



**Barbara Falk**

## Between past and future

*Central European dissent in historical perspective*

Lockean liberalism emphasized toleration of religion and other dissenting social practices. Yet in the Marxian critique of liberal freedoms, dissent was seen solely in terms of class struggle: social harmony could be achieved in a classless society, not a pluralist one. According to Barbara Falk, the severance of dissent and toleration has obscured the liberal roots of eastern European dissidence.

In the preface to her collection of essays *Between Past and Future*, Hannah Arendt quotes French resistance poet René Char, who stated "Notre héritage n'est précédé d'aucun testament" — "our heritage was left to us by no testament"<sup>1</sup> By employing this aphorism as metaphor, Arendt wants to understand the theoretical difficulties presented by the interstices of action. European resistance movements — and here Arendt includes not only the *maquis* but also the "freedom fighters" of Paris in 1789 and of Budapest in 1956 — had inevitably "lost their treasure". For Arendt, this transitory "treasure" is the public freedom found or humanity gained (or created, in the Arendtian sense of the *vita activa*) via participation in moments of revolutionary emancipation.<sup>2</sup>

Twenty years after 1989, those who were witnesses (former activists) and those who are scholars (for whom this was a galvanizing event in which many were also participant–observers in the anthropological sense) are engaged precisely in this dilemma. We are in an Arendtian conundrum; we are between past and future. We realize that the "islands of freedom" represented by communities of dissent in central and eastern Europe had an enormous impact on the scope and type of political, social, and economic change that has occurred — yet we are still reconciling ourselves to that reality analytically. However, between past and future is a useful and theoretically productive place to be. For Arendt, such intervals represented possibility for "moments of truth", for re–examination of our "insertion" into time without hubris, with full awareness of our nakedness — stripped of all masks of understanding and interpretation. After two decades, the time is past for easy and triumphalist explanations of the role of dissent in the fall of communism and the end of the Cold War. However, before the past is truly past, we have within our living memories and experiences to make meaning of it, to insert these experiences into the *longue durée* in the Braudelian sense, such that a testament *can* be written.

Said less metaphysically, what is needed is an analysis that situates the dissent of central and eastern Europe not only in the histories of their states and regions (much of this is already being done by a post–Cold War generation of emerging scholars), but into the broader history of dissent and sub–state

resistance to authoritarianism. In so doing, one can more fully appreciate the legacies of dissent from *this* time and place for global politics in the future. Moreover, given the twin phenomena of speed and the globalization of communication, understanding and situating the recent past into the longer past has never been more urgent or difficult. Unlike in earlier generations where, as Marx said, the nightmare of the past weighs down like a burden upon the brain of the living, the present and the future appropriate the past with a speed and selectivity that is both seductive and dangerous — since the element of *Verstehen* is all too often missing. Hegel's warning about the Owl of Minerva taking her flight at dusk has never been more prescient.

## Defining dissent

In situating central and eastern European dissent in European history past and contemporary global politics present, one is struck immediately by the elasticity of terminology — so much so that the dissidence of the 1970s and 1980s not only elevated the role of dissent in politics, but dramatically consolidated the expansion of its meaning.<sup>3</sup> Part of this was practice, but historiographical revisionism on the part of scholars was also required. Meeting the challenge of this "elasticity" of meaning requires that terminology can best be understood as part of a continuum, not only lexicographically, but historically as well.

In both dictionary definitions and in the history of political theory, dissent connotes both difference of opinion or sentiment with prevailing norms or legal–political structures as well as disagreement or even challenge to those norms or structures. Dissent emerged historically as religious non–conformism, particularly post–Reformation as a result of the wars of religion in Europe. The classic cases, for which dissent is eponymously defined in the English language, are the non–conformist religious sects of seventeenth century England and Scotland. Dissent emerged as having a particular character, was part of a larger continuum of resistance, yet less obviously confrontational than organized opposition.<sup>4</sup>

Resistance, as a larger category, can be either public or private, either textual or performative. Lynne Viola, in her examination of life in the USSR in the 1930s, has discussed resistance within a larger continuum of responses that range from accommodation, adaptation, and apathy through to internal emigration, opportunism, and positive support (2002). Similarly, yet more theoretically, James C. Scott's model of "hidden transcripts" discusses how "offstage" discursive practices are transformed into public dissent — a moment of "rupture" occurs that has revolutionary implications. According to Scott, "hidden transcripts" of resistance — including rumours, gossip, folktales, songs, gestures, jokes, the theatre of the powerless — suggest an impersonal critique of power.<sup>5</sup> "Hidden transcripts" are discursive practices — gesture, speech, action — which are typically excluded from the "public transcripts" of "normal" power relations where those in authority dominate the oppressed. In the context of central and eastern Europe, "hidden transcripts" are the "offstage" of politics — here understood as outside the realm of the party–state. The danger, of course, is that official analysis relying solely or largely public transcripts generally concludes that the subordinated are willing and even enthusiastic partners in their subordination.<sup>6</sup> The "hidden transcripts" of varying kinds of dissent disrupt this official story.

For Scott, the most explosive realm of politics, the potential revolutionary "moment", is the point of rupture that occurs between the public transcript and

the hidden transcript.<sup>7</sup> The central European expression of this *par excellence* is Havel's fictional greengrocer, whose removal of the sign "Workers of the World Unite!" from his shop window obliterates the distinction between official and public and that which is hidden, authentic, and defiant.<sup>8</sup> The greengrocer defies what was expected of him *and* displays the empty semantic content of the slogan. Here Scott and Havel are in agreement in that public refusal is critical for the hidden transcript to become public, and private resistance is transformed into public dissent. Scott suggests that "the first open declaration of the hidden transcript so often takes the form of a public breaking of an established ritual of public subordination"<sup>9</sup>

Scott's analysis helps us to understand the multitude of processes by and through which social mobilization happens, and how reformers can actually end up as unwitting revolutionaries. At the same time, Scott offers a pragmatic critique of theories of Gramscian hegemony and Marxist false consciousness (ultimately, such structuralist theories cannot fully account for 1989–1991). The shared discourse of the hidden transcript is "created and ripened" in the interstices of the authoritarian and dominant/domineering social order, just as occurred in the civil society organizations and movements that populated the "parallel *polei*" of central and eastern Europe.<sup>10</sup> Looked at this way, it is far less surprising when the previously and apparently deferential, quiescent, and subservient populations rise up and collectively catapults society into public opposition to the state via mass defiance, mobilization.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, Scott's work helps us to understand how uprisings don't just happen — there are long histories where we must recognize the "active social sites" in which hidden transcripts were "elaborated and nurtured".<sup>12</sup> A central European example can be found in the dates inscribed into collective Polish memory of resistance against communism *before* 1980–1981 — that is, 1956, 1968, 1970 and 1976. There was a long *prehistory* — preserved in popular memory and a national culture of heroes, martyrs, and villains of earlier episodes, as well as a process of *collective learning*. In Poland, the idea of a coalition of "workers" and "intellectuals" was missing from both 1968 and 1970, but evident in KOR, and then brought to mass fruition with Solidarity.

Although resistance as a broad label is significantly inclusive of everyday activities, what makes resistance *political* is its *public* nature. Absenteeism, deliberately low productivity, retreat into the private sphere — all of these activities can be viewed as forms of resistance, but not forms of dissent. To some degree, dissent requires living "as if", in Havel's famous formulation. However, looking at resistance broadly does help us situate dissent more broadly as the tip of a pyramid of dissatisfaction with the regime.

Nevertheless, there is no clear-cut line between resistance and dissent — it is more of a continuum or a full spectrum. At the "resistance" end of the continuum are activities such as absenteeism, alcoholism or drug abuse, and the preference for personal travel and sporting activities rather than trade union or workplace sponsored events. These activities may not be overt or even intentional. Closer to the middle would be private or family discussions on alternative historiography that fostered a deliberate "double-thinking," listening to a banned radio broadcast, writing an essay "for the drawer" but occasionally taking it out and showing it to someone, publicly telling jokes, or reading *samizdat*. Closer to the middle on the other side of the continuum, toward dissent, would be activities taken in support or in the "grey zone" — agreeing with a petition, participating in a pilgrimage perhaps, or discussing with friends a particular broadcast or spreading news obtained therefrom.

Finally, at the "dissent" end of the continuum would be the production and distribution of *samizdat*, public protest, active involvement in independent groups outside the control of the party–state — all of which risked regime persecution and/or imprisonment. Some activities acquired public or political status by nature of their mass and volume, such as the thousands of East Germans who "voted" with the feet by escaping to the West in the early 1950s, or later in the summer and early fall of 1989 via their exit to Austria through Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

### The origins of political dissent

Dissent can be said to be inherent in the historical canon of political thought in the sense that dissent in its public and political form is what separates philosophy from *political* philosophy. "Modern" dissent, however, has three has at least three overlapping origin stories: first, with the rise and consolidation of the Westphalian state; second, with the emergence of liberalism, specifically in the work of John Locke; and third, with the emergence of religious dissent and the ensuing debate on toleration. Ultimately, as I will argue below, Marxism as alternative history and praxis "distorted" these intertwining trajectories of dissent because conflict was reduced to class conflict as a) materialist in basis and structural in origin; b) historically inevitable, and thus leading to revolutionary violence; c) resulting in a utopian future with a teleological drive to better humanity. In the process, liberal "rights" such as freedom of expression and conscience/belief were sidelined as both epiphenomenal and inconsequential.

The history of contemporary political dissent really begins with the rise and consolidation of the modern state in post–Westphalian Europe. Moreover, the idea of protecting difference of opinion and enshrining that protection politically is intimately tied to the emergence of *liberalism*. The key text is John Locke's *Letter on Toleration (Epistola de Tolerantia)*. Locke's letter and early modern views on tolerance have been primarily connected with religious dissent.<sup>13</sup> However, although it remains the case that Locke's approach was primarily about remedying state intolerance toward Christian sects, they were often perceived as dissenters not only by religious tenets but by the nature of their exit from prevailing social and political norms. The same arguments used by Locke to demonstrate the irrationality of coercive force to induce belief and the limits of state intervention and authority in subjugating belief to the dictates of the state ring true in terms of thinking of rigidly authoritarian regimes. Proper areas for governments to intervene and proper arenas in which governments ought to remain neutral area introduced in the *Letter*, even though they are more expressly considered in Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*.<sup>14</sup> Ultimately, for Locke, to persuade belongs to the realm of human reason; it should not be within the reach of the state. As Locke compellingly argues:

it is one thing to persuade, another to command; one thing to press with arguments, another with penalties. This the civil power alone has a right to do; to the other, good–will is authority enough. Every man has commission to admonish, exhort, convince another of error, and by reasoning to draw him into truth: but to give laws, receive obedience, and compel with the sword, belongs to none but the magistrate.<sup>15</sup>

Out of the tradition that Locke spawned there emerged a number of principles — both practical and theoretical — that have ultimately been associated with liberalism. First, toleration, although it arose in matters of belief, was extended

to other aspects of human life—social practices, forms of art and expression, and today to the active integration of diverse and even opposing religious and cultural practices within multicultural societies. Second, although dissent may be on either side of the boundaries of legality, tolerance is a device to either a) discourage behaviour by intelligently and tactically *not* over-reacting via legal or coercive force, or b) distinguish in lenience between civil disobedience and typically criminal acts (thus mitigating the usual punishments or sanctions usually applied). In both cases, toleration is not to be confused with active approval. Finally, toleration opens up discursive and political pathways that lead beyond a classic rights-orientation to either a radical form of relativism (no one value or belief system has any greater claim to truth or societal advantage than another), or to arguments for pluralism and diversity that require public and procedural arbitration when claims collide, governed by an ethic of responsibility, cooperation, compromise, and an often unstated assumption that some claims are more fundamental and thus legitimately trump others.<sup>16</sup> In other words, "tolerance" is a pre-condition for complicated democratic deliberation and, more recently, debates about multicultural citizenship and complex identities.

Much theoretical and historical work needs to be done to truly situate the dissent of the late twentieth century into this longer tradition, and to take seriously the work of central and eastern European dissidents as political theorists in their own right. An important practical explanation for the paucity of research and writing in this area is the post-Marxist nature of the original work of the dissidents themselves — which emerged from a region stymied theoretically by the dull conformism of Marxist-Leninism.<sup>17</sup>

Nonetheless, following Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski, many dissidents came to view not only distorted Marxism as faulty but increasingly interpreted Marx himself as theoretically responsible for a tradition that effectively sidelined dissent as reformist and ineffective and rights and liberal freedoms as bourgeois and epiphenomenal.<sup>18</sup> Nineteenth century industrialization and exploitation saw dissent sidelined by economic disadvantage, so much so that Marx theorized that liberal freedoms must be both bourgeois and epiphenomenal, because they made little difference to the material conditions of the labouring classes (so powerfully determinative was the logic of capital). Marx was not operating within a theoretical illusion; his utopian teleology was matched with a hard-headed realism when it came to humanely analysing the level of alienation, human suffering, and effective disenfranchisement. Dissent could only be understood as part of the larger struggle of class conflict, and would only yield permanent results for the labouring masses if revolution would occur, which indeed it would, as it was historically inevitable. Social harmony was found in a classless society, not in a pluralist one.

Practice matched theory not only in the rise of proletarian internationalism and radical labour and political movements — both revolutionary and evolutionary, but also well outside urban factories.<sup>19</sup> However, although dissent in Marxist and neo-Marxist theory and practice, from the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, was twinned with class analysis based on materialism, it was never entirely economically driven. However, it remained the case right through to the 1980s that, with few exceptions, toleration (upon which dissent depends) was in many senses conceived as inimical to socialist thought — it was associated with the "repressive tolerance" of Marcuse in the West,<sup>20</sup> and with the ruthless instrumentalism of the Russian revolutionaries and their disciples in the East (and on this issue ideological differences

mattered not, as among, for example, Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky).<sup>21</sup>

Not until after the revolutions of 1989 is there a debate on the contribution of dissent and the collective *oeuvre* of dissident thought and practice to liberalism. The argument that the dissidents bequeathed to the West a newly reinvigorated liberalism has most often been discussed in the guise of confirming the familiar tenets of liberalism, not as generating any new ideas or approaches.<sup>22</sup> However, the dissident emphasis was on the construction of alternative civil societies designed to reinvigorate the stagnant official public sphere of the party–state; the procedural importance of anti–politics (read not as counter to politics but about doing politics differently) was not primarily designed to engineer regime change (always an *ex post facto* interpretive temptation post–1989). At the heart of their contribution to robust and participatively democratic liberalism are the dissidents' commitments to social solidarity and social trust, the actual practice of human rights guarantees, and a "thick" conception of responsibility dependent upon self–empowerment, a retrieval of subjectivity, and an open–ended and socially–grounded sense of obligation for others as well as ourselves. In short, the theory and practice of dissent in central and eastern Europe resuscitated themes evident in both Locke and Hegel, yet denied by Marx. Their work can therefore be seen as an ideological bridge from eighteenth and nineteenth century political thought to the present that contributes to democratic theory by treating democratization as an evolving process in an authoritarian political space, rather than taking democracy as a given and then attempting to make it more fulsome.<sup>23</sup>

Is dissent then logically dependent on liberal ideas? Of a rights–bearing individual? Yes, but not only. Monist liberalism must give way to pluralist liberalism, wherein communities of divergent character must also have political and legal "standing". Such a view of dissent recognizes that identities are not zero–sum, and indeed are constructed in both complementary and contradictory manners — on the bases of ethnicity, gender, belief, historical experience and shared oppression (both politically and phenomenologically, as in Patocka's idea of the "solidarity of the shaken"). Indeed, such a view of dissent empowers the dissenter, because it does not assume dissent is fundamentally destabilizing but expressive of public reality.

Finally, if dissent is logically a philosophical and practical byproduct of liberalism, it is also intrinsically related to theories of liberty, and assumptions about human nature and freedom. John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* assumes that a key argument for liberty, and particularly freedom of expression, is dissenting opinion: the second chapter is devoted to a rich discussion of relationship between free thought and discussion and liberty more generally. For Mill, one can never be sure that the opinion being stifled is false, and even where that level of certainty might exist, such a process is wrong in and of itself. Underlying the forced silencing of discussion is a dangerous "assumption of infallibility".<sup>24</sup> More pernicious is the underlying premise that individuals cannot be exposed to potential untruths because they are incapable of judgment. Following Mill, the processes and production of samizdat not only reinforce in practice his arguments about free expression as the bedrock of political liberty, but engagement in the activity amounted to a reclamation of human capacity for judgment.

In summary, central and eastern European dissidence must be analysed, inserted into, and enveloped by larger and longitudinal debates in political theory about toleration and dissent, rights and rights claims, reformism and revolution. Notably, dissent in the region reached its apogee when it moved

beyond claims of persecution and legal defence to what KOR called "social self-defence" — that is, the utility of dissent not simply as consciousness-raising, but as a practical defence of particular communities in alternative civil societies. Following the analysis of Václav Benda, it was in these "parallel *poletí*" where networks of social trust could be developed and nurtured, where learning and bargaining could take place, and where public action in the Arendtian sense of enlarging freedom would result. The coalition of workers and intellectuals in Poland represented in both KOR and later Solidarity, the inherent political and social diversity of Charter 77, and the ways in which the largely urban intellectuals in Budapest reached beyond their social and political experiences to both previous generations (most particularly the "1956ers") and to Hungarian minorities abroad, are all indications of the lengthy process of pluralism and inclusion inherent in dissent.<sup>25</sup> In all these examples, the experience of dissent practically assisted in the construction of not simply a democratic model or a liberal model, but a pluralist one.

### Dissent and non-violence

Not only is dissent sometimes historically "collapsed" into class conflict in the Marxist paradigm, it is often equated with violence. However, dissent needs to be situated within alternative explanations and paradigms regarding the utility of force, such as "just war" theory (on the appropriate and ethical use of force); traditions of passive resistance and civil disobedience (from Thoreau to Gandhi's *satyagraha*); and, as argued above, theories of civil society and democracy.

The concern for property, a counter-revolutionary zeal to protect privilege post-1789, and the emergence of labouring classes — urban, pauperized, and without voice — all resulted in an equation of dissent with violence.<sup>26</sup> Not without reason did Marx see violence as the midwife of every revolution.<sup>27</sup> Georges Sorel, in *Réflexions sur la violence*, theorized that violence was not only necessary to political will and direct action, but indeed purifying. Similarly, philosophers in the western "Just War" tradition from Augustine and Aquinas through to Grotius and Pufendorf, have sought to reconcile the Christian spiritual prohibition against violence and in particular murder with the *realpolitik* of war, imperialism and, in today's parlance, "regime-change".

Not without accident were many of the early theorists of just war also originally theorists of civil society. Indeed, the tradition of natural law can be thought of as the theoretical "glue" that holds together these two discourses. The integration of law and reason with Christian morality allowed for discussions over the appropriate use of force, its proportional application, the justness of the cause of conflict, the righteous intent of the actors, and the importance of self-defence. For Aquinas and the scholastics, natural law was seen as grounded in yet separate from Christianity, in that it was positivist in implementation. Later the ideas of Pufendorf, Grotius, and Locke, illustrate how civil society exists as the liminal space between human society, which is naturalized, and the state, which is based upon the contract and consent of the governed. Moreover, the narrative of the liberal progression from the state of nature through to the state proper is dependent not only upon the "mutuality of contract and consent" outlined by Locke, but also by the assumption and realization that this must be ultimately non-coercive in nature. The realm of simultaneous freedom and equality that is the holy grail of liberal philosophy cannot be accomplished via any procedural or logical rationality that permits violence in the attainment of these social and individual goods. It is exactly this tradition that central European dissent is steeped in — one that unites a

practical and moral commitment to non-violence with an appreciation of the public space afforded by civil society in which this can occur.

Jonathan Schell has linked the theory and practice of central European dissidents of the 1970s and 1980s with the global demise of what he calls the "war system" and has situated their work into a larger "logic of peace" which he argues will increasingly prevail in the twenty-first century. Schell's argument is one of both principle and practicality. The revolutions and scope of change ushered in by the concatenation of events in 1989–1991 were as successful as any war could have hoped to have been. By the mid-twentieth century, a sea-change took place in global attitudes toward both violence and dissent — attitudes which went well beyond the particular requirements for socialism and stability in the Eastern Bloc. At the end of World War II, increasingly thick international legal regimes were constructed to severely circumscribe permitted use of force between states. Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations essentially prohibits war under international law, save and except for cases of self-defence (understood legally as the temporal imminence of attack).

Moreover, violence — to the extent it accompanied decolonization, Cold War superpower disputes (fought as proxies), or social resistance or civil war within a state — is increasingly seen as human failure. Essentially, the lessons of the Somme and Verdun, Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, Vorkuta and Kolyma, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, all come together in a coherent commitment to non-violence. War gave birth to revolution, which in turn swallowed its own, or resulted in modern mass crimes such as genocide. Violence did not merely beget violence; it became the utilitarian means to advance utopian teleologies that resulted in considerable social and moral dislocation. At the same time, these historical experiences of total and societal violence were shaping the contours of the post-war order; events such as Gandhi's campaign of *satyagraha* in India provided novel alternative solutions to the assumed equation of substantive political change with violence. The post-war nuclear arms race, and accompanying theories of deterrence (and the guarantee of "mutual assured destruction") provided additional powerful incentive for changing the equation, because the stakes had never been so high.

For the central and eastern Europeans, the nuclear arms race, the leading role of the party, and particularly after 1968 and the geopolitical reality represented by the Brezhnev doctrine, effectively combined to remove insurrectionary options — both tactically and strategically — from the table. Thus, in "The New Evolutionism," Polish writer and activist Adam Michnik famously suggested that: "To believe in overthrowing the dictatorship of the party by revolution and to consciously organize actions in pursuit of this goal is both unrealistic and dangerous".<sup>28</sup> In Hungary, George Konrád recognized the impossibility of altering the system "by means of dynamic, uncontrolled mass movements" given that the limits were obviously drawn by the USSR and the "military balance".<sup>29</sup> And dissident playwright Václav Havel in Czechoslovakia discussed how action was dramatically circumscribed by "superpower centre" but nonetheless recommended local small-scale actions designed to "achieve modest concrete goals".<sup>30</sup> This unified approach — termed "anti-politics" by both Konrád and Havel — embraced the creation of a social space outside the party-state for self-help, self-education, artistic and literary expression, and legal defence and protection. Michnik called the approach "new evolutionism"; for Havel it involved "living in truth"; for János Kis it necessitated "radical reformism". Tackling reform "from above" had been rejected as impossible (that was the lesson of the Prague Spring), and



violence was not only politically untenable, it was rejected morally as well. Not only did revolutionaries who burn Bastilles end up building their own, cautioned Michnik, but more importantly the theorists of dissent did not want to become like the enemies they despised. Michnik, following Arendt and Camus, specifically located the genesis of the totalitarianism in the utilization and constant deployment or threat of violence.

## Conclusions

The above analysis has endeavoured to illustrate the beginnings of a comparative political history and theory of dissent, pointing to key questions, and relevant areas of historical departure and comparison. Essentially, I argue that central and eastern European dissidence can and should be fruitfully situated in the political theory literature on dissent and toleration (and its opposite, repression), as well as the comparative historical and social science literatures on non-violence and revolution. One of the most novel features of central/eastern European revolutions is that they were revolutions in both the theory and practice of revolution, by virtue of their principled and practical commitments to non-violence. In this critical sense, one of the most valuable legacies of central and eastern European dissent is the marrying of these two seemingly impossible historical and political trajectories.

Returning to Arendt, the revolutions of 1989–1991, once so historically fresh and analytically challenging, well and truly belong to the past. However, the many lessons and legacies they offer to both scholars and contemporary political actors are not only part of our present, but will be very much seized upon in the future. George Orwell, with the same characteristic pessimism that underwrote *1984*, worried that although every past tyranny was overthrown because human beings, as matter of their nature, desired freedom, that very assumption was in question with the social engineering inherent in the totalitarian project. One of the most valuable lessons of dissent is that it proved that the experiment to create *Homo Sovieticus* failed spectacularly on every level.

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<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, introduction by Jerome Kohn, New York and London: Penguin, 2006, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Arendt further elaborates: if there is no testament, or tradition, a handing-down, a preservation, then there is no "willed continuity in time [...] neither past nor future" (5). Witnesses and participants in concentrated political dramas — for that is what revolutions are — fail to appreciate their "treasure" because it was so strange and new they did not know how to name it, except that it was beyond victory or defeat. What is required to make meaning is a process of completion, where enacted events must be told, narrated, and thereby imbued with meaning.

<sup>3</sup> On the ongoing social and political utility of dissent, see Barbara J. Falk, "Learning from History: Why we need dissent and dissidents," *International Journal* 64.2 (Winter 2008–09), 243–253 and "Resistance and Dissent in Central and Eastern Europe: An Emerging Historiography", *East European Politics and Societies* 25.2 (May 2011), 318–360.

<sup>4</sup> The terminology of dissent (involving "difference of opinion or sentiment" or "disagreement with a proposal or resolution") is different than that of resistance (involving acts of "resisting" and "opposing") or opposition (also action-oriented, involving being "against" something, with examples of military combat and political confrontation). See in particular, *The Complete Oxford English Dictionary* (1987). In the OED, dissident and dissenter are virtually synonymous, and harken back to seventeenth and eighteenth century religious dissent; there is an ecclesiastical tone to the entire explanation. Resistance and opposition imply capability and power, or empowerment, and resistance in particular is sub-divided into passive or active.

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James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1990, xiii.

- 6 Ibid. 4.
- 7 Ibid. 19.
- 8 Václav Havel, *Open Letters: Selected Prose 1965–1990*, trans P. Wilson and A.G. Brain, London: Faber and Faber, 1991, 176.
- 9 Scott, *Domination*, 215.
- 10 The term "parallel *polis*" comes from a famous and widely cited samizdat essay written by Czech dissident Václav Benda. Benda advocated the Greek model of the *polis* — the centre of a political and democratic community — as an ideal centrepiece for alternative politics (see Barbara Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East–Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings*, Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2003, 247–248). By the late 1980s, the term had become synonymous with efforts to recreate alternative civil societies in the region, independent from the party–state.
- 11 Ibid. 224.
- 12 Ibid. 212
- 13 The stereotypical view prior to the Reformation, held that diversity of belief was not only socially dangerous, but evil — and the only appropriate response was to stamp it out (see Cary J. Nederman and John Christian Laursen, *Difference and Dissent: Theories of Tolerance in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, New York and London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996, 1). Thus the response of the Vatican to Jan Hus at the Council of Konstanz in 1415. At the same time, dissent on practical and functional grounds was tolerated both in theory (for example, as advocated by Jean Bodin or Christine de Pizan) and in practice (representatively by Henry IV with the Edict of Nantes in 1598).
- 14 John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, John Horton and Susan Mendus (eds.), London and New York: Routledge, 1991, 7.
- 15 Ibid. 19.
- 16 The classic rights scenario is understood as a situation where individual citizens can express public opposition and can effectively proselytize their disaffection, premising their action upon the existence of inalienable rights of free expression (for example, of speech, conscience, or belief).
- 17 This was neither a quick nor easy process. A good example of this theoretical evolution can be found in the work of János Kis. In his earlier work with György Bence (*Toward an East European Marxism*), Kis tried to uncomfortably reconcile the Marxist humanism of the 1950s (ironically, including that of Kolakowski) with a "Marxist anthropology" of Marx's early writings and the activist direction that purposefully did not conform with official Marxist ideology. Later, echoing Adam Michnik in Poland, Kis invalidated the old "reform versus revolution" canard, and through his formulation of "radical reformism" cut a swath through the heart of that debate. See in particular, György Bence and János Kis, "On Being a Marxist: A Hungarian View", *Socialist Register* 1980, 263–297, and then compare to János Kis, *Politics in Hungary: For a Democratic Alternative*, New York: Columbia UP, 1989; and more recently János Kis' argument on the challenges of liberalism in emerging post–communist democracies in *Constitutional Democracy* (2003).
- 18 See in particular Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, three vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978.
- 19 E.P. Thompson documented the rise of Jacobinism among independent artisans, Chartism from outworkers, and Luddism from skilled craftsmen in small workshops who rightly felt threatened by the onslaught of mass production (see E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, London: Penguin, 1990).
- 20 Marcuse did argue for tolerance (and thus dissent) on the basis of enabling truth, which he defined as the "end of liberty". Marcuse wanted to have it both ways — he advocates for tolerance, but his critique cannot infelicitously recognize that tolerance requires that the tolerated be allowed to make choices — however superficial, consumerist, or cynical in nature — that may be at odds with the goals of community or the political system as a whole.
- 21 There was an interesting debate in the 1980s among western analysts of Marxism, who tried to both reconcile Marxism with toleration and dissent, and advocate for it; see for example the contributions of G.W. Smith, Graeme Duncan and John Street, and David Miller in Susan Mendus (ed.), *Justifying Toleration: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives*, 1988. Curiously, none of these authors, however, seriously engaged with the "actually–existing dissent" in central and eastern Europe that was contemporaneously occurring, and none of the "correctives" to the rigidities of Marxism they advance were relevant to the ways and means in which authoritarian communist regimes were unsuccessfully attempting to deal with dissent. Ultimately, they were most concerned with

political passivity in the West. Authoritarians did not act in an "ideologically correct" way in simply dismissing dissent as simply impossible or socially deviant (rationalizing it out of existence) — they cynically and instrumentally combated it legally, ideologically, and culturally. Pro-Muscovite hardliners who saw that dissent was ultimately an attack on the constitutive ideology of the system as a whole were presciently correct.

- <sup>22</sup> See e.g. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolutions in Europe*, New York: Random House, 1990; Timothy Garton Ash, *We the People: The Revolution of '89 as Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague*, Cambridge, Granta Books, 1990; and Jürgen Habermas, *Die nachholende Revolution: Kleine politische Schriften VII*, Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1990. I have discussed this debate more fully in *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East–Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings*, Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2003, 334–354. On the initial paucity of interest among political theorists, see Jeffrey C. Isaac, "The Strange Silence of Political Theory," *Political Theory* 23.4 (November 1995), 637–655.
- <sup>23</sup> In this sense, I see the contribution of the dissidents as furthering and extending the work of democratic theorists such as Robert Dahl, Charles Taylor, and Michael Sandel. Moreover, their theorization is "confirmed" by the work of comparativists who have analyzed transitions from authoritarian regimes from the 1980s through to the present (from O'Donnell and Schmitter's 1989 series through to more recent analyses of the "coloured revolutions" in Ukraine and Georgia such as Timothy Garton Ash and Timothy Snyder (2005), and Adrian Karatnycky (2005).
- <sup>24</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (including Mill's *On Liberty* and *Essay on Bentham*), ed. Mary Warnock. Glasgow: William Collins, 1962. 145.
- <sup>25</sup> On the character and richness of this diversity, see especially Falk, 2003, Skilling, 1981, and Falk, 2008.
- <sup>26</sup> Arguably this equation reaches back much further, to the Luddites in England and even earlier medieval peasant rebellions across Europe. To equate dissent with violence was also to justify its oppression in the name of order and stability.
- <sup>27</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Volume I: The Process of Capitalist Production*, trans. Third German Edition Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, ed. Frederick Engels, New York: International Publishers, 1967, 271.
- <sup>28</sup> Adam Michnik, *Letters from Prison*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, 142.
- <sup>29</sup> George Konrád, *Antipolitics*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984, 70.
- <sup>30</sup> Havel, *Letters*, 89.

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