

**"The End to Soviet-type
Society and the Future
of Post-Communism"**

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THE END TO SOVIET-TYPE SOCIETIES AND THE FUTURE OF POST-COMMUNISM¹

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Soviet-type societies are gone. The system that Ronald Reagan called "the evil empire" exists no more. The first big step toward their dissolution came in 1980-81, when the Solidarity movement in Poland built the first civil society in a system where communists ruled the state. Civil society had been understood as that set of public social relations with legally constituted autonomy from the state, but Poland's civil society was made *in spite of* state law and the wishes of the authorities. This Polish civil society was forced underground when martial law was introduced in December of 1981, but it survived over the decade to return to negotiate the end to communist political monopoly in 1989.

Solidarity's return to the public sphere was, however, preceded and in fact enabled by another major step toward the end of Soviet-type society. In 1987, after nearly two years of trying to modify the Soviet system, Mikhail Gorbachev initiated radical reforms with revolutionary consequences. His policies of perestroika and glasnost throughout the USSR and the societies it dominated in Eastern Europe moved both authorities and opposition to contemplate changes more fundamental than anyone before even dared imagine.

In 1988 and 1989, party and state authorities and leading members of the opposition in Hungary and Poland negotiated a gradual transition away from communist rule. The understandings established in these "roundtable negotiations" were violated later in 1989, however, as publics demanded a more rapid change than the negotiators planned. By the end of the same year, the people of Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Bulgaria and Romania initiated their own transitions to end the old system.

In the USSR itself, change was controlled much more from the top, even while there was revolutionary pressure from below. In 1988, especially among Lithuanians and Armenians, large organized social movements began pushing for greater national self determination within or even independence from the USSR. These movements were constrained by the Soviet state and its coercive power, but the relative power of that state versus society was gradually declining. By August 1991, when communist hardliners tried to reestablish the old system with a coup d'etat, various national movements in the USSR, especially those of Russians, beat them back. In the aftermath of this failed counterrevolution, the peoples of the USSR have completed their own revolution and ended the formal rule of the communist party.

What happened? What led people to overturn one system and try to build another? How did different groups of people help to bring this change about? With what did people identify as

they struggled toward post-communism? And has post-communism solved the problems that motivated the struggle against Soviet-type society?

SOVIET-TYPE SOCIETY

Which Are Soviet-type Societies?

Before 1989, the Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, North Korea, Cuba, East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania were ruled by communist parties. This does not mean they were all the same "type" of society.

These societies were at very different levels of economic development. The population of some was overwhelmingly peasant while others had a labor force working primarily in industry. Some theorists would argue that in 1988 Czechoslovakia and Austria, a communist-led and a democratic capitalist country, respectively, had more in common with each other than either had with a less developed country with a similar system of government and property ownership, like China or India. Level of development, rather than type of political rule, may be a more important classification.

Population dynamics were also not the same in the communist-led societies. China and India worried about having birthrates that were too high, and Czechoslovakia and Austria worried about birthrates that were too low. We might even wonder whether the USSR is a single society in and of itself. Its European republics have very low birthrates, while its Central Asian republics have very high birthrates. If demographic structures are more important than politics for the classification of societies, there is no single type of "communist" society.

Others argue that it was neither technologies nor demographics but culture that made Austria and Czechoslovakia so similar. Despite different kinds of ruling groups, they shared a common Central European history and culture. Because national cultures predate capitalist or communist forms of political economy, it may not even make sense to speak of communist societies, but only of communist political economies. There are many reasons, then, why including all communist-led societies into a single "type" may not be a good idea.

"Soviet-type societies", rather than communist societies, seems to be a better analytical category. This group includes the Soviet Union and the East European communist-led societies. This has one advantage of including only those societies with contiguous histories and cultures in the economically backward part of Europe.² Too, within a few years of World War II's conclusion, these societies were modelled explicitly on the experience of a USSR ruled by Josef Stalin.³ The Chinese, North Korean, Vietnamese and Cuban economies have been different from the Soviet-type one in important ways, and of course their societies have very different cultures and histories. Their futures are likely quite different from those of the USSR and Eastern Europe, and thus best left out of this account of the end to Soviet-type societies.

Albania and Yugoslavia might also be left out. After World War II, they fit the model of Soviet-type society, but they soon broke with the type. Between 1953 and 1956, the USSR and other Soviet-type societies began to move away from the model of centralization associated with Stalinism. Albania remained tied to that Stalinist model for more than three more decades. By contrast, Yugoslavia broke with the Stalinist model earlier than any other country, between 1948 and 1953. Although a communist party continued to rule, the Yugoslavs changed the economy dramatically. For most of their histories, then, communist-led Albania and Yugoslavia were out of step with Soviet-type societies. Soviet-type societies were neither so stagnant nor so dynamic as these two cases. They are the type's "outliers", and useful for occasional comparison to the development of Soviet-type societies. Yugoslavia represents the possibility for early change out of the type, and Albania represents the possibility for stagnation within the type's earliest stage, Stalinism.

What Are the Characteristics of Soviet-type Societies?

For the most part, Soviet-type societies have industrialized very quickly. Except for the more developed Czechoslovakia and East Germany, communists came to power in societies where most of the people worked on the land. But by 1980, the majority of working people in all Soviet-type societies, with the possible exception of Albania, were in manufacturing and not agriculture. Albania was the poorest country in Europe after World War II, and has remained so. Its movement toward post-communism has been the least developed too, as the authorities only allowed contested elections in March 1991, which the communists won. Albania's relative political and economic underdevelopment means that it is unlikely to have the same kinds of change as the rest of Eastern Europe. But like them, it will face the problem of introducing markets.

In a capitalist political economy, the means of production are privately owned and a market plays a leading role in the establishment of prices. In Soviet-type societies, the state owned the major means of production, like factories and land, and the economies were run according to a centrally administered "plan". These plans, developed by a central agency in consultation with various actors, determined production targets, customers and suppliers for enterprises. Prices for wholesale and retail goods were set administratively, not by the forces of supply and demand.

These plans were based on distorted information and on bargaining between enterprise managers and planners, rather than on scientific calculation. They could come close to being fulfilled only if managers violated their spirit, by using the informal and sometimes illegal second economy to obtain the inputs they needed. Perhaps, then, these economies do not deserve the label "planned," but they did face different problems from those faced by capitalist economies because their instrument of economic regulation was different.⁴ Hungarian economist Janos Kornai argues that the plan created a kind of investment hunger which uses up all available labor

in the system resulting in shortages of labor and other inputs.⁵ Full employment then was not just a political decision, but a consequence of the plan's irrationality. Under this system, production was constrained by limited supplies of inputs, not by limited demand as in capitalism.

Ruling communist parties in Soviet-type societies also maintained some connection to the ideas of Marx and Lenin. More important than this claimed ancestry, however, was that these parties have been restrained from reinterpreting those ideas. Communist parties in Soviet-type societies were subservient to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and its military apparatus. These Soviet organizations decided what kinds of changes were acceptable in Eastern Europe and what kinds were not. The most vivid examples of this Soviet domination can be found in the invasions of Hungary in 1956 and of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in the pressure for martial law in 1981 in Poland. In each case, the Soviet authorities justified military repression with the claim that the rule of the communist party and the existence of socialism were endangered. It didn't matter to Soviet authorities that these changes were begun in order to address problems of the Soviet-type system, and that they were supported by the people in these societies. It also didn't matter that in each instance some communists supported the change. A tendency toward systematic change was built into Soviet-type society, but Soviet power always constrained it. Yugoslavia's development suggests the chances for change without this Soviet constraint.

Yugoslavia left the Soviet-dominated alliance of countries in 1948. The League of Communists of Yugoslavia continued to rule the country, but between 1950 and 1953 it initiated a series of economic reforms based on "workers' self-management". They sought to build a political economy different from that of the Soviet-type, and one which, they claimed, reflected better the principles of marxism. The system developed as no other in the world. As in Soviet-type society, private ownership of the means of production was severely restricted. In contrast to that system, control over property was decentralized due to the expanded power of enterprise directors and workers' councils. Although the political authorities continued to influence the enterprise in a number of ways, by 1953 a framework for a market economy was built. Enterprises were obliged to respond to a market for their goods and for their supplies.⁶

If one of the important problems facing a post-communist system is the development of a market economy, Yugoslavia's evolution is an important experiment.⁷ It is not a post-communist experiment, as a communist party directed this economic reform. But it does suggest that communist parties are capable of initiating significant reform, and that Soviet political and military domination over Soviet-type societies is a central reason for their remaining more or less of the same "type".

Soviet-type societies therefore shared a common political economic system based on the rule of the communist party and the centrally administered plan, but equally important,

transformations of this type were constrained by their membership in a political/military bloc dominated by the Soviet Union. The measure of autonomy each Soviet-type society enjoyed changed over time, but the type's coherence has depended on the insistence by Soviet leaders that the totality of their system be approximated by those societies under their domination.

By contrast, those who rule in capitalism base their power on their control over capital within a market-based economy. As in Soviet-type societies, the military and police in the capitalist world can be used to prevent or redirect change within a dominant country or in the countries subordinate to that country, but the motive for this exercise of force is different. Capitalist elites tolerate a wider range of political and cultural conditions so long as economic conditions are suitable for their interests. The rulers of Soviet-type societies permitted much less deviation from not only the economic, but also the political, social and cultural rules established in the Soviet Union.

Soviet-type societies no longer exist. Domestic struggles within Eastern Europe shape their futures today much more than do the preferences of those in the xUSSR. The political leaderships in all of these societies have more or less repudiated the communist past and are moving to embrace the free market in institution and ideology. Even the Soviet Union itself has been fundamentally transformed by the emergence of new political forces and the effort to make a market-oriented political economy. The failed coup d'etat of August 18-21, 1991 in the USSR was the final gasp of a dying system trying to regain power. The coup only accelerated political change. Over the fall of 1991, independence was declared by most of the Union's former republics. But the defeat of that old system does not mean the end to social problems. It means only the end to simple solutions. To see this, we need to understand the crisis of the old system and how it produced its own "gravediggers".

THE CRISIS OF THE SOVIET-TYPE SYSTEM

Economic Contradictions and Decentralization

Communist parties did not come to power in the most advanced parts of the capitalist world system, as Marx thought they would. Rather, they came to power in relatively underdeveloped regions, in "developing societies".⁸ Communism was seen by its advocates as a strategy for developing agrarian societies more quickly than capitalism would. Whether it does is debateable. It is certain that communist parties have overseen rapid change, but their rate of development has stagnated as they moved beyond the shift from agrarian to industrial society, and toward "post-industrialism".

Communist-led economies were relatively good at mobilizing resources and applying them to the development of basic industry. Communist parties were not very good at making existing enterprises more efficient. When rates of growth began to show the first sign of decline in the

1960s, communist authorities began to look for new ways to improve economic performance. Hungary and Czechoslovakia led in implementing reforms designed to decentralize decision making and make employees of the state more responsible and more productive. The Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 ended their initiative; the Hungarians continued to lead economic reform among Soviet-type societies through the 1980s. But domestic reform was not the only solution for economic problems.

Communist leaders in the 1970s also began to establish more ties with non-communist countries. They increased trade with the West, but more importantly, several countries, notably Poland, East Germany, Hungary and Romania, received large loans from various financial agencies in the capitalist world. This infusion of Western capital sparked a rise in production and standards of living, but did not solve basic problems in the Soviet-type economy. By the middle of the decade, due to recession in the larger world system but also to the failure of reform at home, the boom of the 1970s turned into a bust. Many East European intellectuals and political leaders began to draw the conclusion that trade with the West and reform of the economy were not enough to enable their societies to compete successfully with the West on economic terms. A more fundamental transformation might be necessary.

This concern for relative economic decline moved Mikhail Gorbachev and the Soviet leadership to give up on the fine tuning of the system that they began in 1985 and to turn in 1987 to fundamental change, to "perestroika" or "restructuring." Tatyana Zaslavskaja a sociologist and former advisor to Gorbachev, posed the problem in sociological terms.⁹ She argued that there was a contradiction between the rising level of technology, education, and social complexity on the one hand, and the existing system of economic management on the other. This organization of enterprise and economy was a brake on the development of technology and production. Management had to be decentralized and a more direct link between the quality of work and compensation for that work had to be established for the Soviet economy to become more efficient. Without this reform, the Soviet economy would fall further behind the West. But there could be no reform without democratization and open public debate.

This crisis in the Soviet economy was the factor which enabled change both in the rest of the Soviet system and in other Soviet-type societies. By 1987, the political leadership in the USSR perceived that there could not be sufficient economic decentralization without 'glasnost' or "openness" in public discussion. But the loosening of political restraints led to much more change than communist leaders anticipated.

Cultural Contradictions and the Truth

Communist parties not only wanted to oversee the development of the economies of their societies. They also wanted to reshape their societies and remake the individuals who lived in

them. They claimed that in the new socialist society, there would be more justice and greater equality among individuals and nations and between men and women. The basic class conflicts of capitalism would be superseded so that peasants and workers along with a stratum of intelligentsia could work together to build socialism. They believed that people would adopt a more modern vision of the world in which old superstitions would fade away. A new morality would emerge, in which people would work for the common good. And above all, there would be no ruling class living a life of undeserved privilege, but rather a political leadership that would not only know the interest of society but act unselfishly in its interest. This was the proclamation; the perception was something else.

No matter how virtuous a revolution, sudden change produces victims and makes enemies. Some people lose influence, some property, some freedom, some lives. All other things being equal, to the extent a revolution is popular and domestically motivated, there are fewer victims and enemies. But when the revolution comes from abroad, as it was brought during the war against Hitler's Germany by the Soviet army into Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, East Germany, Bulgaria, and into areas subsequently incorporated into the USSR itself, the number of enemies and victims is greater from the start. And convincing the rest of the society that these victims and enemies deserve their status grows more difficult. Thus, in much of Eastern Europe, communists carried quite a burden in reconstructing a truth appropriate to their rule. And because of their ideology, it was even tougher.

Since the promise of socialism is so great, and because communist parties have come to power in economies ruined by war, the gap between promise and outcome is considerable. Unlike an aristocracy or bourgeoisie, communist leaders are obliged to eschew the manner of a ruling class because their ideology decrees that there is no ruling class. But over time, the communists' egalitarian values shaped by the struggle for justice tend to be eroded as the struggle to retain their rule generates elitism in outlook and lifestyle among them. They then become even more obliged than any other ruling group to hide their personal power and especially their privilege. This in turn moves the party to manipulate and deceive the public, to suppress freedom of speech and press rather than extend it. It leads them, Yugoslav Branko Horvat argues, to create a new kind of traditional authority in which faith in the party, rather than in reason and facts, becomes the basis for being a good subject of the party.¹⁰

Ultimately, this is an impossible project, for faith in the party is based on claims the party cannot realize. This has become especially true since the middle 1970s, as Soviet-type economies began their rapid decline in relation to the West. Communist authorities continued their "propaganda of success" even when it was increasingly apparent to those they ruled that social problems were growing, not disappearing. The most dramatic demonstration of the gap between proclamation and perception was the accident at the nuclear reactor in Chernobyl, Ukraine in

1986. Soviet technology was not only behind the West, but life threatening! The only way the authorities could make problems disappear was to refuse to allow them to be discussed in the mass media, but a disaster the size of Chernobyl could not be hidden. Even smaller social problems could not be eliminated entirely from the public mind by refusing their public discussion. Instead, all these smaller problems tended to be condensed by the public into one larger one: deception by the authorities.

The party attempted to create a new "truth" that would enable it to continue its rule, but instead the party became the embodiment of the "lie." They hid information about their own power and privilege; they minimized the scope of social problems in their own system, while focusing on those that the West suffered. But people travelled to the West, listened to Western radio stations, and came to believe that their world was not as egalitarian, just or healthy as that of the West. People turned away from the authorities in order to find "truth" elsewhere. One place was in the "nation".

IDENTITIES IN SOVIET-TYPE SOCIETY

The Nation

Of all the possible "identities" that could move people to collective action in Soviet-type societies, it seems that national identity has become the dominant affiliation.¹¹ Not class, not religion, not local community, not gender, and not generation, but nation is the category to which people typically appeal when they attempt to understand social problems and realize a collective ambition. Ukrainian changes illustrate this translation of crises and solutions into national identification best. "Chernobyl" was the first incident leading to a national reawakening, and then it became the "code word for everything one is against".¹² The Ukrainian social movement Rukh's program and charter shows just how central this identification with the "nation" is.

The nationality factor is a mighty engine of social progress, particularly in a multinational country; nations are the basic units of human civilization, human communities with a historical future. National diversity is the foundation for the multifarious development of humanity, of its vitality and endurance, their unfettered development the guarantee of civilization. A higher level of maturity of a nation is national statehood. Only under conditions of political, economic and cultural sovereignty is the free development of nations possible. The preservation of a nation is guaranteed under conditions of the coordinated development of the political-state, socio-economic, cultural and ecological aspects of existence.¹³

Nationality in Eastern Europe and the USSR is different from ethnicity in North America. Nationality is associated not only with one's heritage, but also with a collective history, particular places, a separate language, and a distinctive culture. Nationality within the USSR also is not the same as citizenship; one would be a Soviet citizen, but one's nationality might be Russian,

Ukrainian or Armenian. One's nationality is even registered on a Soviet passport. Nationality is a way of life in a way that citizenship is not.

Nationalities in Soviet-type societies tend to be concentrated in politically segregated geographical areas, even within multinational states. Because of this concentration, nations aspire often to self-rule. Self-rule might mean membership in a larger confederation, but for larger nationalities, as the Ukrainians are, self-rule often means national independence. The most influential social movements in Yugoslavia and the USSR, from the Croatian Democratic Union to Lithuania's Sajudis, were constructed to realize national independence. Ironically, communist nationality policy helped generate this national consciousness.

The USSR, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia organized their sub-federal administration around national groups. Despite twists and turns which made the dominant cultures more and less oppressive, communists oversaw modernization, provided basic education in local languages and helped to make national capitals out of places that were multinational locales in pre-communist days. The communists thus helped to generate the broader national consciousness which encouraged the wider ambitions for political independence that Soviet, Yugoslav and Czechoslovak communist authorities were not prepared to grant.¹⁴

A similar dynamic operated in those Soviet-type societies whose nations enjoyed nominal political independence. Apart from Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, Communist parties came to power after World War II in nationally defined states. But the new political rulers could not express their national identity in the same ways as those before them did. Anti-Soviet or anti-Russian national sentiment was especially forbidden. Even "national roads to communism" were suppressed. The Soviet Union under the "Brezhnev doctrine" claimed the right to restore socialism, by force if necessary, when it considered its system to be in danger in another nominally independent country. Independence from such a threat became a national aspiration. Independence as a Soviet-type society was thus another "lie" for many East Europeans.

With communists in power, national histories had to be rewritten in schoolbooks and official media. The role of communists in making national histories in the twentieth century was sanctified, non-communists were profaned, and the Soviet Union was glorified. So, beyond hiding the privilege of the powerful or the scope of social problems, communist leaders often rewrote history to elevate their own past and to diminish that of their opponents, who most often proclaimed the nation as their first loyalty. In this, communism further made itself into a lie to its subjects, while unintentionally elevating the nation to become the "truth." The nation became the alternative to communism. And if that national identity were tied to religion, the nation could be tied to something eternal and sacred, as it was in 1979 in Poland.

The Polish Solidarity movement of 1980-81 was the largest organized social movement Eastern Europe has ever seen. Over nine million people belonged to it. It was both a trade union

that sought to improve the conditions of work for its members, and a social movement struggling to guarantee freedom of association and speech. One of the key identities for this movement was its nationality, however, and Roman Catholicism played a major role in its formation. Its foundations were laid when Pope John Paul II returned to his native Poland in 1979. A Polish writer described his homilies at outdoor Masses attended by thousands of people:

In this dismal country of hypocrisy, cant and disregard for human dignity, the Pope's words harmonised with the thoughts of every Pole. He called for dignity, respect for man, truth, justice, law and tolerance. He clearly indicated those responsible for Poland's decline. He personified the potential greatness, the hopes and aspirations of the whole nation.¹⁵

In these Masses, individual Poles discovered that their private and individual alienation from the regime was shared by millions of others. In this setting, a national community was "rediscovered," aided by the most sacred of Polish men who identified communism as the great evil that was destroying the spirit of the nation. Catholic religion and Polish national identity, even for non-Catholics, went hand in hand in 1979.

Solidarity, in 1980-81, was not a religious movement, however. Nor was it an exclusively national movement. It was also a labor movement, and this is one reason why Solidarity was so fundamentally important in the dissolution of Soviet-type societies.

The Working Class

The working class was one of the most important identities to have been constructed in this region, for officially at least, the working class was also the ruling class in Soviet-type societies. Communist leaders claimed that they wished to create a "classless" society, and in one sense they did. No one could be financially secure through ownership of property; everyone was dependent on his or her job for income and benefits. From the manager to the unskilled laborer, they were all "employees" of the state, and thus Soviet-type society provided a kind of "equality". But this was also an equality based on common vulnerability before an oppressive state.

All employees could enjoy the protection a trade union could offer. But in Soviet-type societies, trade unions were not in the business of offering protection. Trade unions were extensions of the communist party and the state, or so it was perceived in Poland before Solidarity's formation. Solidarity was significant because it was independent, and not associated with the "lie."

In Soviet-type society, the communist party claimed to represent the working class, in addition to managing the economy and running the state. To have an independent trade union would mean that the working class was distinct from and opposed to the communist party. Solidarity was thus a direct ideological challenge to one of the claims legitimating the communist

party's monopoly on power: that it knew and represented the interest of the working class. In this sense, the formation of Solidarity finally exposed the "lie" legitimating communist dictatorship.

Solidarity was not only an ideological challenge to the party, but a practical one as well. Unlike individual dissidents or protesting students whom the authorities could imprison or exile, a united labor movement could not easily be repressed. Solidarity had at its disposal labor's ultimate weapon, the occupation strike, a resource all the more significant given the size of Poland's largest factories. To break an occupation strike in the Lenin Shipyards, Solidarity's birthplace, would have meant storming a walled fortress employing over 15,000 workers, a task far more difficult than crushing street protests.¹⁶

The Soviet-type system's preference for the rapid development of heavy industry in huge complexes has meant that the communists have realized their aim of creating an industrial proletariat. But they also created a collective actor predisposed toward a common consciousness and capable of exercising considerable power. Given the distance between the ceremonial praise for the working class and the actual conditions of work, a labor movement should have been a likely and recurrent challenge to the authorities of Soviet-type society. But no other place developed such a significant independent trade union movement as Poland. Why was Solidarity the exception?

Polish workers have, since 1945, had the most successful experience with protests. Poles never suffered the magnitude of losses that other protesters have throughout Eastern Europe. They did not suffer invasions as have the Czechs, Slovaks and Hungarians. They even managed several times to force changes in policy or even in national leadership with their protest. Solidarity was thus the culmination of working class protest, but working class mobilization can lead to a variety of politics. In 1990 Romania, post-communist leader Iliescu transported miners to beat up striking students. Serbian workers have been mobilized by ex-communist leader Milosevic in a nationalist movement against Albanians and a war against Croats. In the USSR, striking miners in 1989 decided they should avoid politics and limit their concerns to their working conditions. In renewed strikes in the winter of 1991, they called for Gorbachev's resignation. In August, miners struck to oppose the coup.

Post-communist societies will see even more working class protest than Soviet-type societies experienced, as transition assaults the standards of living of the proletariat that communism built. But it is hard to anticipate the politics that will be associated with that working class mobilization. "Socialism", the principal "counterculture" of capitalism,¹⁷ has come to be associated with the communist parties of the region and the lies for which they stood. Is there another progressive political vision that workers might embrace as they protest? Might it be the civil society and democracy associated with Solidarity in 1980-81?

Civil society is a vision of social association based on three basic ideas: pluralism, or a system in which each individual or group is free to mobilize resources to articulate and defend its own interests; legality, or a system of law in which all citizens are given the same civil, political and social rights; and publicity, or the existence of public spaces in which debate of different viewpoints can proceed unimpeded. Democracy is based on such a civil society, because it is only under the conditions of pluralism, legality, and publicity that citizens can freely choose the persons and programs to represent them.

Although Solidarity in 1980-81 was based on the power of the working class, the movement denied the significance of class by embracing this vision of civil society. Whether professional, worker or peasant, each Pole had a common interest in the making of this democratic alternative to the Soviet-type system.¹⁸ It was "civil society against the state".¹⁹ But this vision is not embedded in the labor movement. It represents an important new ideology of the intelligentsia, one designed to combat both communism and the intolerance associated with old forms of nationalism.

The Intelligentsia

The intelligentsia are writers, historians, lawyers, physicians, engineers and other highly educated people who comprise an upper social class from which a political elite is chosen. In the absence of a bourgeoisie, they were the principal social actors who brought post-imperial modern states to Eastern Europe. Before communism, the intelligentsia was a relatively exclusive group socially, although within the group there was a wide variety of ideologies: various forms of populism, socialism, communism, nationalism, and capitalism. But communist rule made the intelligentsia both less exclusive and more homogeneous politically.

The ranks of the intelligentsia were expanded dramatically. Higher education was made more widely available with the aim of creating a "working intelligentsia," a highly educated stratum that would help construct a new kind of society. The intelligentsia was put at the top of an occupational hierarchy with a lifestyle above that of the peasantry and working class, but in exchange the authorities demanded loyalty to the communist party.

From the start, many in the intelligentsia resisted this transformation. Their freedom in work was constrained. The privilege of their group was reduced; while they still lived better than other classes, the gap between their lifestyle and those of other classes grew smaller. The number in their class also grew, which meant its exclusivity declined. And communism also typically meant an assault on the nation and the old truths to which many were attached. Some members of the intelligentsia thus became the principal advocates of nationalism against communism.

However, the old nationalism had its problems. Before World War II, nationalism often meant exclusion and oppression of specific minorities within nation states, and of Jews and

Gypsies throughout Eastern Europe. Many thought that it would be better to revise communism than to return to the old hatreds, but this "revisionist" strategy failed in Eastern Europe. The last hope for such a transformation occurred during the "Prague Spring" of 1968 in Czechoslovakia, when communists and others sought to make a new society, a "socialism with a human face". Now, even when East European communist parties lead reform, as the Bulgarian Socialist (formerly Communist) Party did in 1990, they seek to build a market economy and liberal democracy, not a reformed Soviet-type society.

After 1968, many East Europeans began to believe that the economy could not be reformed, nor could its politics be made more humane. But instead of turning to an unreformed nationalism, many intellectuals looked to a vision of a democratic civil society which they claimed to be the best aspect of the national patrimony. Instead of relying on change from above, change would come from below; all would have equal rights, regardless of nationality. Culture, economy, and society would be liberated from the party and organized in a more just way by society itself; the party would remain the titular head, like the Queen in England. This was also an appealing compromise, as nearly all democratic and nationalist visions could be included in it. This was Solidarity's vision in 1980-81, but ultimately it, too, failed. Civil society could not be created without changes in both state and society.²⁰

Martial law was imposed in Poland on December 13, 1981. Solidarity was forced underground, and the communist regime tried to implement a reform if not with a human face, at least with a more marketized economy. But the authorities discovered that they could not implement change without the support of the society. Members of the intelligentsia throughout Eastern Europe, within and without the communist party, began to realize that some kind of common effort might be required to save their societies.

The Authorities

It was often assumed that authorities in Soviet-type societies were both extraordinarily powerful and committed to the ideology guiding the exercise of their power. Not so.

These authorities were most powerful and most committed during Stalinism. Actors then were more likely to believe in the Soviet alternative, or at least were more obliged to act as if they did, given the threat of imprisonment; for this was also the period of greatest uncertainty and danger. People could be fired, imprisoned and even killed for suggesting that they were not entirely loyal to the Stalinist system.

After Stalinism, the communist authorities became more tolerant. Hungary's leader Janos Kadar exemplified this shift when he said "he who is not against us is with us." When their economies began to fall behind the West, the authorities not only became more tolerant, but also less confident. History, contrary to what they were taught, seemed not to be on their side.

Economists, influenced by the free market theories of the West, began to convince the communist authorities that the only future lay in marketizing society and even establishing greater rights for private property. Communist authorities typically could not express their disenchantment with the system, given the continuing influence of the ideological orthodoxy in Moscow. But when Gorbachev weakened the grip of this orthodoxy, then others could express their intentions more openly.

While it cannot be said that the communist authorities in Eastern Europe and the USSR were the force behind the end to Soviet-type societies, the end could not have come without their participation in its burial. While Boris Yeltsin, the President of the Russian Republic, was the hero of the anti-coup forces in August, 1991, communist leader Mikhail Gorbachev laid the foundations for civil society's victory over the communists with his policies of perestroika and glasnost'. Instead of trying to repress working class strikes in 1988, Poland's authorities agreed to negotiate with Lech Walesa about the relegalization of Solidarity. In Hungary, reformers within the Communist party sided with opposition groups in civil society to beat back party hardliners in 1988-89, and then helped to implement free elections for Hungary's first post-communist government. There was resistance; but in each instance, communists or former communists who wanted to end the old system prevailed and helped to make a new one. But is it so new?

POST-COMMUNIST SOCIETY

The successor to Soviet-type society is no longer a communist-led society. But what kind of society is it? Many say democratic, and many say capitalist, but the truth is that nobody knows, for this society is in transition, without a known destination. And not only are post-communist societies more and less distant from the old system, but they may be on different tracks.

It is difficult to say when post-communism begins. One could argue that it began in the USSR when Gorbachev initiated his policies of perestroika and glasnost'. Or it might have begun in Poland in 1980-81 when Solidarity built a civil society alongside the communist state. Did it begin in Yugoslavia when its communists began the move toward markets? Each of these departures from the Soviet-type system is a foundation for post-communism, but most would argue that the "real" break with the old system comes only when political authority is won through free and popular elections. But popular elections are not enough by themselves to make post-communism more than a circulation of elites.

Despite their leadership in other ways, Yugoslavia and the xUSSR might be among the least advanced in their movement away from the old political system. Yugoslavia or its successor independent republics could have taken the lead among post-communist countries given their

experience with international trade and a market economy, but the war which in November 1991 engulfs Serbia and Croatia means that post-communist transition will pose the additional challenge of peacemaking and post-war recovery. And while the territories of the xUSSR could become the most significant post-communist economic opportunity for Western capital, their relationship to one another and to their unified heritage poses problems of transition that other more sovereign nation-states need not face. Which government, for instance, is responsible for the Soviet international debt, and which political authorities should be the beneficiaries of new aid?

Does post-communism require that the government be without former communists? In some places in Eastern Europe, in Romania, Bulgaria and Albania, present or former communists won ostensibly free national elections. A transformed communist party won in Albania in March 1991 and in Bulgaria in June 1990, and individuals who were once leading party members won in Romania in May 1990. The opposition to these new authorities have demanded new more free elections, claiming that transition will not be complete until these too recently converted democrats are out of power. The focus on getting former communists out is not limited to the places where they have held onto their ruling position.

In Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, those who led the struggle against communism now lead the government. These central European countries are thus probably ahead of the post-communist countries to their east and south, but as in those countries, the drive to oust former communists from positions of political or economic influence continues as a popular theme. It is the easiest program to raise for those who claim the change to post-communism is moving too slowly. It offers a concrete plan of action, and it is more or less politically safe, as few will openly defend communists. Their only defense is that "witch-hunts" will divide society and distract the population from the more difficult institutional changes before them.

These anti-communist themes have the least resonance in East Germany perhaps because there change is happening too fast. The most powerful opponant of communist East Germany, West Germany, now rules the country completely. It is marketizing the old Soviet-type society at a huge cost to the German state budget, but the East German population is also paying much. It has suffered the highest rates of unemployment among post-communist societies alongside huge increases in the costs of living. Few there complain that transition moves too slowly. East Germany is now unusual among post-communist societies.

With free elections in post-communism have come many of the things for which advocates of civil society struggled. The intelligentsia, as the traditional leader of East European nations, again dominates parliaments. Poland's president, Lech Walesa, an electrician by occupation, is the great exception among East European political leaders. Guarantees of freedom of association, speech, and the press as well as other civil liberties have become more real in all of these societies. Now, social problems might be discussed more realistically, given that the precondition for their

solution, a civil society, is being developed. But solutions may not be found, as the problems associated with economic reform illustrate.

Among those post-communist societies that have independent states, Poland leads in economic change. It has liberalized most prices to go to their market levels. Enterprises are no longer controlled by a central plan, but rather must make their way on the marketplace and become profitable. As such, many people have been fired from their jobs; unemployment, once nonexistent, now approaches 10 per cent. For these kinds of aggressive moves toward a market, international financial actors have rewarded Poland with credits and have forgiven significant portions of the debt acquired by the communist-led government. But Poland's "shock therapy" is still not as harsh as many economists would recommend.

Poland's huge industrial complexes are still running and employing the workers that brought down the communist government. The new post-communist government, while it believes such enterprises should be sold to private investors, cannot find buyers. And they are hesitant to force these firms into bankruptcy, because threatening more workers only risks political instability. The post-communist authorities are finding that while the old system was ridden with shortages and inefficiency, it produced a kind of industrial stability that capitalism cannot. In Soviet-type society, the state directed resources to assure political stability, if not economic rationality. Workers today do not demand that their own firms be privatized, but rather that their sectors be given more resources. In this sense, post-communism may have to be more different politically than economically from Soviet-type society, as a kind of "workfare" in huge industrial complexes may be the only way to assure that transition from Soviet-type society can proceed without inviting class warfare. Another conflict likely to emerge is one between countryside and city, especially in those places, like Hungary and Poland, where there are large numbers of private farmers.

Private farmers were an important component in the making of post-communism, especially in Hungary. Agriculture was one of the areas in which entrepreneurial skills were preserved and private businesses successful.²¹ But many of these farmers were competitive only within a system where domestic and especially international markets were undeveloped, and important inputs to agriculture were subsidized. As East European farmers face both competition and price inflation for inputs, many of them will go under. Already in Poland, one of the groups most disaffected with the new post-communist order and its economic shock therapy is the peasantry.

Another identity likely to be affected dramatically by post-communism will be women. Communist authorities claimed to have liberated women in Soviet-type society. They drew more women into the paid labor force, they brought more women into higher education, and they made abortion more widely available, among other things. Of course, women were in a sense forced to

work because of the poor wages of their spouses, and whether with higher education or not, women were often segregated into more poorly paid feminized employment. And abortion was not always safe, especially when it was used as a substitute for birth control that was not available. And sometimes, most notoriously in Romania in 1967, women were even denied access to abortion and birth control in a desperate attempt by the authorities to increase a faltering birth rate. As a result of this "forced emancipation," men and even many women have eschewed Western feminist politics and embraced a "traditional" vision of gender relations, where women stay home and men can earn a family wage.²² But because of declining standards of living, this vision of family life will become available only to a very privileged few.

This ideology of gender relations fits nicely with a return to the old nationalist politics. The image of the nation, much like this vision of gender relations, is one of being "natural", not of being socially constructed or imposed. "Freedom" to stay at home and out of politics and the workplace is a part of this new position for women. And the wish for many women to adopt a more "feminine" and less masculine manner is consistent with this vision, which includes not only more concern for fashion but also for family. But these gender politics will likely not remain so dominant as they are today in Eastern Europe.

Once the dichotomy between the nation and communism, between the "natural" and the "artificial," outlives its political utility, other conflicts will occupy the public sphere. It is likely that conflicts among nationalities will replace the conflict between nations and communism, as they have already in Yugoslavia between Serbs and Croats, or in the USSR, between Armenians and Azeris or Georgians and Ossetians, or in Bulgaria between Turks and Bulgarians. If national conflicts do not emerge, other conflicts will: between workers and the new authorities, between town and country, and between those holding to an old vision of the nation, and those with the new.

The people who have overthrown the Soviet-type system are not the same kinds of people whom communists came to rule after World War I or after World War II. Even if they speak the same language and lay claim to the same heritage, their societies are much more urban and educated. They also live in a different historical period, with a world more democratic and cultures more international than before World War II. Nevertheless, there are many in the USSR and in Eastern Europe today who would impose a vision of society that harkens back to an old order rather than moving toward a new, more democratic one. This is especially apparent in gender politics.

In post-communist Poland, the Catholic Church pressured the legislature to ban abortion. Through parliamentary maneuver, some representatives temporarily defeated the effort, but few politicians have come out and opposed the Church directly. The Church's explicit endorsement of the party Catholic Electoral Action for its stand on abortion enabled it to rise from relative

obscurity to third place in the October 1991 elections, and then become a member of the ruling coalition government. While not a theocracy, the influence of the Church on the new Polish order suggests a measure of religious influence inconsistent with the secular character of most modern democratic polities. Ironically this influence also could endanger the Church's broad appeal.

While Poland was dominated by communists, the Church was seen as the repository of the nation's values, but in less than two years after Poland's first post-communist elections, the Church is being seen by significant numbers of people as a new oppressor, legislating its morality on the nation. The Church is even making more Poles sympathetic to feminism and support for women's choice; before, many Poles saw in feminism only the elevation of work over family.

Many more problems face this region. There is an ecological crisis. Prejudice against homosexuals is condoned in official circles. Crime and drug abuse appear to be more widespread. An AIDS epidemic could emerge given the paucity of sex education and health care. The end to Soviet-type society has not solved these problems, even if they have changed the character of a few others. While there are fewer shortages of goods, there are more people unemployed. While there are more civil liberties, there are fears of growing nationalist intolerance and ethnic violence. While the cold war has disappeared, new regional hot wars emerge. There are new democratic governments, but these governments will unlikely be able to realize very soon their promises of economic rebirth. Post-communist transition means only the end to rule by a Communist Party.

CONCLUSION

The end to Soviet-type society means for Eastern Europe and the xUSSR the end of simple solutions to social problems. The dichotomy between truth and falsity, between good and evil, upon which the struggle against communism by the nation was waged, will soon be revealed as but a useful myth for overturning an oppressive system of power relations. Most tragically, perhaps, the problem which triggered mass opposition - economic crisis - has hardly improved. Distribution problems have only worsened in the xUSSR, and in Eastern Europe, the increase in production from the small private sector cannot make up for declines in production by the large industrial sector still owned by the state. Economic crisis helped breed the anti-communist revolution in Soviet-type society. What will it make in post-communist society?

The post-communist system has one definite advantage over the old system, however. To the extent civil liberties and democracy are maintained and expanded, lies are more difficult to support and social problems more difficult to hide. But it is altogether a different question whether this openness will mean that the new authorities and society will be better able to address their substantial social problems. There will be a great temptation for leaders of these systems to return to a strategy of deception and manipulation in order to hide problems they now must manage, but with which they may not be able to cope. And this time it likely will be those who

claim the nation and freedom as their inspiration who establish the new "lie". And with the collapse of socialism as an alternative vision, East Europeans may not have an obvious "truth" with which to challenge a new system of oppression.

ENDNOTES

1. Ron Suny, Howard Kimeldorf and Craig Calhoun read an earlier version of this text, and I am grateful to them for their comments. This final text is my own responsibility. A subsequent version of this text is available in Craig Calhoun and George Ritzer (eds.) Social Problems: A Critical Approach. McGraw Hill, 1992.
2. The dominant national group in the Soviet Union is the Russians, making up about half of the people in the USSR. Russian culture is part of the European heritage, given its participation in the politics and letters of the continent. One of the dominant themes in Russian culture has been its search to understand its relationship to Europe: whether it is part of its culture, or whether it is an alternative to it. Russian culture is more than European; much of its people's attention has been focused on the Asian territories that its armies conquered and to which its people have migrated for over four centuries. Most of the USSR's territory lies in Asia, and thus cannot be understood as an exclusively "European" country, but because of the dominance of Russian culture in the USSR, and Russian culture's close ties to European culture, we can understand the USSR to have had a history in the eastern, economically backward part of Europe, so long as we recall its Asian ties.
3. I don't consider the period between the October Revolution and the end of the Soviet Union's first major liberalization in the New Economic Policy in the 1920's to be characteristic of Soviet-type society. Likewise, the immediate post-World War II period in which communist parties in Eastern Europe had not yet consolidated their hold on politics, economy and culture is not part of this societal type. I would rather consider Stalinism to be the first stage of a Soviet-type society, in which control over the state, economy, and society is highly centralized. It has its own dynamics, but tends to stabilize around the following: at the behest of its top political leadership, the security apparatus instills mass terror by widespread surveillance and arbitrary arrests; there is little to no private ownership of land and agriculture is collectivized; central planning of the economy and rigid state control of enterprises are maximized; society is allowed little autonomy from the state, with religious practices and independent associations prohibited, or at least limited; the "personality cult" also develops in which rituals and monuments proliferate to express society's appreciation for the leader of the communist party. The Soviet Union under Stalin (1929-53) and Albania under Enver Hoxha (1944-85) are the main examples of this stage. Regression from post-Stalinism to Stalinism is also possible. Romania redeveloped its Stalinist system under the rule of Nicolae Ceausescu, who in 1969, four years after becoming party leader, consolidated his absolute rule over the system. See Mary Ellen Fischer, "Idol or Leader: The Origins and Future of the Ceausescu Cult" pp. 117-41 in Daniel N. Nelson (ed.) Romania in the 1980s. Boulder: Westview Press, 1981.
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11. See Alain Touraine, pp. 75-82 in Return of the Actor Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988, for a useful discussion of "identity" in the construction and analysis of social movements.
12. Roman Szporluk, "National Awakening: Ukraine and Belorussia" in Uri Ra'anana (ed.) The Soviet Empire Lexington Books, 1990, p. 79.
13. Rukh: The Popular Movement of Ukraine for Restructuring. 1989. Program and Charter. Kiev, Ukraine, published by Smoloskyp Publishers, Ellicott City, Md., p. 28
14. Ronald Suny, "The Revenge of the Past: Socialism and Ethnic Conflict in Transcaucasia" New Left Review #184, November/December 1990, pp. 5-36.
15. Andrzej Szczypiorski, The Polish Ordeal: The View from Within. London: Croom Helm, 1982, pp. 112-13.
16. See Michael D. Kennedy, Professionals, Power and Solidarity in Poland: A Critical Sociology of Soviet-type Society. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 for an analysis of the relationship between power resources and Solidarity's strategic action.
17. Zygmunt Bauman, Socialism: The Active Utopia. London: Allen and Unwin, 1976.
18. See Kennedy, 1991, for an analysis of the relationship between class and civil society in the context of Solidarity.
19. Andrew Arato, "Civil Society against the State". Telos. 47(1981):23-47.
20. See David Ost, Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics Temple University Press, 1990 for an argument about how the state could have been transformed in 1981.
21. Ivan Szelenyi, Socialist Entrepreneurs: Enbourgeoisement in Rural Hungary. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.
22. for a review of gender relations in communist-led societies and after, see Maxine Molyneux, "The 'Woman Question' in the Age of Perestroika" New Left Review #183 September/October 1990, pp. 23-49.

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