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Revolutions for Europe

The Legacy of 1989

The process of European integration brought about radical changes for contemporary Europe. The definition of national sovereignty changed dramatically, and the boundaries of nation-states began to lose importance. The systems of governance within the member states had to accommodate the demands of “ever-closer” economic and political integration, which in turn gave rise to a new type of polity at the European level. European Union enlargement is intensifying these processes and thus working towards a final end to Cold War divisions. In many ways, this should fulfil the goals of the original project of European unification, namely, overcoming the legacy of the Second World War.

Measured against these results, the changes wrought by the process of European integration may seem revolutionary (and as in any revolution worthy of the name, it is hoped that these accomplishments will be enshrined in a new European constitution). Yet in other respects, it appears inappropriate to speak of a revolution when discussing the EU. This new political entity may be both “unsettled and unsettling”,¹ but it is not revolutionary when one considers the way these far-reaching changes were implemented: They were the result of negotiations not fighting

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in the streets. They were introduced rather cautiously, step-by-step, by elites intent on preventing radical changes in the existing political order from upsetting political stability on the continent.

This is reminiscent of other revolutions that do not qualify fully as revolutions: those in Central Europe in 1989. This is one reason why the EU would do well to seek inspiration in the ideas and ideals that guided people in the communist bloc during their struggle for liberty and the rule of law. Another reason is more straightforward: EU enlargement can only succeed if it also builds on the experiences of those nations that are to become its new members.

A number of key concepts developed by dissident intellectuals in Central and Eastern Europe during their struggle against communism are still relevant to contemporary Europe. This statement is so obvious that it would need no further justification were it not for the fact that the legacy of 1989 has not (yet?) found a suitable place within the broader European context. More often than not, the legacy of 1989 is either ignored or misunderstood.

Strange revolutions

The revolutions of 1989 do not fit easily into any preconceived notion of revolutionary change in Europe. These were “self-limiting” revolutions in which there was very little or no violence, no radical break with the past and very little or no revenge exacted on those responsible for injustices under the old regime. The exact opposite of the revolutionary regime change orchestrated by communists after the Second World War, the revolutions of 1989 were marked by constraint, not radicalism. They were, as Gale Stokes observed, “revolutionary in the negative sense that they in-

tered any realistic hope that the teleological experiment in the use of human reason to transform society in its entirety might succeed".² In this way, they undermined the revolutionary tradition usually traced back to the French Revolution, which was driven by the belief that radically new ideas would yield radically improved societies.

The dissident intellectuals in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary who were catapulted into positions of leadership during these revolutions were very unlikely revolutionaries by any standard. The likes of Václav Havel in Czechoslovakia, Adam Michnik in Poland and György Konrád in Hungary saw their struggle against the omnipotent communist state as an "anti-political" struggle for authenticity, not a struggle for political power. Accordingly, they were reluctant to ally themselves with clearly defined ideological positions. Instead, they appealed to a set of basic human values, assuming that a regime built on hypocrisy, greed and conformism could be defeated by truthfulness and a sense of basic human decency, that is to say, Havel's notion of "living in truth".³

These may have been noble ideas, but to many western observers, they seemed antiquated and unsuitable to serve as the basis for a coherent and clearly formulated political program. Thus dissident intellectuals and their ideas received little scholarly attention before and (not even) after the collapse of communism. As Winfried Thaa observed,

even though terms like truth and falsehood, authenticity and social schizophrenia became crucial points of reference for dissidents under Soviet rule from the beginning of the 1970s, they were largely ignored by students of communism in the West.⁴

Western academia's neglect of intellectual developments among Central and Eastern Europe's dissident intellectuals was even easier to justify after the collapse of communism. There was not much to study, so the argument went, given that the revolutions of 1989 did not yield any new ideas. Jürgen Habermas, for example, identified as early as 1990 "a peculiar characteristic of this revolution, namely its total lack of innovative, future-oriented ideas".⁵ Against this background, the most plausible explanation for the revolutions of 1989 was to see it as a "catch up revolutions" revolutions that simply allowed societies behind the former iron curtain to catch up with the rest of Europe in its never-ending march towards modernity.

1989 and theories of modernization

The catch-up interpretation had the great advantage of assimilating the experience of 1989 into the narratives of European history based on theories of modernization. Although most observers rejected Francis Fukuyama's thesis regarding "the end of history" as too simplistic, they were more inclined to see 1989 as the culmination of the historic processes triggered by the French Revolution. While 1789 marks the birth of modernity, 1989 brings Europe to maturity. By this account, European civilization's path towards ever-greater progress was merely interrupted by the tragic accidents of Nazism and communism. A typical assessment is that of François Furet, who believed that the revolutions of 1989 were imbued with:

the famous principles of 1789 with a certain freshness and with renewed universality. As we begin to close the long and tragic digression that was the

Communist illusion, we find ourselves more than ever confronted by the great dilemmas of democracy as they appeared at the end of the 18th century, expressed by ideas and by the course of the French Revolution.⁶

Furet's view is not unjustified, and it resonates with the views of some actors from the 1989 revolutions. György Konrád, for example, noted that their timing was "an edifying coincidence, one might say: a homage, at a remove of two hundred years, to the revolution that first proclaimed the civil rights of the individual".⁷ In fact, the most popular slogan of these revolutions, "the return to Europe", could be seen as an invocation of the principles usually associated with the French Revolution's legacy: the ideals of freedom, equality and fraternity.⁸

The poverty of theories of modernization

However: Relying on theories of modernization and the French Revolution as the exclusive paradigm of radical political change obscures some unique features of the Central European revolutions. These theories focus on abstract historical forces and are hence ill equipped to deal with the impact of those imponderable factors that make societal change such a fascinating (and unpredictable) subject of inquiry: the role of personalities and their ideas, the role of cultural and political identities and so on. More generally, theories of modernization add little to our understanding of the possibilities for challenging repressive political structures from within. It is telling that, even though most adherents of theories of modernization failed

to predict communism's collapse, the theory is cited – in hindsight – as the most plausible explanation for the “inevitability” of this collapse.⁹ Moreover, 1989 invalidated (or at least discredited) one of the defining principles of 1789: that principle extolled by revolutionary leaders and thinkers from Robespierre through Lenin to Žižek, namely, that radical societal change is only possible through violent struggle.¹⁰ The reluctant “revolutionaries” in Central Europe refused to accept that revolutionary violence should be used (and justified) as a liberating force. In this way, the 1989 revolutions in Central Europe mark the end of the revolutionary tradition that saw the 1789 French Revolution as its defining paradigm.¹¹

1989: the year of conservative revolutions?

Paradoxically then, one of the most interesting innovations of 1989 was that it did not bring about a set of daring, new ideas to function as a blueprint for a brave, new society. If anything, they were backward looking and in that sense even conservative. This, however, pace Žižek (and any other contemporary political theorists who bemoan the decline of revolutionary spirit) is the key to understanding the success of these revolutions. Historically speaking, it would not have been unusual if these revolutions had failed. It is their success that is remarkable, and this calls for an explanation.¹² These revolutions were generally so successful precisely because they were unoriginal and backward-looking.¹³ Ironically, the term that would possibly better describe the events of 1989 is “revolution” in its original meaning: a

return to an earlier state of affairs. This is the kind of revolutionary change defended by critics of the French Revolution such as Edmund Burke. Burke's famous rebuttal of the French Revolution's ideologically inspired violent excesses strongly resonates with the key concepts put forward by Central Europe's dissident intellectuals: the concept of a "self-limiting revolution", the idea of a "return to normality" and the ideals of an ethical civil society and "anti-politics".

The lessons of 1789

Ever since Burke published *Reflections on the Revolution in France*,¹⁴ proponents of revolutionary change aimed at delivering (instantly) both liberty and equality had to confront one of the fundamental dilemmas of liberal democracy: Democracy can destroy liberty. Thinkers as different as Alexis de Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill, Lord Acton, Hannah Arendt and more recently Fareed Zakaria,¹⁵ speaking from differing vantage points, have warned against the danger of mob rule supplanting rule of law. This was the problem of "the tyranny of the majority".

This lesson was well understood by Central Europe's dissident leaders. Consider Michnik's comments on the virtues of democracy:

Democracy is not identical with freedom. Democracy is freedom written into the rule of law. Freedom in itself, without the limits imposed on it by law and tradition, is a road to anarchy and chaos – where the right of the strongest rules.¹⁶

This is not to say that the post-communist nations of Central Europe can rest assured in the viability of their newly established liberal democracies, but measured against historical precedents, the revolutions of 1989 were remarkably successful in laying the groundwork for liberty under the rule of law. This result was no accident, as it corresponded with the conscious efforts of crucial actors to implement revolutionary change virtually without a revolution. In this sense, it is appropriate to call the events of 1989 in Central Europe “anti-revolutionary revolutions”,¹⁷ “revolutions under the rule of law”,¹⁸ or – to put it provocatively – conservative revolutions in the Burkean sense of the word.

1688 and 1776, not 1789

Burke himself can in fact be seen as a defender of the ideals of liberty (if not equality) and a certain kind of revolutionary change, which he saw best embodied in Britain’s Glorious Revolution of 1688 (though he did not call it that). As the full title of Burke’s seminal work indicates, there was another dimension to his critique of the French Revolution, one oft neglected in discussions about modern revolutions. This added dimension was his concern with protecting the British revolution’s achievements.¹⁹ Thus Burke’s insights can also help us understand the unique nature of 1989 by giving us alternative points of reference such as the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the American Revolution of 1776. As Krishan Kumar noted in a reference to both the aims and the methods of all these revolutions, there are some revealing similarities between 1989, 1776 and 1688: “If the 1989 revolutions were about democracy, constitutions, citizenship, the rule

of law, the protection of individual rights and the creation of a pluralist civil society, it is hardly possible to think of more suitable parallels than the English and American Revolutions".²⁰

For example, Tocqueville's somewhat idealized representation of the American Revolution as the kind of revolution that "contracted no alliance with the turbulent passions of anarchy, but whose course was marked, on the contrary, by a love of order and law"²¹ could be applied to 1989. In 1776, as in 1989, "revolutionary" leaders were aware of the dangers of a radical break with the past and thus opted for a "self-limiting revolution" in which the spirit of innovation was tempered by a concern for political stability. Along these lines, Michnik argued, "Solidarity has never had a vision of an ideal society. It wants to live and let live. Its ideals are closer to the American Revolution than to the French".²² Similarly, Burke's account of the Revolution of 1688, which was focused on the attempt to preserve "antient indisputable laws and liberties",²³ can be related to the notion of a "return to normality" in the countries of Central Europe. When Czechs, Poles, Slovaks and Hungarians shed their oppressive regimes, they believed (rightly or wrongly) that they were simply reclaiming their ancient liberties.

Accepting this view of 1989 could lead to a re-evaluation of the historical precedents of revolutionary change that Arendt called for many years ago. She bemoaned the fact that intellectuals in the West were so infatuated by the legacy of the French Revolution that they were inclined to see all other events, including the American Revolution, through the prism of 1789:

The sad truth of the matter is that the French Revolution, which ended in disaster, has made world history, while the American Revolution, so triumphantly successful, has remained an event of little more than local importance.²⁴

The American Revolution, according to Arendt, was more successful than its French counterpart in opening up new opportunities for citizens to become actively involved in politics as equals under the rule of law. By focusing on political liberty rather than issues of social equality, the American Revolution created space for authentic political engagement. As Thaa demonstrated, the revolutions of 1989 can be seen as a late vindication of Arendt's attempt to challenge the dominant concept of revolution in Europe with a "concept of revolution that does not seek the radical overthrow of the societal order, but rather, orientated on the American model, aims primarily at a renewal of political space".²⁵ At any rate, both revolutions, 1776 as well as 1989, can be described as self-limiting revolutions.

Self-limiting revolutions

The idea of a self-limiting revolution emerged partly as a pragmatic response to a new geopolitical situation in Central and Eastern Europe. After a series of unsuccessful revolts against Soviet-style, authoritarian communist regimes (in 1953 in Germany, 1956 in Hungary and Poland and 1968 in Czechoslovakia), it became clear that significant political change in Central Europe was impossible so long as the Soviet Union was determined to maintain control over its satellite states. Yet the actions of

Central Europe's reluctant revolutionaries were guided not only by these pragmatic considerations. Just as important, if not more so, was their conviction that they had to exercise restraint in their political struggle, so as to prevent "the very negative experiences of all unlimited social revolutions of the Jacobin-Bolshevik type".²⁶ They were also convinced that the "post-totalitarian" communist regimes could have been challenged from within by peaceful means, if only enough people were determined to defy them. This was the reasoning behind Havel's seminal essay "The Power of the Powerless", in which he rejected the use of violence inspired by dogmatic ideologies:

"dissidents" tend to be sceptical about political thought based on the faith that profound social changes can only be achieved by bringing about (regardless of the method) changes in the system or in the government, and the belief that such changes – because they are considered "fundamental" – justify the sacrifice of "less fundamental" things, in other words human lives. Respect for a theoretical concept here outweighs respect for human life. Yet this is precisely what threatens to enslave humanity all over again.²⁷

Michnik was even more direct in rejecting the ideal of revolutionary violence associated with the French Revolution: "to believe in overthrowing the dictatorship of the party by revolution is both unrealistic and dangerous", he argued, because "those who use force to storm present-day Bastilles are likely to build bigger and worse Bastilles".²⁸ Consequently, opposition leaders were willing to restrain themselves in their exercise of power even after the actual

collapse of communism. They made considerable efforts to maintain “the fiction of legal continuity with a past without legality”.²⁹ Andrew Arato noted that this is one of the remarkable legacies of 1989. “It is the great contribution”, he writes, “of the Central and East European struggle for legality in the midst of radical transformation that, even without inherited republican institutions, the new can be built without total rupture with the past”.³⁰

The anti-communist revolutionaries were prepared to make deals with their former communist foes, because they feared the alternative would lead to chaos and anarchy. These actors “were trying at all times to promote a revolution without a revolution”.³¹ Not only dissident intellectuals but ordinary men and women on the street wished to avoid a complete revolution in the traditional sense. They wanted simply a “return to normality”.³²

Return to “normality”

The notions of a return to “normality” or a return to Europe may have been very ambiguous,³³ but they resonated with a vast majority of the people. Many Czechs, Poles, Slovaks and Hungarians simply desired to restore a sense of normality after the “foolish experiment” of communism. That this “normality” was equated with securing lifestyles thought to be characteristic of established democracies in the West, and that this “normality” was significantly removed from Central Europe’s present or past experience did not prevent the region’s peoples from seeing their return to “normality” as natural. It was their return to a past that (may have) never existed. As the Polish sociologist Jerzy Jedlicki wryly remarked, Poland

has always been returning to Europe, although it has never actually been there.³⁴ Yet it is precisely due to this perception that it was possible for Poles, Czechs, Slovaks and Hungarians to see their struggle for liberty as being in line with the best elements of their national traditions.³⁵ To use Burke's terminology, the nations of Central Europe reclaimed their own ancient liberties. In this way, the notion of a return to normality linked the project of post-communist transition, which was oriented towards a liberal-democratic future, with the pre-communist past.

However, not only the pre-communist past served as a reference point for evaluating liberal values. The new leaders also sought to rally people behind liberal values by recalling their failed revolts against communism. This return to the best elements of their dissident past(s) obviously conflicted with a second aspect of conservative revolutions: the effort to maintain the fiction of legal continuity with the illegal and illegitimate communist regimes. Clearly, these were contradictory impulses. One could not preserve "pasts" that were so radically different and even mutually exclusive. Yet this was done, even when it led to grotesque situations. It suffices to recall that Václav Havel, who as a leader of Charter 77 was despised by the communists, was elected president of Czechoslovakia in December 1989 by the communist national assembly.

In fact, there is a further irony that makes the revolutions of 1989 conservative in Burke's sense. Even though the 1989 revolutions shared a number of goals with 1789 that Burke opposed in his day, many of the radical ideas from more than 200 years ago seem less radical today. For example, Burke opposed democratic ideals and the modern concept of citizenship, because he believed that these enlightened concepts were too radical and dangerous for

liberty, but it is perfectly plausible to imagine that he would not be so opposed to them today. Some 200 years after the French Revolution, the French revolutionaries' ideals have become part of a "European", or Western tradition,³⁶ and most people today would not think of democracy and liberty as inherently incompatible.

Anti-politics and civil society

Due to the enduring popularity of the recent concept of civil society, which transcends ideological boundaries, it may be easily forgotten that the idea was originally based on a rather conservative ideal: the conviction that free societies rely on private virtues.³⁷ This is reflected in Burke's idea that good character and virtue cannot be developed by an abstract ideal of humanity. Good character and virtue can only be fostered within a relatively small community of citizens here and now, within "little platoons" in which everyone knows their place (moving in expanding concentric circles from family to neighbourhood, from neighbourhood to city, from city to nation and into the wider world). One does not become virtuous simply by understanding and accepting the wisdom of Rousseau's "general will" or the Kant's "categorical imperative". One becomes virtuous by practising virtue. Similarly, for Arendt, there is not much use in invoking noble principles of liberty, unless a kind of political space is created in society where independent citizens can act authentically.

This kind of reasoning also reverberates through the convictions of the dissident intellectuals (e.g. Havel, Michnik and Konrád), who strongly believed that communism could fall, and later that the process of post-

could fall, and later that the process of post-communist transition could succeed, if a change took place in the “hearts and minds” of the individual members of society. This is why Havel stressed turning away from “abstract political visions of the future and towards concrete human beings and ways of defending them effectively in the here and now”.³⁸ Therefore, any genuine political engagement had to be the result of taking concrete responsibility. This was the ideal of an ethical civil society.

In its initial form, the concept of civil society was not meant to be revolutionary. Civil society was not seen as directed against the state, but was supposed to complement it. That was the vision inherited “from Locke, the Scottish Enlightenment, Burke, Hegel and de Tocqueville”.³⁹ G. M. Tamás, one of the leading Hungarian intellectuals, explained, dissidents in Central Europe creatively appropriated this concept for their own purposes and turned it against the oppressive communist state. This antagonism between state and society is more reminiscent of Thomas Paine than Burke, and it is unsurprising that the Central European concept of civil society had strong appeal among left-wing intellectuals in the West.⁴⁰ It was Paine who asserted in *Common Sense* that “society is in every state a blessing, but government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil”.⁴¹

The dissident’s suspicion of the communist state and its official ideology, Marxism, found expression in the idea of anti-politics. Anti-politics was directed not only against the state, but against any institutionalized form of politics, and it was hostile not only towards Marxism, but towards any dogmatic political ideology in general. However, one would be crudely mistaken to view the ideal of anti-politics as apolitical. On the contrary, by liberating individuals from

the constraints of institutional politics and schematic thinking imposed by abstract ideological frameworks, individuals were empowered to endow their actions with authentic meaning. In this sense, what was personal became political. The ideal of anti-politics urged people to act “as if” they were free⁴² and to assume the responsibility that comes with freedom. Thus anti-politics was not politics without principle, rather simply “politics without cliché”.⁴³

Europe as a Community of Values

If anything, dissident intellectuals in Central Europe were less reluctant to take principled positions in their political struggles than their counterparts in the West. This is reflected in the ongoing debates about the goals of European integration and the means of achieving these goals. While the debates in the West seem to have focused on the technical aspects of integration, Central European intellectuals have time and again stressed that Europe has to be seen as a community of shared values and should therefore be defined by a certain set of principles.⁴⁴ As Bronisław Geremek has argued,

If the European Union is to overcome national parochialism and embrace a shared and binding purpose, it must abandon the rhetoric of accountants and speak in a language that comprehends what is good and bad, beautiful and ugly, right and wrong.⁴⁵

For a similar argument critical of the technocratic nature of the European Union consider Havel’s comments on the Treaty of Maastricht. While Havel showed himself im-

pressed by the ingenious institutional arrangements created by the treaty, he felt that something important was missing:

I felt I was looking into the inner working of an absolutely perfect and immensely ingenious modern machine. To study such a machine must be a great joy to an admirer of technical inventions, but for me, whose interest in the world is not satisfied by admiration for well-oiled machines, something was seriously missing, something that could be called, in a rather simplified way, a spiritual or moral or emotional dimension. The treaty addressed my reason, but not my heart.⁴⁶

This problem is being increasingly acknowledged even in the West. Larry Siedentop, for example, bemoans “the absence of a searching debate about European integration – a debate which would bring to the surface underlying assumptions about human well-being – [which] is itself symptomatic of a crisis in European beliefs”.⁴⁷ Against this background, the experience of Central Europe’s dissident intellectuals during their struggle against an oppressive regime can be instructive in reminding Europe of its purpose.⁴⁸ Today, the question of European integration’s final purpose is regaining importance as part of the debate surrounding the proposed constitution for Europe. Will an enlarged Europe accommodate the legacy of 1989? The signs so far are not very promising. The experiences of Central Europe’s post-communist countries do not feature prominently in discussions of Europe’s emerging identity. Habermas’s attempt to build a European identity relies on anti-Americanism, secularism, the ideal of the welfare state, and the European people’s struggle for

peace, but if anything, his ideal also seems to be directed against Central Europe's dissident intellectuals.⁴⁹ While Habermas addresses a number of historical developments in 20th century Europe, including "the experience of the 20th century's totalitarian regimes", he does not mention once the struggle against communism, or what I call here the legacy of 1989.⁵⁰ He focuses instead on the antiwar demonstrations of February 2003, which took place simultaneously in "London and Rome, Madrid and Barcelona, Berlin and Paris". The coordinated action of the demonstrators marked, according to Habermas, the long-awaited emergence of a European public sphere.

The preamble to the Draft Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe is even more ahistoric.⁵¹ It avoids any specific reference to the historic experiences that shaped modern Europe, even the First and the Second World Wars. Unsurprisingly, the preamble does not refer to the revolutions of 1989 either. This is arguably another missed opportunity, considering that the success of the current European project cannot be understood without a reference to the defeat of both major twentieth century totalitarian challenges to liberal democracy: Nazism and communism. As it is, the current draft of the preamble is a rather uninspiring technocratic document and could hardly satisfy those Central European intellectuals who are looking for "a spiritual or moral or emotional dimension"⁵² of European integration.

The European Union, if it is to become more than just a sum of its parts, a community of peoples and citizens rather than an alliance of nation-states, needs to build on the ideas and ideals that inspired the dissident intellectuals in their struggle against communism. Disputes about the institutional design of the new (enlarged) European Union

should not distract our attention from fundamental questions about the purpose of European integration. Following Geremek's advice, we need to ask: "Why do we [the Europeans] want to live together?" What is the purpose of European integration?⁵³ In addressing these questions, we should consider the lessons learned by Central Europeans in their struggle for freedom, which many of them saw as a struggle for Europe.

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- ¹ Brigid Laffan, *The Future of Europe Debate* (Dublin 2002), p. 10.
- ² Gale Stokes, *Three Eras of Political Change in Eastern Europe* (New York, Oxford 1997), p. 163.
- ³ Václav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless", in John Keane (ed.), *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern Europe* (Armonk 1985), pp. 23-96; and György Konrád, *Antipolitics: An Essay* (London 1984).
- ⁴ Winfried Thaa, *Die Wiedergeburt des Politischen: Zivilgesellschaft und Legitimitätskonflikt in den Revolutionen von 1989* (Opladen 1996), p. 34.
- ⁵ Jürgen Habermas, "What Does Socialism Mean Today? The Rectifying Revolution and the Need for New Thinking on the Left", *New Left Review*, 183, 1990, p. 5.
- ⁶ François Furet, "From 1789 to 1917 & 1989", *Encounter*, 1990, pp. 3-7, here p. 5.
- ⁷ György Konrád, *The Melancholy of Rebirth: Essays from Post-Communist Central Europe, 1989-1994* (San Diego 1995), p. 22.
- ⁸ Europe was for most people in Central Europe primarily a political concept synonymous with the West, that is to say, with the traditions of liberal democracy. Already in November 1956, for example, when there was a popular uprising against communist rule in Hungary, the director of the Hungarian News agency called for help against the Soviet invasion with the following words, "We are going to die for Hungary *and for Europe*" (my italics). Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe", *New York Review of Books*, 1984, pp. 33-36, here p. 33.
- ⁹ For a persuasive critique of the theories of modernization, see Thaa, *Die Wiedergeburt des Politischen*. For a useful and comprehensive overview of the theories of the collapse of communism see, for example, Leslie

- Holmes, *Post-Communism: An Introduction* (Cambridge 1997). For arguments against historical determinism, see, for example, Edgar Morin, "The Anti-Totalitarian Revolution", in Gillian Robinson, Peter Beilharz and John Rundell (ed.), *Between Totalitarianism and Postmodernity*, (Cambridge 1992), pp. 88–103, here p. 93.
- ¹⁰ For the view of revolutionary violence as "an authentic act of liberation", see Žižek's recent commentary on Lenin in Slavoj Žižek, *Revolution at the Gates* (London 2002), especially pp. 259–61. For a persuasive critique of this argument, see, for example, Jörg Lau, "Auf der Suche nach dem guten Terror: Über Slavoj Žižek", *Merkur* Vol. 57, Nr. 2 (2003).
- ¹¹ See, for example Jacques Rupnik and Dominique Moïsi, "1989 in historischer Perspektive", *Transit*, 2, 1991: pp. 5–15, p. 7.
- ¹² Andrew Arato, *Civil Society, Constitution, and Legitimacy* (Oxford 2000), p. 80.
- ¹³ This is not to say that other aspects were not important. The international environment, for example, "has been exceptionally favourable to the democratic transition in Central Europe". Jacques Rupnik, "The Postcommunist Divide", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 10, Nr. 1(1999), pp. 57–62, here p. 62.
- ¹⁴ Edmund Burke and J. C. D. Clark, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Stanford 2001).
- ¹⁵ Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York 2003). For a useful overview of 19th century critical responses to the French Revolution see, for example, Timothy O'Hagan, "Liberal Critics of the French Revolution", in Timothy O'Hagan (ed.), *Revolution and Enlightenment in Europe* (Aberdeen 1991).
- ¹⁶ Adam Michnik, *Letters from Freedom: Post-Cold War Realities and Perspectives* (Berkeley 1998), p. 320.
- ¹⁷ Richard Sakwa, *Postcommunism* (Buckingham 1999), pp. 86–91.
- ¹⁸ This label is possibly best applicable to the Hungarian case as demonstrated in László Sólyom and Georg Brunner, *Constitutional Judiciary in a New Democracy: The Hungarian Constitutional Court* (Ann Arbor 2000), p. 220.
- ¹⁹ *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, and on the proceedings in certain societies in London relative to that event in a letter intended to have been sent to a gentleman in Paris. As J. C. D. Clark argued, Burke "did not defend an old world against a new world; he defended his modern world (Whig, commercial, rational, patrician, Anglican) against assault by atavistic moral, intellectual and political vices". Burke and Clark, *Reflections*, p. 89.
- ²⁰ Krishan Kumar, *1989: Revolutionary Ideas and Ideals* (Minneapolis 2001), p. 119.

- ²¹ Cited in Irving Kristol, "The American Revolution as a Successful Revolution", in *America's Continuing Revolution* (Garden City, N.J. 1976), p. 8.
- ²² Cited in Barbara Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in Eastern Europe* (Budapest 2003), p. 183.
- ²³ Burke and Clark, *Reflections*, p. 181.
- ²⁴ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York 1965), p. 49.
- ²⁵ Thaa, *Die Wiedergeburt des Politischen*, p. 142.
- ²⁶ Arato, *Civil Society*, p. 48.
- ²⁷ Incidentally, it is worth noting that Havel allowed for the possibility that violence may be justifiable "as a necessary evil in extreme situations, when direct violence can only be met by violence and where remaining passive would in effect mean supporting violence: let us recall, for example, that the blindness of European pacifism was one of the factors that prepared the ground for the Second World War". Václav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless", in John Keane (ed.), *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern* (Armonk 1985), p. 71. Accordingly, Havel was able to endorse, if not without qualification, the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.
- ²⁸ Michnik, *Letters from Freedom*, 106. Michnik made this argument first in Adam Michnik, *Letters from Prison and Other Essays* (Berkeley 1985), pp. 86-87 and p. 106.
- ²⁹ Andrew Arato, *Civil Society*, p. xiv. This approach found its legal expression in one of the key decisions by the newly established Hungarian constitutional court ("On Retroactive Criminal Legislation", 5 March 1992). It was justified as follows: "The change of system has been carried out on the basis of legality.... The old law retains its validity. With respect to its validity, there is no distinction between 'pre-Constitution' and 'post-Constitution' law. The legitimacy of the different (political) systems during the past half century is irrelevant from this perspective; that is from the viewpoint of the constitutionality of laws, it does not comprise a meaningful category." Sólyom and Brunner, *Constitutional Judiciary in a New Democracy*, p. 220.
- ³⁰ Arato, *Civil Society*, p. xiv.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- ³² Tadeusz Mazowiecki was hence able to proclaim in August 1989: "One has return to Poland the mechanisms of normal political life. The transition is difficult, but it does not have to cause shaking. On the contrary, it will be a path to normalcy." Tadeusz Mazowiecki, "A Solidarity Government Takes Power", in Gale Stokes (ed.), *From Stalinism to Pluralism: A Documentary History of Eastern Europe since 1945* (Oxford 1996), p. 229.
- ³³ Holmes, *Post-Communism: An Introduction*, pp. 335-6.

- ³⁴ Jerzy Jedlicki, "The Revolution of 1989: The Unbearable Burden of History", *Problems of Communism*, 4, 1990, pp. 39–45.
- ³⁵ Stefan Auer, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Europe* (London: Routledge, 2004).
- ³⁶ Lawrence E. Cahoon, *Civil Society: The Conservative Meaning of Liberal Politics* (Malden, Mass. 2002), p. 119.
- ³⁷ See Winfried Thaa "Zivilgesellschaft – ein schwieriges Erbe aus Ostmitteleuropa", *Osteuropa*, 5–6, 2004, pp. 196–215.
- ³⁸ Havel, "The Power of the Powerless", p. 71.
- ³⁹ G. M. Tamás, "The Legacy of Dissent", in Vladimir Tismaneanu (ed.), *The Revolutions of 1989* (London 1999), p. 188. For an example of an early "conservative" theorist of civil society, see Christopher Finlay, "Hume's Theory of Civil Society", *The European Journal of Political Theory*, October 2004, pp. 369–91.
- ⁴⁰ David Ost, for example, in his influential study of Solidarity insists on labelling this movement as a leftist group, or taking into consideration its peculiar relationship towards ideology, "a post-modern left". David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics* (Philadelphia 1990), p. 16.
- ⁴¹ Eric Foner, "Introduction", in *Thomas Paine: Rights of Man* (Harmondsworth 1985), p. 11.
- ⁴² See H. Gordon Skilling, *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia* (London 1981), 211, and Stokes, *Three Eras*, p. 170.
- ⁴³ Jean Bethke Elshain, "Politics without Cliché", in *Real Politics: At the Center of Everyday Life* (Baltimore 1997).
- ⁴⁴ This idea can be traced back to Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (London 1962), p. 19 and pp. 249–51; Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe"; and Jiří Dienstbier, *Snění o Evropě* (Prague 1990 [1986]).
- ⁴⁵ Bronisław Geremek, "The Two Communities of Europe", Reflection Group: The Spiritual and Cultural Dimension of Europe (Project Syndicate/Institute for Human Sciences), September 2003.
- ⁴⁶ Václav Havel, "European Parliament, March 3, 1994", in *Toward a Civil Society: Selected Speeches and Writings* (Prague 1995), p. 296.
- ⁴⁷ Larry Siedentop, *Democracy in Europe* (London 2001), p. 34.
- ⁴⁸ This was recognized, albeit rarely, by a handful of Western intellectuals even before communism's collapse in 1989. An interesting example from the summer of 1979 is the manifesto of a number of French intellectuals who spoke out in support of Central and East European dissidents and saw their struggle as a struggle for Europe. See "Pour L'europe des Libertés et son Union", *Le Monde*, 1 June 1979.

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- ⁴⁹ The article, co-signed by Jacques Derrida, was written partly in response to a letter in support of the U.S. intervention in Iraq, initiated at the start of 2003 by the Spanish government and signed by then Czech President Václav Havel, among others. Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, "Nach dem Krieg: Die Wiedergeburt Europas", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 31 May 2003, p. 33. The English version of the article was published as "February 15, or What Binds Europeans Together: A Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, Beginning in Europe's Core", *Constellations*, Vol. 10, Nr. 3 (2003), pp. 291-297. For more about Central European dissident intellectuals and their support of the U.S. position, see also Adam Michnik, "We, the Traitors", *World Press Review*, June 2003.
- ⁵⁰ As Jan Ross observed, "Europeanism à la Habermas is peculiarly defensive, if not backward-looking. It appears as the protector of Brussels and Bonn, nostalgia – in the garb of high theory – for the good old days before 1989, before globalization, before September 11, before EU enlargement. In fact, 1989 itself, as a major European event, plays no part in this grand design", Jan Ross, "Die Geister des Pralinengipfels", *Die Zeit*, June 2003.
- ⁵¹ The European Convention, *Draft Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe* (Luxembourg 2003), p. 5. The absence of any specific historic references in the preamble was made, for example, by Armin von Bogdandy, "European and National Identity: Identity Formation through Constitutionalism?", a paper presented at the conference Debating the Democratic Legitimacy of the European Union, Mannheim Centre for European Social Research, 27 November 2003.
- ⁵² Havel, "European Parliament", p. 296. See also Leszek Kołakowski, "Can Europe Happen?", *New Criterion* Vol. 21, Nr. 9 (2003).
- ⁵³ Bronisław Geremek, "Europe: United or Divided? Enlargement and Future of the European Union", a paper presented at the Irish Central European Dialogues, Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 26 March 2004. See also Bronisław Geremek, "Wider die Erweiterungsskepsis. Das neue Europa und seine Feinde", *Osteuropa*, 5-6, 2004, pp. 9–18.



View of Königsberg from the northeast overlooking the city palace to the western end of the Kneiphof quarter, the Hundegatt quarter and warehouse quarter around 1925.