to have Serbia, Slovenia and Croatia separated. Or maybe one of them preferred this and one did not but the one who did had slightly more

power. Locally, it might be that in the case of Czechoslovakia the Czechs were basically able to convince the Slovaks to go along with it but then, twenty years down the line, the Slovaks became unhappy with that. Those were momentary decisions but they created a state structure. And note that once the boundaries were created there was enormous pressure to keep them. We still see that today. Nobody wants to see these boundaries reshaped or refashioned precisely because they are all irrational in some sense.

*What about some of these societies, these nationalist groupings?*

No, when I said nobody, I meant that nobody who is powerful in the world system wants to see the boundaries reorganized because once you open the issue there is no end to it.

*East Europeans are a little sensitive at being taken for nobodies. Right now, after 1989, we in Eastern Europe are living in a vacuum, at least in terms of security. Now we have to live with the consequences of the Wilsonian decision, which sounded profoundly liberal and democratic.*

That is perfectly correct but I seize upon your use of “vacuum of security”. The vacuum of security is because of the collapse of the Soviet Union. They enforced the boundaries. Nobody made a fuss about the boundaries in the 1950s or 1960s. It was not permitted. If I look ahead five to ten years, I suspect that the vacuum is going to be filled by Western Europe. Quite aside from Eastern Europe, I anticipate the emergence of a West European military structure. Mitterand is pushing for it hard now. Kohl really wants it and I think that within five years we will see it. We will have a West European military organization. And I suspect they will replace the Soviets and become the ones to control the boundaries.

But, in the meantime, you’ve got five years and you are correct that anything can happen. Yugoslavia could fall apart tomorrow. If it falls apart, Czechoslovakia may not stay together. But if Czechoslovakia does not stay together, then Hungary and Romania may start fighting over Transylvania. And if this happens then the Romanians may begin to fight about Moldavia, that is Bessarabia. This is, of course, what Western Europe and the U.S. do not want. They are going to try in every way to stop it and they have no other way of stopping it than to keep the boundaries as they are now. Because once you open them up, there is no rational readjustment. In other words, if it all falls apart in the next five years, I do not know how or whether it will be put together again. But if it doesn’t fall apart in the next few years, those boundaries are going to be encrusted.

*What about some sort of forum for East European reconciliation?*

If you ask me now to predict what will happen, I think that Western Europe will move in as the military guarantor of the boundaries and will try to keep East Central Europeans happy by involving them in the outer ring of their economic arrangements. In effect, this would be offering a carrot and a stick. The stick will be their threat to move troops in if they tried anything and the carrot being the economic rewards East Central Europeans would get if they are “good boys”. Therefore, in the year 2000, you have 9 chances out of 10 that the boundaries will be identical to now. But I agree that we are in a relatively rare moment where the question has been reopened, making the disintegration of a whole set of boundaries possible. If this were to occur, I do not know what would happen. I cannot begin to imagine what kinds of boundaries would come out. That would almost be a question of the relative force of Hungarians, Romanians, Slovenians, etc. And this is a very hard thing to measure.

*But this is why there are all these dreams of regrouping, of having some kind of Central European integration – of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and, perhaps later, Yugoslavia and Rumania.*

Let me say this – if there were a realignment of the boundaries, half of the people would be happy and half miserable as a result. I do not see a situation where, if you realign boundaries, 100 per cent of the people of the region would be happy.

*I agree, but what if Eastern Europe realizes what Western Europe has already realized – that the importance of boundaries has declined as has the absolute sovereignty of individual nation-states?*

Weak countries do not federate.

*Well, this is true. And this is why we need substantial western aid.*

First of all, I do not think you are going to get very substantial western aid. Second, I do not think that anyone in the West, neither the U.S. nor Western Europe, is particularly attracted to the idea of a federation of East Central European states. This is true even if it were politically possible.

*Why not? They do not want a stronger partner?*

Exactly. It is the same reason they don't want a confederation of the Arab world or of Latin America.

*Yes, this is what I have noticed. And this is why I am pushing it.*

You are reacting in the same way that political figures have reacted in other parts of the world. You are saying that were we to create a unified structure, we would be geopolitically much stronger and therefore have more bargaining power in the economic realm. All of this is true. But you are asking me to predict likelihoods of the Wilsonian perspective and I say that the likelihood of your being able to achieve that is rather low. You are simply not strong enough to achieve it.

*Shall we go back to the development of liberalism?*

Yes. So liberalism took its 20<sup>th</sup> century version by trying to expand the idea of incorporating the working classes of the industrialized countries into the system to include the working classes and peasantries of the world into the system. This was Wilsonianism and Rooseveltism. Against that stood Leninism, which was the recreation of a true socialism that could not be integrated into the system but was truly against the system – i.e. the Third International, etc. Let us look at what happened. As we all know, what happened was that the Russian Revolution was not immediately followed by other revolutions, most notably the German revolution. The Russians drew two lessons from that. One was the notion of socialism in one country which was transformed over time into the idea that Russia was a state like any other state, had rights within the world system and demanded these rights. This has been something systematic in Soviet foreign policy from Lenin through Stalin through Khrushchev through Brezhnev to Gorbachev. Indeed, one might say that it is only with Gorbachev that they will finally achieve this objective. But it is no longer a revolutionary objective.

As for the second thing, the Soviets concluded, I give great significance to the Congress of Baku where Lenin brought together what we now call the movements of national liberation, largely from Asia and Africa, and proposed a big alliance of all of these movements and the European working class. This meant that he had to have a program which would appeal to these people. Of course, this was anti-imperialism. It turns out that anti-imperialism, when you look at in practice, is simply a more militant sounding version of the Wilsonian self-determination of nations. That is, basically what these movements tried to do, overthrow colonial regimes and establish sovereign states.

Once these states were established, what did these new governments do? Whether they called themselves communist or nationalist, they engaged in the economic development of their countries. Sometimes they called this socialist development but it was basically economic development, i.e., they built steel mills and attempted to do other things to improve the economy. They sought to catch up with the Western World. They also expected a certain kind of aid to come from the west to help them, which was termed technical assistance or development aid. This was, of course, a form of the welfare state on the world level.

So after the Second World War, you have the U.S. talking about the economic development of the Third World, and the Soviet Union speaking of socialist development of the Third World while in practice there was not much difference in terms of their objectives. Hence, I see Leninism as having started as a militant socialism and ending up as an only mildly different version of liberalism on a world scale. And indeed, in some sense it was even the ultimate justification of liberalism. The Soviet line itself helped to preserve the liberal myth. This is because the Soviet line was always that the countries of the Third World wouldn't develop if they listened to the U.S. even if they were quite militant about it because the U.S. simply would not do enough. In order to do enough, you have to do it the way we are doing it, i.e., our particular version is the only version which will really allow countries to develop. Of course, the Soviet Union was put forth as the model – they built this enormous industry and achieved whatever they claimed to have achieved, etc. So in the 1970s and 1980s, when one Third World government after another economically collapsed in various ways

through debt mechanisms and had engaged in structural readjustment with the IMF, the Soviets could just say that none of them had done things in the correct way. The correct way was their way.

Of course, what happens by the late 1980s is that the Soviet Union collapses too, in the very same way and just as dramatically as any country in the Third World. Suddenly, everyone began to ask where all of this great economic development was, not only in Eastern Europe but also in Russia. These are terribly backward economic situations where the living standard is disgracefully low, etc. And they now ask for help and aid from the World Bank the way anyone else would.

Imagine what this does in the social psychology of the world system. The last militant hope of the national development ideology has collapsed. Even if you do it in their militant form, it does not work. But the liberals world-wide or in the U.S. were promising in the 1940s, 50s and 60s that if you sensibly, rationally engage in the program we put forward, you will develop economically. In that sense, the Soviet version was their justification. It was their shield against the disillusionment. That shield has now disappeared. The peoples of East Central Europe as well as those of Asia, Africa and Latin America are facing a reality that national development is not going to happen within the structure of the system. That undermines liberalism, not communism. Communism is dead. Liberalism is undermined because it is a promise and if people do not think it can be fulfilled over the long run, they are not going to sit quietly. So, I see 1989 as the collapse of liberalism.

You yourself talk about how fast the disillusionment has set in. Of course it has. The fact that you adopt all of the recommendations of Jeffrey Sachs will not mean that Hungary will look like Denmark within five years. It cannot mean that. There is no way that Hungary is going to look like Denmark, because all of the countries of the world cannot look like Denmark within the framework of the system we have. The system we have is radically inegalitarian and depends on that. The reason Denmark looks so good is that there is an enormous worldwide transfer of surplus value from the outer ring of the world periphery into the core of which Denmark, for various historical reason, is a part of.

*What do you see coming?*

There is a middle-run and a long-run. I said in the middle run, there is a decline in U.S. power and in the longer run the decline in liberalism.

*Does this mean that liberalism is finished or only in decline for the moment?*

I think that it was undisputed for 200 years because people believed in its promise. Even if they didn't get the reward immediately, they expected to get it down the line. This is basically what kept the people of the world relatively quiet because the expectation that things would somehow improve. Today this expectation is gone.

So now I have to speak about what will come both in the middle-and longer run. In the middle run, with the decline of the U.S. we will see what has happened many times before – we will get new loci of economic power. At this point, we already have three loci of economic power. These are Western Europe, Japan and the U.S. They are each relatively strong and none of the three is very much stronger than the others. I think we are going to have a new expansion of the world economy in five or ten years from now, i.e., a new boom. These three loci are going to compete with each to attempt to get the largest part of the pie. My own vision is that when three roughly equal units try to compete in such a situation, they tend to reduce to two in order to win. The two that I see moving together are Japan and the U.S., coming together economically and in some kind of arrangement so as to compete with Western Europe. That is the story of the next 20–30 years.

Once we have these two loci in place they will each try to incorporate various areas into a kind of economic zone. I see China as being the priority for Japan and the U.S. and Russia for Western Europe. In each of these cases, we have enormous countries and relatively undeveloped markets from the point of view of the capitalist world economy. And these markets have an incredible demand. So if you incorporate them, you create a market for an expanded world production. I think that the geopolitics will follow from this.

If you move towards the incorporation of Russia, it may be Russia under Gorbachev or Yeltsin, for it does not matter as long as it is a stable structure to be pulled in economically, then Eastern and Central Europe are in-between geographically. If the arrangement gets worked out between Russia and Western Europe, they of course have to do something for the people in between. That



is they have to do something physically, politically, economically, etc. That is what I was talking about before in terms of the security arrangements. Economically, the situation will be one where East Central Europeans will be second-class citizens in a booming Europe. That may be a lot better than being in Paraguay or Bolivia. But I must emphasize that it will not be the same as being in Denmark.

So, I see this going on for the next 20–30 years. I think that Japan and the U.S. may do a little better than Western Europe, but they will both be strong and compete with each other. What will happen is that the true South, i.e., Africa, South Asia and large parts of the Americas will be more or less left out of this picture. They will not be needed in the same way as, in the post-1945 picture, Eastern Europe and Russia were not needed economically in order to allow the expansion that occurred. This will take us into another subject, but I think there will be a great political reaction to this in the South.

Now, in the longer run, the decline of liberalism creates even greater problems. If it really fully enters into the consciousness of people in Africa, South Asia and Eastern Europe that economic development is not a serious prospect, they are then going to have to look for new kinds of ideologies to sustain them.

*What is going to replace liberalism? Is there a new ideology on the horizon?*

One of the things is that liberalism, as part of its ideology, said that the key actor was the individual. In some sense everyone bought into this ideology which makes sense if you believe that progress is inevitable and that the individual can move rationally to support this inevitable progression. But if you now do not believe that progress is inevitable, you are living in the possibility of disintegration as being normal rather than progress. If that becomes the prevailing *Weltanschauung*, and I suspect it will in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as disintegration becomes the normal phenomenon, people will look to protect themselves against it. Logically, then, the group rather than the individual becomes the actor, because you cannot protect yourself as an individual in a disintegrating world. But I leave the notion of “group” vague because there are all kinds of possible groups. Groups can be ethnic groups, gender groups, people with similar outlooks on life, intellectuals, ecologists. They can also be the powerful of the world. It is not accidental that in the last 10–15 years, we have had a sudden upsurge in political and intellectual interest in a thing called group identity. Everybody is now talking about group identity. At this conference here, we were talking about inclusion and exclusion. But of what? Basically of groups.

When groups organize, there are basically only two types of ideologies, they can put forward. One possible ideology is what I call “the survival of the fittest”. We organize in effect to fight with other groups and to win by being the strong rather than the weak ones. Of course, fascism was an early form of that but it can take many forms. And it is a real possibility that groups will organize on that basis. Incidentally, we call it fascism when dealing with groups which are relatively weak in world terms but try to impose themselves by the use of force in various regions. If you are really strong in world terms, the way you impose yourself as a group is through meritocracy. We see this being reinforced right now in the U.S. and Western Europe. You claim that favouritism to groups is illegitimate. This turns out to be the right of people who are already strong and therefore have access to the educational system, etc., to perform the best in various formal tests and to retain the relative power that gives them. I see this also as the survival of the fittest dressed in very liberal, universalist garb. So this is one ideology – the survival of the fittest which says that if you do not make it is because you are weak and it is your fault.

*Neo-Darwinism?*

Neo-Darwinism is a perfectly reasonable label to put on it. And it will be one contesting ideology of the next 50–100 years. The other contesting ideology will be egalitarianism but phrased in group rather than individualist terms. It will contain the notion that all groups have a right to a relative place in the sun and a share in world services on earth. But groups themselves are complicated. They are not clearly separate structures because all individuals are in multiple groups and all groups contain subgroups by definition. If you have a group of Croats, you also have male Croats and female Croats and the female Croats could be part of the women’s group. You also have

intellectual Croats and worker Croats, with the intellectuals part of a grouping of intellectuals. There may also be people of two religions, etc.

So a group from an egalitarian point of view can never be a closed phenomenon. Therefore, it has to be internally democratic. That is very important for it is the main difference between the groups who have the ideology of the survival of the fittest, which is a kind of militarist ideology. They insist upon great uniformity and cohesion within the group. But if you want to pursue an egalitarian form of group ideology with the legitimacy of all groups realizing their achievements, then each group must also recognize that its members belong to several groups and that internal group structure has to be relatively open and democratic, both organizationally and intellectually.

That is not easy to achieve and I do not guarantee that the egalitarian ideology will win out. What I say is that we will no longer be competing between conservatives, liberals and socialists who are all talking about managing normal change. Instead, we will be talking about survival of the fittest groups versus egalitarian groups, speaking about managing a disintegrating world system and replacing it with something new. Obviously, we shall see which direction it will go. But this will be what will be occurring over the next 50–100 years, not only in East Central Europe but everywhere.

*That sounds like a theoretical step towards a sociology of groups.*

Well, everything in its context. We are living in a historical system which I call the capitalist world economy. The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were in a sense the high point of this system as a system. It was natural that it developed a *Weltanschauung* that was appropriate to it – the fact that the system was a good system and that its advantages would be seen by everyone eventually if not immediately. This is the theory of progress. I do not think we have time to talk about the factors which structurally make it impossible for the capitalist world economy to survive very long. But if I can just assume this for a moment, given that it is in a structural crisis, it can no longer have the *Weltanschauung* of inevitable progress. This is what I mean when I talk of the *Weltanschauung* of disintegration of the system. And now the groups come forward within that framework as the actors which can play a role. They will develop appropriate ideologies. Where we come out of this in the year 2100 or 2050 is a very open question.

# THE NEW CENTRAL EUROPE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

AN INTERVIEW  
WITH ISTVÁN BORSODY\*

*My first question is what is your opinion about the future of the Central European region?*

As far as the future is concerned, the relationship between the East-Central European region and the European Community is the most important. However, the desire of Hungary, or of any other country in the region liberated from Soviet domination, to join the European Community can only be fulfilled after some time has passed. Joining has strict preconditions such as a pluralistic democracy, a free market, and the safeguarding of human rights. The new East-West relationship and the newly evolving European situation will have to be clarified. If all this is considered, it can hardly be expected that the Central European region will soon join the European Community. For the time being only a so-called “associate membership” or “affiliated membership” appears to be possible. There are the two terms used in the charter of the European Community, in the Rome Treaty. The presently negotiated Western economic aid program should take a regional form, similar to the post-war Marshall Plan if the countries of the Central European region are expected to reach the social standard required for full membership over time.

*I am glad you mentioned the Marshall Plan. It would be excellent if Eastern Europe were treated in the same way by the West, as the United States treated Western Europe after World War II. At that time we were left out of the blessings of the Marshall Plan. And the present conditions of Eastern Europe also differ from the post-war conditions of Western Europe.*

Let us begin with East Germany whose relationship to West Germany and hence to the European Community will take a form different from that of the other erstwhile Soviet bloc countries. Presumably not only East Germany but also the other former Soviet bloc countries will temporarily establish individual contacts with the European Community. We should also keep in mind the fact that for the time being the region will be influenced by its relationship to the Soviet Union. At present more than half a million Soviet troops are stationed in East Central Europe. It is not yet clear how Moscow plans to abandon this territory. Since they probably wish to leave it as a demilitarised, neutral region, the question is what would be its relationship to the Soviet Union and the European Community? The Western democracies incessantly emphasise that they respect the security considerations of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe.

*Do you see any specific Eastern European feature in the field of nationalism?*

The predominant characteristic is that the temperature of East European nationalism is terribly high. Tremendous changes would be needed to reduce this boiling sentiment to the level of Western European nationalism. The ultimate objective would be the disappearance or spiritualization of the borders along the Western model. But for the time being this can hardly be accomplished. What I consider, however, as an immediate necessity from the viewpoint of Hungary is an agreement between Hungary and her neighbours on the issue of national minorities.

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\* This interview was made in November 1989 in Boston.

*Now, when there is so much change and one would think that opportunities are open for all sorts of new solutions, it becomes unambiguously clear that it is just those old clichés, which were suppressed for 45 years by the Soviet-Bolshevik rule, that are surfacing. The clichés are relevant to the previous age and Hungary is assessed quite negatively. For instance, whenever the issue of the Hungarian minority in Romania comes up in the West, the answer is ready: “we know that you want to get Transylvania back”. The cliché, has many elements. But I would like you to say something about the origin of the stereotypes which can be traced back to World War I and the subsequent settlements.*

As far as the old clichés are concerned, the Central European region is still dominated by the same national conflicts that developed during the last phase of the Habsburg monarchy. The political structure of the region is still determined by the satisfaction of national objectives, of the so-called suppressed nationalities, just as it was deemed just by the peace treaties after the two World Wars. We do not consider them just as they are directed against us and violate our national interests. It is desirable also from the point of the future of the European Community to create such a modern political structure in the region that it would at last safeguard peace among the nations.

*Reading attentively your book first published in 1960, The Tragedy of Central Europe, which has been re-published in several editions, one gets the impression that twentieth-century history should be re-written. Though you never state this explicitly, this is what the book suggests to me. The old clichés are dominant in the consciousness of the international political agents. If there is no change it would be difficult to get out of the present trap.*

The objective of my book on Central Europe was exactly to highlight the Central European issue as it is embedded in the twentieth-century history of Europe. The American historian Hans Kohn, of Central European origin, reacted to this and he was one of those who encouraged me to write the book. But he was also sceptical as to whether I would find a publisher. Oszkár Jászi, my main supporter, held a similar view. In one of his letters recommending publication he wrote the following: “The publication of this book would prove the political maturity of American book publishing.” Neither Jászi’s, nor others’ recommendations helped. Jászi, to whom I dedicated my book, did not even live to see it published. Finally, the advice of an American acquaintance of mine from the time of my diplomatic service in Washington, Clarence Streit, solved the problem of publication.

*How?*

Streit was the founder of the Atlantic Union movement, and a correspondent for the *New York Times* at the League of Nations in Geneva in the thirties. With the growth of Hitler’s danger he recommended the federation of the Atlantic democracies. He had a hard time finding a publisher for his book entitled *Union Now*. He suggested to try the London publisher Jonathan Cape, who was perceptive to new ideas, and who ultimately published his book as well. This is how Cape became my publisher. In 1960 MacMillan in New York also immediately published the book together with Cape. And luckily two years later it was published by the best paperback publisher in the popular series of Collier Books. Its price was 99 cents and it was available everywhere. The third, enlarged edition was brought out hard bound in the International and Area Studies of the Yale Center. So, as Shakespeare would say: all is well that ends well.

*How was it received?*

The Hungarian emigrants, operating under the wings of Free Europe, did not like what I wrote about Horthy’s Hungary. They ignored it. The most valuable reviews were published in Britain. The review in the *Times Literary Supplement* was particularly appreciative. In the United States the *New York Herald Tribune* and the *Washington Post* wrote nicely about it. The latter particularly praised my realism. “Eastern Europe Seen Realistically” – this was the title of the review if I remember correctly. With the passage of time periodicals also dealt with it with more or less enthusiasm. But the *New York Times* ignored it. Hans Kohn sent me his review which he had written for the *Times*. In those days Kohn was a great authority on Eastern European issues. Apparently Kohn, criticising Czechoslovakia, agreed with my book. But the *Times* did not like it. There was trouble with the interpretation. I know from my publisher that the *Times* had asked for a separate copy, obviously to decide upon the fate of the book with the help of several experts.

*Would you say something more about Czechoslovakia as it was interpreted in your book?*

In my book, I acknowledged that Czechoslovakia had been the only working democracy of the region. But I called attention to Czech and Slovak nationalisms as well, and such criticism was not very popular in the West, and particularly in the United States, even up until today. Hans Kohn wrote in the review he prepared for the *Times* (which was not published by the paper), that in my view Czechoslovak nationalism had undermined the validity of democracy in Czechoslovakia. And naturally I also strongly criticised Benes' relocation policy after World War II. I also wrote that unfortunately Masaryk had given up the traditional Central European federalist stand of Czech politics when he founded the Czechoslovak state.

*You mention Central European federalism. As far as I know you met Oszkár Jászi in America after he emigrated.*

I met Jászi at a reception at our Embassy, when I was a press attaché, in Washington. Then I sent him my book on the Hungarian-Slovak compromise which was published in Budapest in 1945. He liked it very much. He said that it was written in his spirit. Before I left Hungary for good we met once more in New York. And when, in 1947, I became a teacher in Pittsburgh and I was nearer to Oberlin, where Jászi lived, I visited him regularly and we were in constant correspondence until his last illness which hit him in 1956 one year before his death. I mourn a fraternal friend in him. Our friendship was one of my life's great human experiences. It is a great honour for me that he regarded me as his successor.

*What did your relationship with Jászi mean from the angle of your political thinking? When was your federalist outlook and commitment really strengthened?*

My federalist outlook actually evolved during World War II. In those days there were many people in Budapest on the left as well as on the right who expected a Central European federation from the post-war settlement. I was separated from the anti-Nazi left by their uncritical admiration of the Czechs. They disapproved of my book on Benes, in which I disclosed his extremely nationalistic resettlement plans for the post-war period. My relations with the Hungarian left improved really only after I emigrated. My relationship with the conservative anti-Nazi wing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was cordial during the war, though I did not agree with their pro-Habsburg federalist ideas. They were informed about the outside world mainly by Tibor Eckhardt and György Bakách-Besseney. Their only hope was Otto Habsburg. My relationship with my erstwhile democratic friends grew cold because of ideological reasons after emigration. They shifted towards a conservative direction I could not agree with. Generally speaking my friendship with Jászi isolated me also from the public life of Hungarians in the States. They were not happy with my enthusiasm for Jászi.

*Could you speak about your relationship to American foreign policy?*

According to my wife, I was lucky because I did not commit myself either to the official American, or émigré, Hungarian circles. When I left Hungary for good, my regular contacts with the American State Department broke off. Initially I had some contacts with refugees through the International Peasant Union of which I was a founding member. As a university professor I did not become an academic expert on the East European issue. One reason is that I am not a researcher, and the other is that I did not take up a job in a big university. I never expected to become a teacher. I have become one to earn a living. Fortunately, I got a good job at the small but not insignificant Chatham College right after I resigned from my job at the Embassy. I became a lecturer on European and Russian history, and here teaching and not research was rewarded. My success was due to my knowledge of languages and ability to lecture. I still do not consider myself a scholar or a teacher. My main interest has been current politics. What has been the most important for me is that a university career offered a lot of leisure. I have spent it on writing, particularly during the long vacations. Ever since 1948 we have spent the summer months in New England near Boston, at Wellfleet, Cape Cod along the sea, where our family rapidly settled down. I owe a great deal to Wellfleet even in my work. The perspective of the sea has broadened my own, at least this is how I feel.

*Are there significant differences of content and approach in your writings? As you say your book 'The Tragedy of Central Europe, or, The Triumph of Tyranny, as it is also known in the original London and New York title, faced difficulties. Apparently there is a deeper conflict between you and the views of the average American, or Hungarian refugee. Am I right?*

This is true. I think my main difficulty derives from the fact that I have identified myself with the European federalist view and I have been writing in this spirit. In those days few people considered it a realistic trend from the perspective of day-to-day politics. And in academic circles such an ideological commitment is regarded as unscientific. But as a political writer I have been compensated by being the most frequently published correspondent of the *New York Times* on all sorts of current issues. I tried to sell my federalist idea at the inception of the organisation of Free Europe under the title "Liberation and Union". My pamphlet, published under the same title with the support of my Atlantic Unionist friends, was distributed by Free Europe. But they did not consider my federalist slogan good for their Central European program. Their anti-Communist propaganda saddled nationalism, which I condemned, together with a number of other things. Of course I know that success in public life requires compromise. Had I not known it I would not have been appointed councillor to the Embassy in Washington in 1945. But my life in the States has not offered another public career besides writing. And there has been no shortage of controversial views in my writings.

*Perhaps the timeliness of your views is approaching.*

I would be particularly glad if my books, *The Tragedy of Central Europe* and *The Hungarians: A Divided Nation* which I edited, and my other Hungarian writings would evoke the interest of the Hungarian public. During the American half of my life I have not published any book in Hungarian, but I have not stopped writing in Hungarian. I have participated mainly in the activities of the *Látóhatár* [Horizon] in Munich and of the *Magyar Füzetek* [Hungarian Notebooks] in Paris. Whether in English or in Hungarian I have always tried to shed light on the Central European issue, including the Hungarian one from a new angle in my works. I have never forgotten the fact that I came to the US as a representative of Hungary when I was a member of our embassy in Washington. This year it will be 45 years ago. Even in those days I noted the lack of works objectively discussing Central European and Hungarian issues. The situation has not improved much since. It has rather been aggravated in several respects: partly as a consequence of anti-communism, and partly from pro-Soviet publications. From the Hungarian point of view it is a particularly difficult problem to inform the public of the progressive and liberal thinking that I am primarily interested in. Of the Central European peoples, the Czechs glitter in their democratic prestige, whereas we are considered as inclined towards fascism, mischief-making and as nationalists oppressing the national minorities.

*As a political writer how do you see your relationship to present day Hungary?*

Academic and other cultural works published since the war have done a lot of good and have improved our fame in the world. But the communist period did not contribute to the political clarification of Central European and Hungarian issues. I may quote as an example Iván Berend's influential essay, containing his lectures given in Britain on Central Europe. His interpretation views the contemporary history of Central Europe negatively as the tragedy of the Holocaust, and positively as the victory of the Soviets. Neither view sheds light upon the nationalist competition which is the essence of the present Central European situation. Berend places Central Europe into the center of European capitalist decay, a road which leads to Hitler and to the fall of Western civilisation with Marxist regularity. Redemption is brought about by communism through the Soviet Union as liberator. This historical analysis became popular in a number of so-called progressive western circles after World War II. Presumably, the spread of such ideas will stop now in Hungary. And I would be glad if my work interpreting the Central European issue from the angle of democracy and European federalism would assist in the creation of a new international democratic political ideology in a Hungary liberated from Soviet rule.

*Perhaps we are not wrong to say that airing the Central European issue irritates the policy-making circles in America and the West, the political scientists and historians. We are airing it because the dissolution of the*

*Habsburg Monarchy struck a heavy blow upon us. The resettlement of Central Europe, in the wake of World War I, was not based on a consensus. Nobody inquired about the opinion of the masses. The situation was similar after World War II. The negative consequences of these dictates are still being felt by Hungary as well as by the minorities living in the neighbouring countries. The sense of being pressed, of psychological depression is still there, and occasionally resurfaces unpredictably. In the West, this is interpreted as a kind of ill-fated nationalism. For them the Hungarians are an unpredictable, restless nation. And while our neighbours have oppressed us for a long time, it is still the Hungarians who are regarded as oppressors.*

Yes. But perhaps there is a chance of presenting the just Hungarian grievances authentically, in a form suited to our times. Our problem is our past and we still suffer its consequences. We have to do something about this. I am convinced that an honest future cannot come about without clarification of the Central European past. During the communist era some attempts were made by Hungary and her neighbours but without much success. Perhaps the perspectives are better today. After World War II the controversial issues of the past were clarified between the French and the Germans. This activity is associated with the names of the historians Pierre Renouvin and Gerhard Ritter. Perhaps now that we are trying to emulate Western examples, we may also succeed in clarifying the controversial East European issues in a similar manner.

*In your view, how could the Central European national tensions and those of the national minorities have been more successfully solved after the disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy and how should we deal with this now?*

I would suggest the report of the American committee, of the so-called WORKSHOP preparing Wilson's 14 points, according to which it was impossible to establish just borders along the principle of the nation state in Central Europe. The situation would be different, went on the American report, had the region been transformed into a federation. We could emphasise that the tragic experiences of our century have proved the righteousness of the federalist wisdom. In fact, the western revolution, in the spirit of federalism, is going on right now with the creation of the European Community. I do not think that Eastern liberation would create another autonomous European Community. I can imagine the future of Central Europe only within the framework of the pan-European federation, primarily for economic reasons. On the other hand, I consider the creation of certain Central European regional institutions rather necessary because of reasons of Central European policy towards national minorities.

*Could you give an example?*

I like very much what is called the "Europe of Regions" in the West. Apparently this kind of federation can already be perceived in our region. It consists of six republics. Somewhat later Czechoslovakia also became a federation of two republics, that of the Czechs and the Slovaks. Hopefully Romania is also moving towards regionalisation. The Romanians treat Transylvania as their exclusive national property. They consider it "Rumanian land". But the land has as many nationalities as the people who live there. The Transylvanian land is both Rumanian and Hungarian land. I see the settlement of the Transylvanian issue within the framework of European regionalisation and federalisation. We have to generally think over what institutions could promote the termination of the competition of national minorities in Central Europe.

*What do you have in mind?*

I have several Central European institutions in mind along the model of the institutions of the European Community. We would need a Central European Regional Court of Justice with the involvement of neutral judges. In the West such an institution is already in operation (The European Court of Justice). The Court of Justice would be the court of the first order in our controversial issues, including the border disputes in the Central European region. I think we ourselves should look after our own affairs and should appeal to the pan-European court only in extreme cases.

*What are the other regional institutions you have in mind?*

The other institution I have in mind is the Central European Regional Council. Of course we would become a member of the European Parliament as soon as we join the institution of the

European Community. But we have to discuss and settle our special problems amongst ourselves if possible. We should be careful not to make ourselves hated by Europe because of our nationalist ambitions. We cannot become worthy members of the European Community without a peaceful regional spirit. We cannot realise the desire of our federalist ancestors for unity, expressed by Oszkár Jászi when the dualist system collapsed, or even earlier by the Romanian Aurel Popovici, and much before him by the Czech Frantisek Palacky. But I repeat: I am convinced that the primary task of appeasement is the clarification of the controversial issues of the Central European past.

*How do you imagine it?*

The third regional institution I have in mind could be a Central European Institute of Regional History. There is a chapter also in the recently published book *The Hungarians: A Divided Nation*, which was included in the volume when I was planning its structure, because I am convinced that one of the preconditions of the appeasement of the peoples along the Danube is agreement upon their past. This chapter was compiled on the basis of an essay written by Lajos Für on the history textbooks of the neighbouring countries and István Deák wrote the introduction. I imagine the mission of the Central European Institute of Regional History to be the revision of our common history. We could do the job the already mentioned French-German Ritter-Renouvin committee did for western historiography after World War II. Until the peoples are taught that chauvinistic tales like the Daco-Roman theory in Transylvania, or the doctrine of the Great Moravian empire as the beginning of the Slovak nation, or the imaginary ancestral homeland of the Ukrainians at the Carpathian foothills and so on, are lies then peace hardly can be imagined among the Central European peoples. I think the Hungarians have overcome these grandiose nationalist delusions. Our new generation of historians have done good work in the elimination of national fantasies. With us the problem is rather that the communist regime has tried to inculcate a sense of national inferiority and lack of self-confidence. Our schools have told the post-war generation that the Hungarians were a sinful and fascist nation. Naturally, this encouraged our anti-Hungarian neighbours and caused a lot of damage to the Hungarian spirit. All this has only aggravated our problem that may be called the “issue of Trianon” just as it was done by our pre-war revisionist propaganda. It is a fact beyond doubt that we Hungarians live in five countries as a divided nation. Stating and consciously facing this by ourselves as well as with our neighbours need not revoke the clumsy nationalist revisionism of the Horthy period. The restoration of the historical borders is out of the question. But I do not agree with constantly repeating that either we do not want the revision of borders, or that we constantly refer to the Helsinki declaration on the inviolability of the borders. After all, the Helsinki Final Act also acknowledges the national self-determination of every people. And as far as the borders are concerned, it also declares that inviolable borders can be altered only peacefully, by mutual consent. In other words, there is no reason to repeat the Soviet interpretation of the Helsinki declaration, according to which Helsinki was the confirmation of the European *status quo*.

*Yes, this interpretation of the status quo is defended here and there as well. The European status quo is essentially in a state of disintegration and we should react to this. We could refer to Helsinki in the spirit described by you.*

Yes, we should react by stating the facts and not only by referring to the right of national self-determination. We should make it clear that in Central Europe there were three peoples who historically created states – the Poles, the Czechs and the Hungarians. The resettlement of Central Europe along the nationality principle divested only the Hungarians of their right to self-determination as well as of their historical rights. In the name of a righteous peace, we are on the road to a basis for compromise: we see a better future for Central Europe within the framework of the European Community in the equalisation of historical rights with those of self-determination. The definition of borders and autonomous regions on the basis of the equality of nationalities would become easier within the framework of the European Community because the policy of the community reduces the significance of borders and its ultimate objective is their elimination. Of course in the views I have expounded here, I do not want to suggest a blind attack on the *status quo*.



The questions of what, when, where and how should be answered by sober and mature political judgement.

*Could you tell more about what you have called a "European community framework"?*

Two revolutionary changes can be expected within the framework of the European community, the disappearance of the territorial, and linguistic rivalries. The opening and eventual disappearance of state borders may create a new international lifestyle. This can already be experienced in the West. We hope to join this European process. The elimination of territorial and linguistic hatred would be the blessing of the "European community framework" in Central Europe. The idea of a "common land" and the appreciation of multi lingualness could evolve. I have a few cherished ideas for dissemination, wishing to overcome hostile territorial and linguistic nationalist hatred. Posters, handbills, decals in every language with slogans like "Neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's field", "Let us respect each other!", "Let us appreciate each other's language!", "Let us love our common land!", "Do not divest your neighbour of his land and language!". It would also be good if everybody learned the same world language in Central Europe. I think English would be the most suitable for this purpose. It is our task to accomplish this revolutionary change practically in the soul of European peoples.

*Speaking about the Hungarian psyche, I have noticed that we have to face a certain inferiority complex which easily turns into hostility and even hatred, jealousy towards our neighbours, and intolerance even towards the minorities like the Gypsies living in the country. Recovery will be a long process.*

Here just as well as among our neighbours; but as far as we are concerned, our present sense of national inferiority is, to a large extent, the consequence of the communist anti-national propaganda. And it also derives from the fact that we have been horribly humiliated as the vanquished of two world wars. Perhaps our situation may be more favourable now that the great powers do not look anymore for allies among the smaller nations of Central Europe. Hence jostling for the favours of the great powers may stop, along with the privileges that came to those who were more smart or fortunate in their manoeuvres.

*Yes, but we have to face the fact that the old clichés survive. The stereotypes of the inter-war period have surfaced, like that the Czechs are democrats and the Hungarians are chauvinists. What can be done to eliminate the prejudices that are harmful to us?*

First of all, we have to create a real, well-functioning democracy, and, of course, we have to come forth with influential ideas. Perhaps the crumbling of borders would be an effective idea. It is becoming popular now. Through it, better than through anything else, we could express our desire to move and live freely within the Carpathian basin, with the state borders disregarded. We have to be wary of our national inclination to introversion either into our own suffering, or conceit, into our problems of being a small nation. We have to think in terms of a larger perspective.

*The Hungary of the recent past cannot be characterised by this outlook. I have often participated in discussions with young intellectuals and whenever the issues were brought into a broader international context the reaction was the following: What is the point in dealing with this? What have we got to do with it? And this was also the official stand in the Kádárist era. I think that now in our new, changing situation we should learn Jászi's international thinking.*

Jászi's international thinking focuses on the realisation that the outmoded, narrow, nationalist interpretation of national sovereignty is the greatest enemy to peace. The federalist philosophy interprets national existence within the international framework. This is the essential ideological base of the European Community. Additionally, three hundred years of the practice of national sovereignty should be revised. The Western builders of the European Community work on it. This is what we have to prepare ourselves for, together with our neighbours.

*I think that the Europeanisation of Europe may also bring the Soviet Union nearer to Europe in the long run.*

The evolving new world will bring everybody closer to everybody else. But, paradoxically, such an approximation may prove to be the most difficult in the cases of our nearest neighbours.

*Here, in Central Europe, there is the danger of remaining an economically weak, muddled region of skirmishes with scattered advantages here and there – cheap labour for others, a zone on the European periphery. We may vegetate in this state for a long time.*

This might happen if we remain politically immature, if we cannot emerge from the quagmire of nationalism, if we are unable to approach the West where the new world of federalist equality is being born.

*István Borsody was born at Eperjes, in the Highlands, today belonging to Slovakia. He pursued his studies in Slovak, and subsequently in the Czech language. He lived in Prague. He only came to Budapest later on in his youth. What nationality do you consider yourself?*

I have never had any doubt about being a Hungarian. Though it is true that the circumstances of my life have made it more difficult to remain a Hungarian. In my youth I supplemented the shortcomings of my Hungarian birth with great exertion. Except for the four classes of the Hungarian primary school, I was brought up in a different language, in the culture of other people. The Hungarian family and the Hungarian minority environment could not substitute for the lack of regular education in Hungarian culture. For a long time I have been living in English. But I consider it a major achievement even today that I could train myself linguistically and culturally to become a full-fledged Hungarian in my youth.

*It was not accidental that I asked you about your nationality, because I think that we, Central Europeans – at least a major part of us – have several identities. I demonstrate this myself. I often ponder about whether I am not exclusively Hungarian, but Central European. This may also derive from the fact that my family did not replace its name of Czech or Polish origin by a Hungarian one. A big part of my family is of German descent, but another three, four or five nationalities are also mixed in it.*

The situation of my family is similar, though not so complicated. I was born at Eperjes, a Slovak region, but at that time the town in Sáros county was still quite Hungarian. The paternal branch of my family had been residents of Gömör county for a long time. My father was born at Rimaszombat where my grandfather was a lawyer. My distant ancestors came to the Hungarian county of Gömör from the north, from the neighbouring Szepesség and were called Kirners. According to family tradition they came from Germany as blue dyers to the territory of the Medieval Hungarian kingdom. They lived at Rozsnyó for a long time. There they became Hungarians. The Trajtlers of Tornalja, the family of my paternal grandmother were also Germans turned Hungarians living at Gömör. The case of the families Szutorisz and Schulek of the maternal branch, from Szepesség is similar: they became Hungarians after being Germans living in Hungary. And what I particularly like is that all my known ancestors were urban Protestants. One of them fled, from the bloodshed of the counterreformation of the Highlands to the Czech kingdom, to his Husite friends. My father acquired a legendary fame for his liberalism among his Jewish students in the Lutheran college of Eperjes.

*If the world took a different turn, could it have been possible for you to spend your life in Prague as a Hungarian journalist?*

I don't know what occupation I could have had. I have chosen journalism besides my legal career to make myself known in public life. In those days I had political ambitions and I was increasingly interested in foreign policy. I was attracted by foreign lands. I have always been enthusiastic about learning foreign languages. I started taking lessons in French and English at the age of ten. But I could never have become a diplomat in Czechoslovakia. I could answer your question by saying that had there been no Hitler and no Munich in 1938, then presumably I would have stayed in Prague indefinitely together with my future wife who was studying medicine at the German university in Prague. But who knows, perhaps we would have landed in Budapest anyway as a consequence of some other Central European change, different from the one in Munich in 1938.

## APPENDIX

### WILD EAST PARTY

1986

There is a continuous reception at the Wild East Party in Budapest. From the West, we receive Western journalists, politicians, scientists, artists. We offer dozens of cultural forums. From the East, we receive instructions, unexpressed expectations, and unverifiable news. Generally, everyone is joyful at the Wild East Party: they are expecting something – the strengthening of their positions from the East, coupled with trips to the West. An acceptance of their status as members of the opposition, also coupled with trips to the West.

In the meantime, attention is distracted from minor or major cases of negligence: the distributor of privileges is the same party-state that is otherwise smiled at. Civil society is not invited to the party, it remains an interested or bored outsider. The elite is divided in many ways; it is destined to quarrel. Yet “reforms” are still on the agenda, and the reception goes on.

Taking a closer look at its disorderly nature, we get the feeling that this society does not take itself seriously (as it has every right to do), yet it is still surprised when it fails to achieve its otherwise marvellous goals.

We are talking about a simultaneously appealing and clumsy design of reality lived through and experienced, an imaginary future, and opportunities that are only dimly conceived or barely articulated, an unparalleled amalgamation of gloomy hopes with wings and faithless everyday self-sacrifices, a touching synchrony of ridiculousness and pathos.

We might honour this not-so-hidden charm under a term that has so far been unknown in aesthetics: socialist surrealism.

Struggling with century-old spasms and innervations, one often feels that nothing changes here. And indeed, the simile of the poet Endre Ady, from more than seventy years ago, is still poignant today; we are a ferry country that strives to sail West but finds less resistance when heading East.

It is the West that is received at the Wild East Party, but in a manner that is directed by eastern ways both from the inside and the outside, with remorse, with a minority complex, hypocritically, and in despair. Should a bit of honest business spirit spring up somewhere, or the will for a respectable dialogue, it is soon overcome by fear caused by the transitory nature of things, irrevocability, and retorts. This feeling that emerges often only as bodiless anguish is the invisible common spring of East European gestures; this is what turns those living here into second-rate citizens. The prophecy, as we so often find, is self-fulfilling: the self-organising mechanisms of fear are always capable of justifying themselves.

### Hey Eastern Europe! Hey Modernisation!

Where the conditions for communication are missing, society fails to learn: it forgets to develop into a society. If at any time during the day, I am unable to decide to walk out to the railway-station and catch a train to visit my friend, who happens to live 200 to 300 km away, I know that I could be back the same evening, or during the night, or probably the next morning; and then again I will

lose him sooner or later, I will forget his thoughts, and our worlds will part. Space in Eastern Europe is structured by a unique kind of time, Eastern European time.

From the university cities of Hungary, Debrecen, Szeged or Pécs, students still travel “up to” Budapest for culture or information. Social and human relations can only be experienced after jumping over thousands of technical obstacles, which require extra sacrifices that are only devulged in exceptionally great love affairs. And the fine texture of civil society is not woven out of great love affairs.

The train that is meant to fly me from a provincial town to Budapest takes four to five hours for 200 kilometres. Several times during the journey, we remain at a standstill in the middle of the puszta. The conductor informs me: “These stops are according to the timetable. They are included in the plans.” In fact we are waiting for the express train headed in the opposite direction, so that we can proceed farther on the one-track segments. The extension of the railway-bed is very likely to be included in the plans, too.

At the historians’ meeting where I am coming from, we spent three days talking about Eastern Europe, small states and modernisation. Hey Eastern Europe! Hey modernisation!

Here the past flows into the present. We diligently study our historie under-development, while simultaneously trying to adapt to the present. Our trains are either late in the present, they never leave, or they don’t even exist.

## Mode of Destruction

In the centrally planned economy, which developed out of the wartime economy, the disassembly of the plan – that is, its implementation – turns into the systematic destruction of the vested interests of civil society and the individual. Procrastination, lack of responsibility, waste of materials and energy, faulty products, lack of publicity: these are the elements of a unique kind of production mechanism, tied together by thousands of threads. They are present in the bureaucratic, spiritual and cultural spheres, just as in production. This system has its primary beneficiaries and victims. The Vienna-based Hungarian sociologist, Zoltán Zsille rightfully describes this state of affairs as artificially maintained disorder. In Eastern Europe disorder does not evolve into order: mechanisms of feedback and self-correction do not function. Here disorder gives rise to further disorder. The “resocist” party-state<sup>95</sup> holds its subjects captive by driving them into permanent, unresolvable chaos, and the irresponsibility that comes along with it.

A man who is cheated everywhere will find cheating to be the only solution. Artificial disorder sucks away creative energies, turns trustworthiness into stupidity, and qualifies outspokenness as provocation or craving for the limelight.

Cheating and corruption have become the liberal profession of society as a whole, a common denominator both at the micro and macro level. Where everybody cheats, all are guilty. Where all are guilty, it is in the common interest that nothing should come to light. The vicious circle of political and economic underdevelopment is made even more unbreakable by the vicious circle of guilty conscience.

“Anything could happen anytime” is a fundamental attitude towards life in the circumstances of destruction. In order to prevent the reflexes of fear from withering away, to make sure that the concentric circles of uncertainty, fear, surrender and isolation do not open up, we learn something new from time to time: that floods are in the interest of the Flood Protection Authority; shelving is in the interest of bureaucracy, and the use of the rubber baton is in the interest of the police force. The state has to defend itself, explained a member of the Communist Youth Association after police used rubber truncheons to beat up demonstrators celebrating the anniversary of the March 1849 revolution. He can feel free to say whatever he wants; no one will pose the question publicly in a critical article about whether or not the ratio of the Hungarian state’s security to that of the British one corresponds to the ratio of a few hundred students and intellectuals with cockades to a

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<sup>95</sup> Resocist: an abbreviation of in reality existing socialism. See Hans Magnus Enzensberger: Socialism, the highest level of underdevelopment.

mass of 100,000 British miners? No one will sue the police force for breaking the law by unlawfully confiscating several hundred IDs without a valid reason, taking away the “identity” of high school and university students for a couple of weeks. Someone without an ID is suspicious and is without rights: he exists illegally, and therefore he can expect to be taken away at any time. The university student might be thrown out of the university, and the high school student might never make it there. If everything goes well, then he regains his ID, “things calm down a bit”, he can be happy that he got off with a few strikes with the baton. And he will store the information in himself for ever about when and how one might want to march in these places. Conformity is a long learning process, and Eastern European history is by no means short of lessons.

## Eastern Civil Society: a Vision from the Swamps

The writer Gyula explained how the Tatars massacred even the ancestors and the descendants of those in Novgorod who dared to revolt against them, making sure that not a single seed of non-conformism remained. The outlaws of Hungarian society – who struggle against more dowdy empires – held out for a long time in the swampy shrubbery of undrained marshes that only they knew.

Almost the same is true of the existing distrustful, isolated little circles of civil society: they will remain visions from the swamps for a long time to come. Division is one of the stabilising forces of a system anyway. The mediocracy in power has to constantly justify its rule: it has to administer justice to the squabbling parties, or it has to identify the current enemies of the state and society. It has to fight an endless internal and external war against imperialism, undisciplined behaviour, and “political immaturity,” always something different, coloured by the rotating system of disclosure and self-criticism.

While reproducing, mediocracy modernises itself; the new cadres of ideology and culture now walk around in a suit they bought in a Western university city, use *Realpolitik* in their rhetoric rather than ideological slogans, and many of them might actually be honest devotees of REFORM. Probably they themselves do not realise that in the meantime – at least for home use – they repaint the gray pink. As long as there is no feedback, the game can continue.

## The Special University of Taboos

In a debate about the state of Hungarian social science, my sociologist acquaintance reprimands me: “My friend, in this country you can research whatever you want to!” When I mention militarism, the arms race, environment protection, peace movements, the question of Gypsies, poverty or – God forgive – Yalta, he adds: “Oh, I didn’t know that you meant to include publication in research.” His work was rewarded by the Communist Youth Association, mine with the withdrawal of my passport. In Hungary it is possible to organise a special university of taboo issues.

A part of the exquisite nature of the mediocracy is its semi-education arising from self-mutilation, and its continuous loss of directions arising from guilty conscience. As long as taboo issues exist, no healthy dialogue can emerge between different parts of society, and probably not even within them. One main point about these taboos is that they are never spoken about or listed, thus their number can be increased or decreased according to one’s wishes. Those exercising power – from kindergarten teachers through school principles to newspaper editors and secretaries of the Central Committee – might draw up new lists every day if they feel a need to do so, according to their own interests and paths of fear.

As a consequence, in a fragmented society a high school student might hear something completely different in school during the day from what he hears in the evening from his parents, who happen to be high-ranking party officials. Whoever accepts the charming little game of “you

can say a lot of things behind closed doors” deliberately or unconsciously plays into the hands of division and fear, supporting the thesis that society as a whole is still immature, and that thus it is not possible yet to be provided it with all kinds of information, as it would be misunderstood or would not know what to do with it. For somebody who speaks and thinks according to the rules of fear, all issues are potentially taboo.

## The Moment is not Right

My West European intellectual friends often speak ironically of the materialistic attitude of Eastern Europeans, without having a deeper knowledge about the local circumstances of political and economic backwardness.

The fact that a materialistic approach openly spread and became fashionable in Hungary in the 1970s and 1980s is actually due to the fact that more enlightened leaders in the country saw the solution of the crisis to be in the gradual and partial liberalisation of the economy, an adaptation to the imperatives of the global economy while keeping a rigid control over the political sphere. For a brief period of time it seemed as if a slow but definite rise in living standards might bloom into conformity. The half-hearted, far from comprehensive, partial and unthoughtful reform measures brought advantages only for a narrow layer of small-scale entrepreneurs and so-called economic work communities<sup>96</sup>. And even in these groups only a partial success could be achieved due to the unchanged rigidity of the bureaucratic machinery. Since economic liberalisation and reform have no institutional guarantees, and therefore can be withdrawn or modified at any time, active members in the process feel that they are in a constant state of uncertainty and intimidation and, understandably strive for a swift way of getting rich through any means possible. As a result, they often sell shoddy goods, and their services are faulty, their operation unpredictable. Although with their disorderly jumble they manage to bring about a certain amount of increase in the circulation of the economy, at the end of the day they only help in conserving the Eastern European characteristics of underdevelopment. The majority of them are short-lived, they have no time to develop or to grow roots. A wind of impermanence and uncertainty blows through the Hungarian miracle.

In the meantime the material despair and dissatisfaction of those who remain outside of the reform process increases, and they include the majority of the population who live off a constantly low fixed income, or pensions that are worth less and less in relation to the level of inflation. In a society that is over-politicised, obvious tensions present in both sectors also emerge in a political form, to which we might add the split inside the political apparatus between supporters of the reforms and those who demand a return to “order.”

In this increasing political crisis it is impossible to formulate a “unified political standpoint”. Day-to-day “crisis management” has become a political cliché, and nobody apart from the mass media tries to hide chaos.

In such an atmosphere the most secure solution at the top seems to be the one-thousand-year-old Eastern tradition of “evading problems”, shelving, delaying decisions, and waiting. This era provides excellent opportunities for new generations of people with career aspirations, who are not fired by ideals and not limited by orthodoxy, but simply want to reach important political power positions as soon as possible. An appropriate combination of cynicism, mediocrity and lust for power provides these “new politicians” enough flexibility to carry out decisions without the slightest adherence to consistent principles, according to the orders of a pragmatism that changes direction every day.

Modernisation and reform blended into a central pseudo-will remain a fake promise, an ideology that might be dragged out into the open whenever needed, or good intentions trickling down from above. A naive faith in the possibility of carrying out deep-rooted reforms remains at best (or at worst) a drug that slows down actions and thoughts. And a Manichaeian view of the world bears fruit for those who exercise power. Those who are good (above) want reforms. Those who are evil

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<sup>96</sup> Known as GMKs from the Hungarian acronym of *Gazdasági Munkaközösség*, these were – contrary to what the name suggests – a step towards a free market economy.

(also above) want immobility. If reforms miscarry, it is because the devil is stronger. Nobody realises that God has at least as much need for the Devil as the other way around.

The lack of communication weakens the sense of reality and creates fantasy images. Good and Evil both appear as figures from a folktale – sugary, or dripping with poison. Yet it is imagination that can be easily forgotten, thus getting close to one or the other there is no longer a need for confrontation: reality convinces and cools down those who engage in fantasies. In a place where at the end of the 20th century getting a telephone is considered a favour from the state, seminars about modernisation are bound to hide a kind of Eastern one-dimensionality.

Despite what has been said, the highest level of Eastern freedom today might doubtless be found in Hungary. To what degree this is due to the relative flexibility of the political leadership, and to what degree to the elementary trembling effects 1956 has had up until this moment, is a matter of debate. In Eastern Europe it is a hidden characteristic of freedom and independence movements that go through a long period of latency, then erupt with enormous force, and usually end up in historical tragedies, that because they can only be extinguished on the surface the demands they articulate find new forms, they become more subtle and turn into other things, but they live on. By crushing them the rulers put themselves in a difficult position. It is easy to abolish political parties, but as far as social, political or economic expectations are concerned, these are much more difficult issues. Authority, if it does not wish to turn into terror, sooner or later must face the real value system of civil or “second” society.

In order to implement the promised reforms, the cooperation of civil society is indispensable. However, this requires the loosening of the ropes that bind it. But a policy of loose ropes results in self-movement and an increase in autonomy which, in turn dissolves the illusion of total control by the state. Those in power that call for modernisation have always been delighted (and probably still are) with the false idea of “economic reform only”. In a tense and easily worried society, pervaded by politics and political paranoia, this act of magic has proved to be all too difficult. In this case, the reforming elite attempted to forget the deeply true Marxist theories about the interrelationship between the economy and politics, concepts with which one is indoctrinated with as early as secondary school. However, after quick, temporary and partial success, they had to put on the emergency brakes. Instead of economic cycles we encounter political cycles, as defined by the congress decisions of the domestic party or those of the Big Brother, as well as by the adherence to the “new party line” that can be extracted from these congress decisions. This adherence, and the preparation for it, by and large inhibits reform aspirations over and over again, impeding the development of any kind of healthy political dialogue.

In Eastern Europe there is a magical sentence that makes it easy to take the wind of change out of the sails: “the moment is not suitable”. “A party congress is coming up (in half a year’s time), we do not know anything yet, let us wait!”, “we have just had a party congress, the dimensions of change cannot be assessed yet, the personal changes are not known yet, we cannot see the new party line, let us wait!” In-between two party congresses the brotherly party holds its own congress, or some other important event takes place.

In Eastern Europe, where times are never suitable, deep-rooted economic reforms cannot be carried out without deep-rooted political reforms.

## February 1987

### Sakharov and the Hungarian Emperor Without Clothes

The Soviet Empire has arrived at the cross-roads. We have discovered the irrevocable truth: the precondition for the otherwise indispensable economic reforms is a radical reform of the political system, provided that the reforming elite is in fact dedicated to carrying out the economic reforms, and that their goals are not simply the appeasement of the unrest that emerges all over the empire as a result of slowing economic circulation, global recession, and domestic deprivation.

Gorbachev has understood that the age of promises is over. A politician who has to come up with a long-term program has to open up. Sticking to the policy of trying to conserve social and

economic life is no way out of the trap into which the Soviet Union has fallen, primarily due to its unique status as a superpower, resulting in its overdeveloped military role and the accumulated under-development of its civil sphere that can hardly be differentiated from the state or the military sector. The existence of the empire is challenged by an interrelated series of both internal and external crises; above all by Chernobyl, the symbol of the trembling modern Soviet atomic state, the demand of the less and less predictable nationalities and ethnicities, including the appeal of Islamic fundamentalism and the pan-Turkic idea amongst the Southern nationalities who speak some form of Persian or Turkish, the Vietnamisation of the war in Afghanistan, the enormous challenge of Chinese economic and political modernisation, and, last but not least, the de-stabilising effect of an Eastern European periphery that falls back and forth from an economic crisis into a political crisis, and from a political crisis into an economic one. As a conclusion: contrary to expectations, Gorbachev's policies of opening seem to be more than just eye-wash.

The freeing of Sakharov is a symbol. The symbol of the irreversible end of a political era.

In 1986, for the second time in post-war history, Hungary, which had been famous for its reforms and economic wonder, fell behind its great ally in the field of liberalism and the advocacy of open policies. The ruling Hungarian elite has learned its role too well during the past thirty years: flirting with the West in the hope of loans and special favours, pride in the relatively significant level of liberalism, the Western-looking eye of the Janus face smiles in a tolerant and democratic way. The other one glances respectfully towards the East, and at the domestic audience, sometimes seriously, sometimes with a wink. The text that accompanies this cross-eyed political performance is quite short indeed: "We would do everything if we only could, but Big Brother is watching us." Nobody has ever tried to find out how much of this is true. It is all too likely that there are still imperial statements about seemingly unimportant cultural questions, not to speak of decisive economic issues. But we can only guess about how much of this is magnified by local political and power interests. Referring to orders from outside and from above had proved to be a useful trick. It was simultaneously a means of sustaining a rigid political order, of declaring humility as an ally, and of winking at the Hungarian public. It meant something like this: "Wait a minute! We would not do the same by ourselves! At the moment this is the most that we can achieve, we are trying our best to change things, but our hands are tied!" Undoubtedly, there were cases when there were no choices. However, in the meantime they have made a virtue out of necessity. From the tactics of winking came an ideological method. The point of reference was naturally 1956. "This is where too much fuss leads to!"

This is why it became almost predictable that reforms would usually be followed by anti-reform periods, without the representatives of the hardliners having to take responsibility for them. Or to be more precise: the extent of accepting responsibility stretched no further than pointing to Moscow. This was nothing but an attempt to educate people to be methodologically submissive, to live with a minority complex, to be hypocritical. And they even had a name for it: a sense of political reality.

But the ground has suddenly become slippery under the feet of this kind of *Realpolitik* that represents a uniquely Hungarian ideology. The political elite is clumsy when it skates on the unexpected, freshly frozen domestic ice. The hardliners, who have had themselves celebrated almost as the heirs of Kádár, have nothing else up their sleeves but the old methods. But their magic tricks appear more and more pitiful. In the midst of the catastrophically deteriorating economic situation of 1986, the Central Committee spends a great deal of time fiddling around with issues like the influence of the opposition in summer camps organised for students, or the investigation of the activities of refractory magazines and publications (i.e., those publications that have partially abandoned the policy of self-censorship). It fiddles around, then it strikes: suspensions, house searches, passport withdrawals, dismissal threats, then an incredible police alert and a long counter-series on television on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 1956. In a



paradoxical way it is exactly this shoreless and bottomless fear – of facing 1956, of the anger that has been suppressed for 30 years and which could now rush to the surface, of international commemorations on the occasion of the anniversary – that breaks through the psychological barrier of intimidation.

Interviews with today's university students, social scientists, eyewitnesses, and those who took an active part in the events appear in domestic *samizdat* publications and on the channels of foreign mass media. The common memorandum on 1956 issued by East Germans, Poles, Czechs, Hungarians and Romanians (!) is a milestone of the long overdue common intervention of Eastern European intellectuals.

In November, at the General Assembly of the writers' association, well-known representatives of oppositional ideas spoke up, along with writers like Ferenc Sánta, who were sentenced to silence for many years. They reject the hardliners in the most definite way possible, as well as direct political intervention into literary life and the suspension of journals, etc.

Opposition thus becomes obvious – the hardliners have no intellectual arguments, only direct ones. But the promised retorts fail to take place.

The hardliners point to Moscow, but to no avail. Sakharov waves back.

When Gorbachev states that democracy is an issue that is too important to be solely the party's business, when Sakharov, who condemned the Afghan war, is free to give an interview to *The Observer*, it is very difficult to refer to Moscow when trying to forbid Hungarian intellectuals from writing or speaking openly about the fate of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, the heritage of 1956, the connections between democracy, economic and political reform, or to stand out against the construction of the Danube dam, this hazardous product of megalomania that would destroy the environment.

Signs of confusion begin to show at the Budapest Wild East Party. At the moment, the emperor has no clothes on.

## 1988: The End of the Masquerade

Most of our intellectual energy is absorbed by dependence and fear, as well as trying to keep other people in dependence and fear. The tolerance of suppressed vested interests has become fixed in the psyche of society as a vested interest. Anarchy, based on the impossibility of control, unpredictability, the rejection of responsibility, the lack of press freedom and the right of assembly and union, grinds up even the most comprehensive programs of reform, and then melts it into itself. This is a vicious circle, in which the rejection of reforms and democratisation is tied to later and later reform waves from above into a continuous religious rite through the consistent accentuation of the need for these reforms.

The only possibility of leaving this feudal-Bolshevik anarchy is if well-intentioned individuals above and below, who respect the interests of individuals and society as a whole, *simultaneously* start breaking through the net of imprinted fears, conformity, artificial enemies, and narrow power interests. If this breakthrough is unsuccessful, nothing will succeed. The slogans of democratisation and reform become hollow catchwords that prefer to simulate plurality and diversity rather than implement it. There are serious signs from below of the intention to open up. The desire of the intellectuals for democracy, autonomy and pluralism is clearly reflected in university papers and the publications of student organisations that have become popular in a brief period of time, and in certain instances even in the official mass media.

On the other hand, a certain kind of duality is apparent. Suspension of papers, ordering editors to report, threats and lectures are followed by praise, re-authorisation and moral or even material support for formerly forbidden research issues. As no guarantees are given, all are left in the dark about why there was a need for a ban and the vilification that followed, and also whether or not the same thing could happen again some time in the future.

With the failure to reach consensus and the open social debates that arise from it, it is still the power elite – which does not represent the general will of society – that decides each day, if needed, what is tolerable, desired or harmful from the aspect of our national economic interest. The

Danube dam at Nagymaros is probably one of the most outstanding examples of this schizophrenia evolving to a social scale. The political leadership – as the latest proof of its enlightenment – commits itself on a daily basis to 1) the liquidation of unprofitable companies, 2) the elimination of non-profitable investments, 3) the inclusion of those involved in production into the decision-making processes, 4) a wide-ranging and effective democratisation. This reveals that the country has entered into a severe economic crisis and has reached the limit of its liquidity. In contradiction “the speed of construction is increased” on this dam which is extremely hazardous to the environment and is financed by enormous foreign loans.

At the same time the schizophrenia of the liberal intellectuals grows stronger. While the sociologist describes the accumulated effects of conformity, the lack of professionalism or responsibility, and the political scientist calls for radical political reforms, and the economist calls for radical economic reforms – the bureaucrat continues to make others practice the virtues of conformity, strengthening the faith that surrounds it.

Young intellectuals have to evaluate certain possibilities: if I write it down, if I sign it, if I say it, even if only I am present: they can fire me or ban me, I will not receive my scholarship or they will withdraw my passport. But giving in gives rise to remorse, and this in turn to a permanently disturbing mood that sticks to the face like a smile-less mask, and causes aggression, intolerance and false ideologies. One of the attitudes that emerges might be described the following way: “I am only an observer here, I don’t have a standpoint, I might turn out to sympathise with all of this”. If it is productive to accept uncertainty against false self-confidence and identification, it is just as destructive to take up this procrastinating “spectator status” that relieves you of everything. I sometimes watch the faces of my young friends. Most of them are under stress: they are worried about the tiny opportunities in their lives that are yet unshaped, and which even so far have not delivered them too much happiness or success. And they have every right to be worried. But this worried tension is also a sign of wanting to speak out. Here and now, and honestly. Conflicts that are reproduced on a daily basis, in circumstances of fear and self-implementing self-expression – provide an excellent setting for manipulation. If I sign, if I speak, if I give them the opportunity to classify me as “oppositionist-adversary”, then I still haven’t done anyone any good, though I have done myself a lot of bad. The same is true of the “right cause”, which might be jeopardised by, so called, irresponsible radicalism. “The damage done is greater than the profit” – says the ideology. But as it is impossible to tell exactly what causes sanctions and when, and how serious they are, one has to keep an eye on precedents: “If nothing happened to X, I might be able to pull it off, too”. These calculations however are useless. In many cases it is not possible to accept responsibility for retorsions, as they are born in the midst of anarchy, and not out of a consensus, as they are not decided in the center, only with reference to the center. In the circumstances of feudal-Bolshevik anarchy the hierarchy of those who are disobedient takes form – or seems to take form. There are people who are sanctioned for having committed absolutely nothing at all, as a result of misunderstandings, untrue letters of denunciation, or just as a preventive measure. Uncertainty and the impossibility of calibration strengthen absolute subjection, which in turn reproduces conformity and schizophrenia.

In the meantime, the creative energies of later and later generations wear down or change shape and become incorporated into “the existing processes”. And this accumulated prodigality, this methodological destruction of nervous systems and human lifetimes, is not even backed by a unique kind of authoritarian self-consistency. By being unpredictable, irresponsible, unaware of media publicity, the elite is able to remain faceless, and it may reorganise its decisions as it likes – along with the people it appointed to be “responsible” for certain things. It might allow itself the luxury of not finding the causes of bad decisions, and if it runs short of “arguments”, it might just blame them on the working people.

Somehow everything should be happening the other way around: first people should be allowed to work, to think, to write, to publish – and criticism should be left to the general public and to experts. This would be advantageous for everyone: the thinker would think, the writer would write, the publisher would publish, and employees of the Interior Ministry, informers and censors, would take language courses, or they could exert their public energies in the open public positions of the reform movement in a supervised way, subject to the value judgements of public opinion. Perhaps to some degree alcoholism and the number of heart attacks would decrease; life would move back

into grey-faced, remorseful executives, authorities would not need to waste public finances and reduce productivity by withholding or withdrawing passports, and by summoning and then re-notifying those who apply for them. The number of institutions occupied with intellectual prevention and the number of party organs could be cut back radically, and those authorities that are financed by taxpayers, without giving them the possibility of exercising some control over them (National Peace Council, State Youth and Sports Bureau, Solidarity Committee, etc.) could prove their public significance in the easiest possible way: they should be financed through their own activities and by their own members instead of taking state support, that is taking money away from citizens.

To eliminate the unlimited waste of socially beneficial activities, there is not even a need for programs designed by a huge apparatus, or even the guidance of the World Bank and the IMF. Sometimes it is enough to look into the mirror, or (and this is the same thing) not to twist the arm that holds the mirror. Shout, “Down with censorship!”

## 1991

Judit, the psychologist, tells me: “Moses was right when he made the Jews wander around in the deserts for 40 years. After the slavery of Rome they needed this time to find leaders with a different attitude, after the spirit of slavery and submissiveness has died out”. Then she adds: “We shall need more time. Perhaps they should have had more time, too.”

But it is impossible for the small nations of Eastern Europe to wander away from here, either directly or in a figurative sense. Neither together, nor individually. The task is more complex and more gigantic.

## “We are not Abroad”

It is the spring of 1991. One Saturday morning I decide to buy some cheese on Szent István Boulevard. The young salesgirl is wrapping up a sweating, half-dry piece for me where. I point to a fresh, round cheese and request that instead. “Do you think that I’m going to pay for it if I cut up a new piece and it dries out?” she asks. “I’m paying for it,” I tell her “and a lot, too, so please give me what I ask for!” Sounds of approval in the background, my popularity is increasing. At this point she gives me the perfect reply: “What are you thinking, we are not abroad!” There is no appeal, she has hit the bull’s eye. Concise, yet ingenious. It is a compressed form of the schizophrenia of the transition. On the one hand, the salesperson might really be punished if the cheese dries out by Monday (why does it dry out?); on the other hand through the way she handled me she has kept her position of power from earlier days, a power that is confined to her workplace: “My salary will not increase, even if I serve you properly; but I do not depend on you, so at least I’ll make life hard for you.” There is also a kind of disappointment in her reply; we are supposedly headed towards something (towards the level of certain foreign countries), but somehow we have not made it yet, we are not abroad yet. This is a lecture, an education, an example of popular wisdom. I should get my act together and respect the local circumstances; I should blend in. Everything will be different once we are abroad.

There is only one thing missing from the reply, and it is exactly this one thing that makes it naively ingenious: self-reflection. In this respect the salesgirl resembles the less ingenious, but cunning new (?) bureaucrats of our institutions that have suddenly become independent. They can take serious offence at straight-forward, direct questions. They also think that “we are not there yet.” At the moment habits and circumstances are not like that in this country. Persistent continuity, packed in a democratic wrapping that shines with pluralism. The Wild East is no joke.

Now, in 1991 they no longer withdraw my passport, and I am free to publish whatever I want. Yet institutional continuity – as well as the continuity of attitudes – still disturbs my functionality.

It is not only that Comrade X is now Mr. X and still occupies the same position. The unacceptable element of institutional continuity is not personal continuity, but the strong similarity of methods and attitudes. The source of problems in many cases is still the absence of transparency, the impossibility of control, the lack of the culture of accountability and responsibility.

Another important aspect is the demobilisation of civil society initiatives, their weakening, the daily minor victories of attitudes that respect authoritarianism over civic courage. The institutional bureaucracy of the state treats the power assigned to it as its own personal belonging, and it places society under itself with a natural gesture. Furthermore, the sense of victory arising from its false revolutionary pathos even makes it greedy and aggressive at times. From within the ministry of the new national conservative government, the former party secretary of a certain institute takes steps to destroy his former institute, the same place from where he used to send his reports upwards. It seems that it is a better to purge downwards.

Our institutions put out large signs saying “Independent,” and then they carry on the way they wish, undisturbed. Instead of those who have remained in their seats rushing to learn the new, democratic rules of the game, and trying to show by example how to implement them, it is those few people who have just acquired leading positions that are adapting to the feudal-post-Bolshevik bureaucratic and decision-making methods. The old elite never turns a hair when embracing the new forms. The new elite verbally and generally condemns what it actually does in practice. The question is still open: will this embrace prove to be fatal, and if so, who will it kill, or will it only be foreplay in a mating game, which will give birth to a modernised, pluralised Wild East on the outside, and a feudal one on the inside?

## The Hierarchy of Rumours

If it were only possible to export rumours and never verified information, Hungary would become rich in no time. Whole systems of institutions build their strategies upon the rotating production, distribution and revocation of good and bad news. A winning position can be acquired by achieving a better rating on the market of rumours, which is just as far from being free as any other kind of market. Those who are unable to spread rumours, those who cannot assassinate the character and destroy the reputation of their opponents, and who believe that they can stay independent at the prolonged Wild East Party, lose, and they will only be the subjects of bad rumours themselves. Subjugation starts when you first put your hands together: the kind of news they are spreading about me is unbelievable. You start to defend yourself, when you lift the telephone receiver. This is the position of the defendant; there isn't even a need to confess. Constant scandals are favourable for political performance artists, but it makes regular, daily operation impossible, not to speak of the establishment of new circumstances, sets of values, and institutions.

A rumour – if launched skilfully, in a convincing manner, from the right place – pegs itself as a fact in the minds of those who are well-prepared for rumours. It keeps those who accept it cornered as a piece of spoilt reality, and it is usually impossible to make those who hold on to it understand that they are themselves the primary medium. Democratisation failed to take place even on the level of mentality: this is reflected in the Wild East form of discourse, “speech”, and language. If you put down your head and wait for good luck, you will sooner or later identify yourself with the rumours that are spread about you.

## The National Kitsch

Adam Michnik mentioned at a gathering in Belgrade, on the eve of the outbreak of the Yugoslav civil war, that thus far we have enjoyed the xenophobia of communism, and now we will encounter the *bolshevism of anti-communism*. International collectivism, which had served the interest of a superpower, and was therefore false, is now being replaced by a nationalist collectivism that is

rooted in deeper historical traditions, and is therefore more “organic”. Referring to a national majority and the “others,” it discriminates, forces into submission or tries to homogenise minorities. In this way it places group interests above individual interests, and it tries to turn the imaginary community of the national-ethnic group and anti-national, and therefore harmful cosmopolitanism against each other. Ivor Jennings’ paradox has not been resolved by the nationalists who took hold of bureaucratic state machineries at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: it is a wonderful thing that people have a right to self-determination, but the problem is that there are always those who decide who “the people” are.

I am an incurable cosmopolitan. I have never been able – and I still do not wish – to organise my Slavic, Hungarian and German ancestors into some kind of order, probably because they have all been craftsmen and *Bürgers*. Therefore, I am unable to stretch my popular-national spine<sup>97</sup>, and I am lost when I hear the words “my blood-brothers”. “I am sorry for you, Feri. You are poorer than us. You are not a part of the nation” an angel-faced university student told me in Szarvas in 1985. In only half a decade’s time this innocent sentence has been transformed into a political weapon. The ideologues of the imaginary community are not sorry any more: they exclude others. This imaginary community is homogeneous and turns inwards: you cannot even like somebody that is not like you, says one government MP. It would not be real love, and we would only undermine ourselves with it. This is how the fall of the Roman Empire began, continues Emil Bogdan, they welcomed the Barbarians, who could not think or pray like the Romans did. This is why we have to be cautious.

This delirious national craze is by no means a mass phenomenon in Hungary, but it is not without an impact either. The idea of building a Trianon memorial with a quotation from Mussolini on it, the hysterical calls for a media that “serves the national spirit”, the maps of Greater Hungary that flood the streets of Budapest from time to time, an army of tens of thousands of skinheads who greet each other with “Sieg Heil”-s and sing songs about slaughtering Gypsies, the open or latent demands of territorial revision by MPs who belong to the governing coalition – today these are just mosaic pieces of a picture from the near historical past. After a brief ebb there will be hopefully; the democratisation of society, and not the processes of authoritarian-populist order-making, that will grow and strengthen. And we will not live to see the strong and skilfull hand that puts together the little pieces of this totalitarian national vision, turning them again into a picture. In our region, where the national kitsch that has been called harmless, or the passing infantile disorder of transition, has enlarged in some places into pogroms, in other places into civil war, an increasing suspicion about minorities, discrimination, and generally into the increase of the army’s hunger; it has in other words, become a pervasive paranoia. This state of mind is alienated from the ideas of dialogue and tolerance. It does not know how to understand others, and only knows how to exclude them. Its medium of existence is hatred. Hungarian society can thank its indifference towards ideologies, which it has inherited partly from Kádárism and its strong tendency for economic orientation, that these popular-national doctrines, which can hardly be called profitable, have found little response. If the West does not close off the opportunities of middle-range ascension from the individual countries of East Central Europe, as well as from *the region as a whole*, these things will most certainly remain nothing more than the reliquaries of a dark era.

However, even in the most fortunate case, the development of a democratic, open society will not be a short and easy pro-cess. Sometimes it seems that even the term “transition” is too optimistic. We may have to prepare for an enduring transition. Uncertainty, plasticity, and the existential crises regime – a huge socially and psychologically price: with the downfall of the great common enemy even the image of the enemy diversifies into a plurality, and then the hunt for scapegoats and the escalation of hatred begins. This Wild Eastern neo-Darwinism can limit the accomplishment of democratic aims from within.

“If you feel guilty,” writes Umberto Eco in his new book, *Foucault’s Pendulum*, “you invent a plot, many plots. And to counter them, you have to organise your own plot. But the more you invent enemy plots, to exonerate your lack of understanding, the more you fall in love with them, and you pattern your own on their model.”

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<sup>97</sup> A frequent slogan of certain groups within the Hungarian right–ed.

Projected hatred is reflected back, and one starts to hate oneself in the other. Hatred on a social scale does not help the evolution of the rules and preconditions of healthy competition. Projection arising from self-defence gives birth to paranoia, and if new institutions are not constructed in a democratic way, they help to sustain this paranoia.

Catharsis does not happen and individual revolutions are postponed. And without them there is no internal freedom. Finally, without the internal freedom of the individual, democratic institutions remain formal at best.

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