Success Stories: Lessons of Democratization in Central Europe

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TRANSITION

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The rise and fall of Communist regimes form one of the dominant political stories of the twentieth century. It started with the putsch-like revolution in Russia in 1917 and ended up with reform-like negotiated revolutions in East Central Europe in 1989. These transitions had a worldwide effect: the end of the Soviet Union and the end of the more than forty years period of the Cold War in 1991. These changes have been interpreted as the sweeping victory of the idea of democracy and the "third wave" of democratization.[1]

More than a decade after the historic democratic turn, all countries in Central Europe are constantly rated as "free" ones by the Freedom House.[2] It seems that, in the Balkans, the problems of definition of national political community meant to be the greatest obstacle to democratization. But when it was solved, most of those countries quickly moved closer to the fully free category. In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Yugoslavia, just as in the post-Soviet republics mentioned above, this movement toward freedom will probably take more time.

In 1999, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland became members of the NATO, in 2002 Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia were invited by NATO as well, and joined NATO in 2004. In 2004 the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovenia to joined the European Union. Bulgaria and Romania (and perhaps Croatia) can receive invitation to the EU in a few years time. The integration of Central Europe into the international democratic political organizations is well on the way.

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1 Most notably, Samuel P. Huntington: *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

2 Cf. Freedom House: *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 2000–2001.* (General editor: Adrian Karatnycky) New York: Freedom House, 2001.

However, these countries had to combat tremendous problems to complete successfully the tasks of the double or "triple transition"[3] (dictatorship to democracy, state socialism to capitalism, and in many cases, from non-states to democratic nation states). Transitions to democracy had significant social and economic costs. Table 1. summarizes the main conditions of the Central European democracies.

For Central European countries, while formal political and human development indices show remarkably good figures, it is the level of economic development (Cf. Real GDP per capita), which still pose huge problems. These democracies are relatively poor democracies by European standards. This is not to say that any serious breakdown of democracy would be probable in these countries, rather it just makes their integration to the European Union difficult. It is not so much the possibility of breakdown of democracy that deserves attention, rather the possible survival of informal, semi-corrupt structures and practices, and the conditions of "shallow democracy" (i.e. half-democratic or not-fully-democratic practices inside the formal democratic framework of rule).[4]

In this paper, I shall first analyze the meaning and modes of these revolutionary changes of 1989 by focusing on the nature of the roundtable talks and their impact on the subsequent democratic regime.[5] Second, I will deal with the impact of communist and pre-communist legacies on the nature of postcommunist democracies. Here, I will discuss the visions of a future democracy and the historical references of the participants of the transition which were recalled to distance some points in the past while revitalizing oth-

3 Claus Offe: *Varieties of Transition.* Cambridge, Mass.: M. I. T. Press, 1997.

4 Cf. Larry Diamond: *Developing Democracy Toward Consolidation.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

5 Former analyses of the Hungarian Roundtable talks include László Bruszt: Negotiated Revolution in Hungary. *Social Research*, Vol. 57. No. 2, 1990. 365–87; András Bozóki: Hungary's Road to Systemic Change: The Opposition Roundtable. *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 7. No. 2. Spring, 1993. 276–308; András Bozóki: The Opposition Roundtable. In Béla K. Király (ed.), András Bozóki (associate editor): *Lawful Revolution in Hungary, 1989–1994.* Boulder: Social Science Monographs distributed by the Columbia University Press, 1995. 61–92; Rudolf L. Tőkés: *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; András Sajó: Roundtable Talks in Hungary. In Jon Elster (ed.): *Roundtable Talks and the Breakdown of Communism.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. 69–98; András Bozóki (editor-in-chief), Márta Elbert, Melinda Kalmár, Béla Révész, Erzsébet Ripp and Zoltán Ripp (eds.): A *rendszerváltás forgatókönyve: Kerekasztal-tárgyalások 1989-ben.* [The 'Script' of the Regime Change: Roundtable Talks in 1989] 8 vols. Budapest: Magvető (Vol. 1–4), Budapest: Új Mandátum, (Vol. 5–8), 1999–2000.

Table 1. *Central European democracies: an overview on political, social, demographic, and economic conditions (2000-2001)*

	Czech Rep.	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia	Slovenia
Freedom H. Index	free (1, 2)	free (1, 2)	free (1, 2)	free (1, 2)	free (1, 2)
Democracy	parliamentary	parliamentary	parliamentary	parliamentary	parliamentary
President elected by	parliament	parliament	the people	the people	parliament
Ex-communist party	non-reformed	reformed	reformed	fragmented	reformed
Population *(million)*	10.3	10.0	38.6	5.4	2.0
Ethnic composition	homogeneous	homogenoeus	homogeneous	divided	homogeneous
Life expectancy *(year)*	74	71	73	73	75
Adult literacy rate	99.0	99.3	99.7	99.0	99.6
Human Dev. Index	high	high	high	high	high
Real GDP per Capita USD	12.362	10.232	7.619	9.699	14.293
In % of EU average	59	51	40	48	69
Inflation % (2001)	4.7	9.2	5.5	7.3	8.4
Unemployment %	8.1	5.7	17.4	18.3	11.6
FDI per Capita *(million EUR)*	2960.5	2595.0	1642.5	1161.9	1801.2

Source: Freedom House (2001)[6], Human Development Report (2000)[7], Gyévai (2002)[8], National Banks and Statistical Offices data[9]

6 Freedom House, op. cit.

7 *Human Development Report*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

8 Zoltán Gyévai: A nagycsoportos bővítés hatásai [The impacts of the Big Bang type of enlargement of the European Union] *Figyelő*, 10 October 2002. 17–19.

9 Provided by Tamás Dávid from Budapest Economics Co.

ers. The paper will conclude with an evaluation of the effects of the "negotiated revolutions" as new beginnings.

1. THE MODES OF TRANSITION AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE NATURE OF SUBSEQUENT REGIMES

Transitions or revolutions?

Democratic transitions are some ways different from classic revolutions, and these differences effect its perception as "new beginning".[10] They might be revolutionary in their outcome but non-revolutionary in their process of change.

- First, while revolutions start out from below and outside the power center, transitions are more complex interplays between elites and non-elites. One peculiarity of transitions is that they start from inside and outside, and also from top and bottom at the same time.
- Second, while revolutions are mostly violent or threatening with the use of violence, transitions are non-violent changes in which participants consciously pay attention to avoid violence.
- Third, while revolutions usually polarize society between supporters of the old and new regimes, transitions offer place for different type of participants. In transition processes usually both the outgoing authoritarian bloc (reformers vs. hard-liners) and the incoming opposition bloc (moderates vs. radicals) are divided.[11]
- Fourth, while revolutions are based on the mobilization of society (or seek to mobilize it at least), during the period of transition one can observe both mobilization and demobilization processes. Revolutions tend to increase participation, transitions tend to increase competition.
- Fifth, with regard to the composition of elites, while revolutions usually bring about elite change, transitions rather mean a fluid restructuration of elites instead of their complete replacement.[12]

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10 The notion of "new beginning" has been used to describe revolutions by Hannah Arendt: *On Revolution.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 1963.

11 Cf. Guillermo O'Donnell & Philippe C. Schmitter: *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986; See also Adam Przeworski: *Democracy and the Market*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

12 On these differences see in detail: András Bozóki: The Hungarian Transition in Comparative Perspective. In András Bozóki, András Körösényi & George Schöpflin (eds.):

All of these differences made difficult for many to see democratic transitions as processes of a historic break. Quite characteristically, people became dissatisfied with the results of the transition and claimed to make a "second" transition in order to "complete" the revolutionary change. On the other hand, despite of those differences, revolutions and transitions are similar in their result. If revolutions or transitions succeed the regime changes. Although, analytically, transitions can be placed between reforms and revolutions, in fact, they are closer to the revolutionary forms of change. In its style and processes, a transition is more similar to reforms, in while regarding its results, it gets close to the notion of revolution. While reformers want to save the existing regime, transformers want to transcend or replace it. If a reform is successful the regime does not change, if a transition proves to be successful, the regime does change.

Reforms and revolutions can, however, be separated for analytical purposes only. In reality, historical processes are complex as they are, they might stem from each other, and they might mutually reinforce each other. Revolutionary situations might open up the regime for reforms or vice versa.[13] Reforms can make up the first, preparatory phase of a revolution. Failed reforms might lead to revolutions, failed revolutions might lead to reforms. Opposition strategies for a democratic transition are themselves based on experiences from previous historical processes and events.

Non-violence and negotiations: Central European transitions from communism

The most striking feature of Central European transitions from communist rule was the self-limiting behavior of their participants. While they were radical in their aims concerning regime change, at the same time they were sophisticated, self-limiting in their political behavior. This was a valuable knowledge learned by the democratic opposition under the decades of communist rule: radical goals and strategies should not prevent the political actors to behave in a co-ordinated, compromise-seeking, self-limiting, non-violent way. Compromises in tactics, intransigence in final goals could, indeed, go hand in hand. In order to achieve their radical goals, leaders of the opposition in Central Europe had to convince the reformist wing of the communist leadership that they would

Post-Communist Transition: Emerging Pluralism in Hungary London: Pinter, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992. 163–191.

13 On the notion of "revolutionary situation" see in detail: Charles Tilly: *From Mobilization to Revolution.* New York: Random House, 1978.

not be killed or jailed during the transition. Moreover, in some countries with reformist communist tradition, they even convinced the communists that a possible peaceful transition serves their own interests as well.

Among the East Central European political transformations, it was Poland where the transition to democracy came first, therefore the Polish opposition had to behave in the most cautious manner. Accordingly, the Polish roundtable talks were not so much about paving the way to a full democracy, as about agreeing, first, on the legalization of Solidarity, and second, on holding semi-democratic, partially fixed elections.[14] The Polish elections of June 1989 could not yet be regarded as fully democratic ones.

Historically, however, we must recognize that the Polish negotiations began as far back as August of 1980. Polish dissidents were the pioneers in initiating open negotiations with the communists in the region.[15] The first talks between the activists of the newly formed Solidarity and the leaders of the communist party in the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk marked the beginning of the end. The self-limiting revolution of Solidarity in 1980-81 established a model for other opposition groups in East Central Europe.

Before Solidarity, people in East Central Europe had two major attempts of different type to change communist rule: a *revolution* (in Hungary in 1956) and a political *reform* (in Czechoslovakia in 1968). Although both of these changes proved to be internally successful, they both provoked Soviet military intervention and were not able to resist the external military powers. Any sort of resistance (intra-party or extra-party, violent or peaceful) seemed to be hopeless. The historic solution for this deadlock came with the idea of "new evolutionism" which was a strategy based on non-violent non-cooperation with the oppressive party-state and the revitalization of civil society.[16] This strategy aimed to strengthen civil society to make it prepared for future negotiations on rights and freedoms. It was an intellectual break with the hypocrisy of reforms and preparation for real, meaningful talks. By refusing reforms and shallow negotiations, Solidarity was able to create a political vac-

14 On the Polish negotiations see: Wiktor Osyatinski: The Roundtable Talks in Poland. In Jon Elster (ed.): *Roundtable Talks and the Breakdown of Communism.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996. 21–68.

15 Cf. Neal Ascherson: *The Polish August: The Self-Limiting Revolution.* New York: Viking, 1983; Jadwiga Staniszkis: *Poland's Self-Limiting Revolution.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

16 See Adam Michnik: A New Evolutionism. In A. Michnik: *Letters from Prison and Other Essays*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

uum around the communist party. It was able to make clear that there was no other solution for the crisis than entering negotiations with the Solidarity.

For Poland, 1989 was the closing chapter of a long historical process: their decade-long transition from "ideocratic" communism to an authoritarian, then to a military regime, and finally, to democracy. Strictly speaking, what the Poles accomplished between February and April 1989 was simply to close an era of military dictatorship.[17] Their first task was to restore legality and grant legitimacy to Solidarity, a task initiated not by the opposition, but by the governing bloc after the failure of the 1988 referendum. By late 1988, even the communists had come to realize that they had no other option than negotiating a peaceful change of the regime.

While the task of the Polish and Hungarian roundtable talks was to extricate their countries from dictatorship, the German and Czechoslovakian roundtable talks occurred only *after* their peaceful revolutions. Therefore, in the latter cases, the goal of their negotiations was the establishment of the institutional order of the new regime, since they had already disengaged themselves from their dictatorial regimes. Poland was the first, but ended up with semi-free elections in 1989. As the second to attempt a transformation, the intention of the Hungarian negotiators was to follow the Polish path but to go further and achieve more than the Poles did.

Only in the case of Hungary did the roundtable talks have to achieve both goals simultaneously: extricating Hungary from the old regime, and creating the institutional order of a democratic regime.[18] These talks represented not only an end of an era but the beginning of a new one. The Hungarian negotiators often referred openly to the Polish precedents.[19] They argued that the Polish opposition could arrive at a compromise with the communists on semi-free elections in June 1989 because they were much stronger than the Hungarian opposition. The Polish opposition could afford to accept substantial compromises in the early stages, because they were strong

17 On the Jaruzelski regime, see: Anton Pelinka: *Politics of the Lesser Evil: Leadership, Democracy, and Jaruzelski's Poland.* New Brunswick: Transaction, 1999.

18 For the minutes of the Hungarian negotiations see: András Bozóki et al. (eds.): A *rendszerváltás forgatókönyve*, op. cit. (From now on: *ARF*); On the historical context of the Hungarian negotiations see Rudolf L. Tőkés, op. cit.; and András Bozóki (ed.): *Alkotmányos forradalom*. [Constitutional Revolution] *ARF,* Vol. 7. Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2000. On the Hungarian negotiations in English see András Bozóki (ed.): *The Roundtable Talks of 1989: The Genesis of Hungarian Democracy.* Budapest - New York: Central European University Press, 2002.

19 Both the communists and the opposition, independently from each other, sent delegates to Poland in May 1989 to learn the first hand experiences of the Polish negotiators.

Table 2. *The Content of the Roundtable Talks in Central European countries*

Country	Poland	Hungary	Czechoslovakia	GDR
Time	February-April, 1989	June-Sept. 1989	Nov-Dec. 1989	January-March 1990.
Participants	Communist Party (CP), Catholic Church, Solidartity, etc.	CP, Opposition Roundtable, Third Side	government, CP, Civic Forum, etc.	CP, New Forum, Civic orgs.
Major Issues	legalization of Solidarity, rules of transition, elections	rules of transition, constitution making, elections	institutionalization of changes, policy issues	policy issues, (failed) constitution making
Result	pact, semi-free elections	pact, plebiscite, free elections	power-sharing free elections	power-sharing no impact on free elections
Significance	decisive	decisive	partly-decisive	non-decisive

enough to mobilize the masses on the streets and change the results of the roundtable talks later on. According to this argument, the Polish dissidents could accept a compromise without damaging their political credibility.

The Hungarian national roundtable negotiations of June-September 1989 benefited, in many respects, from coming after the Polish elections; it was considerably easier to run second than to be the path-breakers. As it happened, the negotiations also fell in the period of time between two significant historic events: between the suppression of the student demonstration at Tienanmen Square in China (June 1989) and the formation of the first non-communist government in Poland in four decades (September 1989). Between the Polish elections in early June and the beginning of Leipzig's Monday demonstrations in East Germany in mid-September – Hungary alone was on the road to democratization. In Poland and Hungary, it was these talks that led to the changes, but in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, they only legitimized and institutionalized the changes after the fact. But one way or another, an essential change of regime took place in all these countries. Table 2, compiled by the author, offers an overview on the nature and significance of the roundtable talks in different countries in Central Europe.

It was only the GDR and Romania where the roundtable talks did not play any significant role in the process of transition. In East Germany, the "GDR-rev-

Table 3. *Characteristics of transition from communist rule in Central European countries*

	Czecho-slovakia	GDR	Hungary	Poland	Slovenia
Old regime	authoritar-ian	rather to-talitarian	authoritar-ian transi-tory	authoritar-ian mili-tary	authoritar-ian transi-tory
Opposition	unified	unified	unified	divided	unified
Way of change	Mobiliza-tion (peaceful)	Mobiliza-tion (peaceful)	Negoti-ated (peaceful)	Negoti-ated (peaceful)	Negoti-ated + se-cession, war
Privatization	con-trolled by the state	con-trolled by new state	spontane-ous	spontane-ous	con-trolled by the state
Boundaries of democratic community	created by separa-tion	created by unifica-tion	given	given	created by seces-sion
First elections	free (1990)	free (1990)	free (1990)	semi-free (1989)	free (1990)

olution" of the Fall of 1989, was quickly forgotten when the option of German reunification became available.[20] In Romania, the parallel putsch and revolution of December 1989 brought a heterogeneous political group to power (the National Salvation Front), led by ex-communist politicians. Those were not even interested in a power-sharing formula: they used the "roundtable" as a facade of democratization only.[21] In fact, their main concern was to prevent the emergence of democratic pluralism before the elections.

Table 3., compiled by the author, summarizes the transition paths in Central Europe.

CHARACTERISTIC POLITICAL VALUES OF 1989

Of the most salient political values of 1989, I will discuss here the following: negative freedom, popular sovereignty, representative government, non-violence, consensual democracy, civil society, and the minimization of

[20] Jonathan Osmond: Yet Another Failed German Revolution? The German Democratic Republic, 1989–90. In Moira Donald & Tim Rees (eds.): *Reinterpreting Revolutions in the Twentieth-Century Europe.* London: Macmillan, 2000. 140–58.

[21] Călin Goina: România esete: tárgyalások a forradalom után. [The Case of Romania: Negotiations After the Revolution] in *ARF*, Vol. 7, 2000. 766–79.

conflicts. The prevailing vision of the framers of the new democracy was that of a democratic welfare society which would "return to Europe", combining the features of a market economy, representative government and international military neutrality.

1. Negative freedom

Among the political values espoused by the participants of the transition the idea of *freedom* was primary, understood both as a liberal and a democratic value. Freedom as a liberal value meant that people could finally exercise their human rights and civil liberties. They were free to talk to one another openly, both in private and in public; there would be a free press, and the right of association and party formation would be guaranteed as inalienable rights of all citizens.

Freedom was understood in a negative rather than a positive sense,[22] requiring the state (the Party, the police, the military, etc., the government as a whole) to allow individuals to pursue their activities free of harassment, interference or control. It was freedom *from* something, freedom from the intervention of the state. This was clearly the cumulative outcome of two major political influences. First, the legacy of dissent in Central Europe, which valued high human rights and equal human dignity (as expressed in the writings of Václav Benda, István Bibó, Václav Havel, György Konrád, Milan Kundera, Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik, Jan Patocka, and others).[23] Secondly, the impact of the then dominant Western neoliberal, neo-conservative ideologies represented by theorists such as Friedrich A. Hayek and Milton Friedman, and politicians such as Thatcher and Reagan.

2. Popular sovereignty

The democratic conception of freedom was understood as *popular sovereignty*, reclaimed after so many decades of Soviet domination, when the pres-

22 On these conceptual differences, see in detail: Isaiah Berlin: Two Concepts of Liberty. In Michael Sandel (ed.): *Liberalism and Its Critics*. New York: New York University Press, 1984. 15–36.

23 For their thought, in English, see for instance, Václav Havel et al.: *The Power of the Powerless.* (Edited by John Keane) London: Hutchinson, 1985; Václav Havel: *Living in Truth.* London-Boston: Faber & Faber, 1987; Milan Kundera: *The Unbearable Lightness of Being.* György Konrád: *Antipolitics*. London: Methuen, 1984; Adam Michnik: *Letter from Prison and Other Essays*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987; István Bibó: *Democracy, Revolution, Self-Determination: Selected Writings.* (Edited by Károly Nagy) Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs distributed by the Columbia University Press, 1991.

ence of Soviet advisors and the Red Army determined political outcomes. The idea of popular sovereignty begs for the definition of political community. When the boundaries of political community (and therefore the identity of the democratic state) were questionable newborn democracy was often distorted by ethnically defined nationalist or nationalizing policies. In many ways, nationalism and democracy are not far from each other: They both based themselves on the idea of popular will.[24] Where the borders of the state had been clearly defined and the anti-Communist civic movements clearly demonstrated their commitment to democracy the end of communism meant to be a beginning of a regime based on democratic citizenship. All of the countries with round table type of transition belong to this category.

Where, however, these social conditions had not existed, especially in the case of non-democratic federations, popular will was used and abused by leaders who transformed themselves from communist to nationalist politicians to maintain power. In these countries democracy was diminishing to the level of partly free and non-fair elections.[25] It is not surprising that none of these countries were able to produce a negotiated way-out from the dictatorship.

3. Representative government

It is worthy of note that democracy was understood as a *representative* form of governance, wherein people exercise their constitutional powers not so much directly, as through the activity of their elected representatives. If democracy, as Robert A. Dahl and others have said,[26] has three major components – competition, participation and civil liberties – it is significant that negotiators at the roundtable talks emphasized the first and the third components, and tended to somehow ignore the second. Because communism had based itself on the forced, involuntary participation of the masses, people grew distrustful of the value of political mobilization initiated at the top. They came to prefer, especially in Hungary, a liberal, "non-participatory" democracy. This tendency correlates with the high value of individual freedom understood mainly as "negative" freedom.

24 Cf. Elie Kedourie: *Nationalism.* London: Hutchinson, 1985.

25 See Staffan Darnolf & Yonhok Choe: Free and Fair Elections: What Do We Mean and How Can We Measure Them? Paper presented at the 17th IPSA World Congress, Seoul, South Korea, August 18–21. 1997.

26 Robert A. Dahl: *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.

4. Non-violence

One reason the regime change was effected so smoothly, was the participants' insistence on peaceful means. *Non-violence* was highly valued and taken seriously by all sides. One could venture to say that non-violence was as highly prized as freedom. The participants' commitment to non-violence, their genuine desire to reach consensus through negotiations, is one of the legacies of 1989.[27] In Poland, already in the Solidarity revolution of 1980-81, the most remarkable feature of that social movement was its complete lack of violence.

In Hungary, ordinary people had no wish whatsoever to repeat the bloody revolution of 1956, and their behavior was also influenced by the evolutionist strategy of the opposition. The communists, still in power, also wished to come through the crisis without resorting to violence. In East Germany and Czechoslovakia, where the situation in 1989 was more dangerous and threatening with violence, each side was anxiously anticipating the need to respond to the violence of the other. Fortunately for all, no one initiated hostilities.

Non-violent conflict resolution was ensured by the then still living legacy of *self-limiting* political actions.[28] Even the so-called radical opposition was, in fact, quite moderate by comparison with other radical democratic opposition formations in other transitions to democracy, especially in Latin America. This ideal of moderation was the result of the decade-long co-operation of the democratic opposition groups of Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. (The high moral value placed on non-violence among political ideals was discussed and re-evaluated ten years after 1989 again, in connection with the NATO air strikes in Yugoslavia. In the spring of 1999, Hungarian public opinion, for instance, was seriously split over the NATO intervention following the crisis in Kosovo. One camp felt that the intervention violated the legacy of 1989, while another, the larger part of the society, felt that, in the final analysis, freedom was more important than non-violence.[29] People had occasion to re-think whether non-violence should be valued as highly as freedom, and also the price to pay for freedom. This seems to remain a constant

27 See the minutes of the negotiations especially *ARF*, Vol. 2. op. cit.

28 For the notion of "self-limiting revolutions" see Neil Ascherson, op. cit., and Jadwiga Staniszkis, op. cit.

29 A group of anti-NATO intellectuals formed a Movement for the Peace in the Balkans (*Balkán Békéjéért Mozgalom*), while others issued a pro-NATO declaration. These debates and manifestos can be found in the April, May, and June, 1999 issues of the weekly *Élet és Irodalom*.

dilemma in Europe.) In Hungary, the reason for the tremendous importance attached to non-violence lies in the violent legacy of 1956. But even in the countries of repeated mass mobilizations, none of the parties wanted to initiate violence by consciously keeping their revolution "velvet".

One of the most important lessons of 1989 was that it was possible to complete a "double transition" (from state socialism to capitalism and from dictatorship to democracy) in a non-violent way. It is truly amazing that in most countries of Central Europe,[30] unlike in the much-praised Spanish or Portuguese transitions, *nobody* died in political conflicts during the period of transition to democracy.

However, the so-called "triple transition"[31] where the redefinition of political community and the clarification of national boundaries were also at stake, posed a more difficult task for those who favored non-violent conflict resolution. The disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, occurred via civil and secessionist wars and ethnic cleansings, set up a negative example. The counter-example of the Czech and Slovak "velvet separation" shows that not only the problems to be solved matter but also the sequence of political steps. In Czechoslovakia, democracy was first established which created respected framework for conflict resolution for both Czech and Slovak political leaders. Therefore, they could negotiate the terms of the separation. In Yugoslavia, parallel processes of democratization and the redefinition of the national political community were mixed up which did not allow much room to use any mutually accepted procedural rules for peaceful separation. Rather, it helped nationalist leaders to abuse the notion of democratic political community (*demos*) by identifying it with "pure" ethnic community.

5. Extended consensualism

The legacy of 1980-81 was a real starting point for the negotiation process, not only in Poland but, indeed, it was significant for all over Central Europe.[32] This peaceful, deliberative approach to building consensus and democracy through negotiations had been a long and difficult process. As a result, *consensual* democracy came to be seen as the ideal form of democracy. The negotiators consented to the continuation of transitional institutions beyond the period of transition, thereby allowing those institutions to become

30 Here, I refer to Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, and Poland.

31 Claus Offe, op. cit.

32 For the documents of the Gdansk negotiations see Anthony Kemp-Welch (ed.): *The Birth of Solidarity: The Gdansk Negotiations, 1980*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983.

established as integral parts of the new democracy. This consensualism was later harshly criticized by the radical right, which wanted a more sweeping change in the power relations of the elite. In Hungary, the first prime minister József Antall had a pithy reply to these demands. He told the radicals, if they wanted a complete change of elites, they "should have fomented a revolution".[33]

I do not mean to suggest that I consider a broad consensualism to be the ideal form of democracy. A consensus should inevitably be reached on the institutional framework of the democratic system, as well as the forms of democratic procedures, but consensus on policy issues cannot be part of any definition of democracy.[34] But this broadly defined notion of consensus was the, perhaps naďve, approach to democracy during the transition, influenced by many different thinkers in political philosophy, and some of the theorists of civil society.[35]

6. Unified civil society

Up until 1989, the victory of democracy was envisioned as a victory of *civil society* over the state. A strong state was understood to be the sign of a weak democracy and vice versa.[36] The achievement of the Hungarian Opposition Roundtable was that it transformed the dreams of a united front, and a loose umbrella organization of opposition, into the reality of a newly formed political elite. Although it can be described as internally divided and conflict-ridden, the Opposition Roundtable also succeeded as a co-operative, consensus-oriented body of the opposition. Their identity was built up around the value of consensus. Civil society was somehow identified with democratic social movements, which are the fighting for real democracy against the existing institutions. Up until 1989, many activists and some theorists believed political parties and governmental institutions are inherently non-democratic,[37] therefore those should be substituted by the unwritten, non-institutionalized, self-evident, general consensus of civil society.

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33 Quoted by József Böröcz: Tetszettek volna forradalmat csinálni… In András Bozóki, Tamás Csapody, Ervin Csizmadia & Miklós Sükösd (eds.): *Csendes? Forradalom? Volt?* [Was It a Peaceful Revolution?] Budapest: T-Twins, 1991.

34 Cf. Philippe C. Schmitter: What Democracy Is … And Is Not. *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 2. No. 3. Summer, 1991. 75–88.

35 See for instance: Janusz Ziolkowski, op. cit.

36 25 Mihály Vajda: East Central European Perspectives. In John Keane (ed.): *Civil Society and the State*. London: Verso, 1988. 333–360.

37 See George Konrád, op.cit.

However, this self-evidently positive understanding of civil society existed until the party-state was intact. The year of 1988 was rather the period of civil society (as fluid, informal, active social movements) than of 1989, when political parties tried to form, crystallize and express themselves. At the time of the roundtable talks in 1989, the notion of civil society still had a strong rhetorical value. But it became clear soon that the old concept of a unified civil society belongs rather to the past myths of anti-totalitarian movements rather to the practice of a future democracy based on pluralism and divided interests.

7. Conflicts versus democracy

Still it was not easy to realize that democracy is about *conflicts*: it is about conflicting values and interests between democrats, which are openly expressed and institutionally regulated. Decisions should be made on the democratic principle of majority rule and the liberal principle of equality in the free exercise of human rights and civil liberties. As Lewis A. Coser, Albert O. Hirschman and others pointed out, conflicts are not dysfunctional in a democracy, they are the very essence of it.[38] For a while, democrats in Central Europe believed that they should be unified, and should have conflicts with anti-democrats only. In the roundtable-type of transitions it was not easy for them to realize that the point was not to eliminate conflicts in the name of consensual democracy, but to channel them through functioning democratic institutions.

For a while, it was difficult for the participants to distinguish between different types of conflicts (conflicting worldviews versus conflicting political interests), therefore they tended to overplay and "totalize" even minor conflicts inherent to all democracies. The participants of the roundtable talks wanted to establish a moderate, smoothly functioning democratic regime and later they tended to stamp each other as the "enemies of democracy" in case of situations with sharpening political conflicts. They were all convinced that only their interpretation of democracy was true.

8. "Back to Europe"

The political visions of the opposition were based on the idea of the Central European countries' "*return to Europe*" and the new politicians of these

[38] See for instance: Lewis A. Coser: *The Functions of Social Conflict.* New York: Free Press, 1956.

new democracies optimistically assumed that "the West" would be eager to welcome the newcomers into the community of European democracies. Now we can safely state that this was not exactly the case. Among the political forces in the post-communist regimes, some initially advocated the idea of a popular "third way", small-scale ownership capitalism between global communism and global capitalism, but subsequently abandoned it in favor of Konrád Adenauer's "social market economy" as the means to a safer, more gradual, and less painful transition. Liberal parties, on the other hand, influenced by contemporary neo-liberalism, advocated a fully liberal market economy based on a non-interventionist state.[39] In the international arena, for a time, Finlandization served as a model for how Hungary might overcome its past, and the example of Austria's development was repeatedly raised as well. Both cases suggested a neutral military status, which was the best relationship with the western powers that post-communist countries could hope for at the time. In Hungary, successful "Finlandization" policies of Finland and the neutral status of Austria or Sweden were highly valued and often quoted. Only after 1990 did more and more politicians begin to raise the possibility of joining NATO. At that time, the European Community (later Union) was still a far more popular option than NATO, because it was identified with social welfare, and people in the new democracies did not fear high external threat enough to be eager to join NATO. This public attitude began to change after the hard-liner coup in Moscow in August 1991, and during the war in the former Yugoslavia.

In sum, no one from Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia questioned that these countries were part of Europe, both geographically and culturally. In their eyes, the return to the luckier peoples of the "European family" seemed to be a quick, self-evident, automatic process. They presupposed that western states would value their long struggle for democracy and would be ready to pay the price of their reintegration. The Central European left regarded "Europeanization" as a process: a project of political and economic modernization. The political right, on the other hand, tended to argue that the major cultural characteristic of Europe is Christianity, which was shared by these countries. Consequently, "Europe" for them was not a program but a state, a regained status after the collapse of communism.

39 On the linguistic battles of the transition see: András Bozóki: The Rhetoric of Action: The Language of the Regime Change in Hungary. In A. Bozóki (ed.): *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe*. Budapest – New York: Central European University Press, 1999. 263–83.

The following table summarizes the tremendous tasks and problems faced by the transitions in Central Europe.

Table 4. *The tasks and problems of the transition in Central Europe*

Terrain	*Direction of change*	*Result*
Political regime	dictatorship to democracy	completed
Economic regime	state socialism to capitalism	completed
Political community	building of the nation-state	completed / controversial
Social transformation	change of elites	completed / controversial
Symbolic legitimacy	moral justice and/or rule of law	controversial
Foreign policy	reintegration to Europe	completed

Naturally, "to complete" a process does not mean that it exists without conflicts or controversies today. It means only that there was an agreement for the completion of the historic turn itself both in the politics and in the economy. At present, many social problems should be tackled, which stem from the very nature of democracy and capitalism. But these are not the problems of transition any more, rather the conflicts inherent to the new regime.

2. THE IMPACT OF COMMUNIST LEGACIES ON THE NATURE OF POSTCOMMUNIST DEMOCRACIES

The close of World War II in 1945 marked the commencement of democratic developments in Central Europe that were arrested by Stalinist sovietization initiated by the occupying powers in 1947. Between 1945 and 1947, the regimes were theoretically based on free elections but could only be called half-democratic at best as the Soviet control gave no real chance to the opposition, forced some political parties to form a coalition with the communists, and disenfranchised hundreds of thousands of citizens. At best, these regimes can be called semi-democracies, with features of an East European version of *democradúra* and *dictablanda*. Finally, the Communist Party, which was given control over all the armed forces, began to clamp down on the adherents of democratic ideals. In most countries, the Communist dictatorship exercised totalitarian control in the 1950s and most part of the 1960s, while the following period could be described as somewhat softer or, at least

different, post-totalitarian dictatorship, characterized simultaneously by a relative pragmatism to economic reforms and by the political monopoly of the Communist Party. Nevertheless, the communist experience was not always the same for these countries.

Table 5. *Types of Communist Dictatorships in Countries of Central Europe*

Regime type/ Country	Czecho-slovakia	GDR	Hungary	Poland	Yugoslavia
Totalitarian (posttotalitarian)	1947-64,	1949-89	1948-62	1948-56	1946-53
Authoritarian	1965-68		1962-87	1956-81	1953-88
Military (posttotalitarian)				1982-87	
Transitory ("dictablanda")	1945-47		1945-47 1987-89	1988-89	1945-46 1988-89

Which were the main differences in Central Europe between the early, totalitarian forms of communist rule on the one hand, and the "mature", mostly post-totalitarian, dictatorships on the other? Table 6., compiled by the author, summarizes them in dichotomies.

The beginning of the end of the old regime had to start with the process "unmasking the hypocrisy", since the communist system was ideologically based on promises of Enlightenment which sharply contradicted to its everyday political practice. People were aware of this discrepancy and knew that the regime based itself on a fundamental lie. Despite the widespread quasi-scientific theory of "homo sovieticus" which suggested that the communist regime had created different type of men and women, in fact, the overwhelming majority of these societies were anti- or non-communist. Communist leaders argued that history was uni-linear process of progress and one day ideal socialism (communism) would be realized. All then present miseries of the "actually existing socialism" were just downplayed as "mistakes" which were made "on the road" to a perfect society. Its leaders misrepresented existing socialism as the given stage of a historical road on which people must go through to reach happiness. People with huge skepticism, however, received this sort of argument.

Originally the regime was "legitimized" not by its achievements but by its final goal. For dissidents, initially, it was not easy to make a break with this teleological way of thinking and to form an opposition ideology. Both the Pol-

Table 6. *Patterns of communist domination in Central Europe*

	1950s – mid-1960s	mid-1960s – 1980s
Countries under Soviet rule	unified bloc	different images
Industrialization	forced	relatively relaxed
Social control	direct politicization	depoliticization
Communist leadership	latent polarization	latent pluralization
Way of life	the terror of collectivist spirit	acceptance of privacy

ish protest and the Hungarian revolution of 1956 were anti-Communist, but not necessarily anti-socialist. Many of the protesters and revolutionaries believed that the dictatorial socialism of Stalinism should and could be replaced by a humanitarian-cooperative, democratic socialism.[40] In other words, they refused to believe in the centralized rule and the omnipotent state, but they still believed in the possibility of democratic market socialism of voluntary associations and co-operatives under one-party rule. They refused the practices of Stalin but still, to a certain extent, accepted the thoughts of Bukharin. It was similar ideologically in 1968 when Alexander Dubcek and his comrades refused the Muscovite way to communism in Czechoslovakia but they believed in a humanitarian, democratic, non-oppressive socialism.[41] They still claimed that democracy and communism are compatible, therefore communism was reformable.

The ideological break became available only when dissidents in East Central Europe were able to step out from the Marxist framework of criticism. This intellectual turn occurred in the 1970s only when opponents to the regime stopped talking about the reformability of the system and started to refer to concepts as human rights and civil society. These two concepts proved to be the most powerful ideological tool in their resistance to late socialism.[42] It was only when they started to organize civil society outside the framework of the state that they became prepared to create a different social entity to be represented in future negotiations against the leaders of the regime.

40 Cf. Bill Lomax: *Hungary, 1956.* London: Allison & Busby, 1976.

41 Galia Golan: *Reform Rule in Czechoslovakia: The Dubcek Era, 1968–69.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973.

42 On those, see Andrew Arato: *From Neo-Marxism to Democratic Theory: Essays in the Critical Theory of Soviet-type Societies.* Armonk, N. Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1993.

First, they had to realize that they had to present a fundamental ethical alternative to the corrupt regime: a need to live "within the truth".[43] Second, they had to organize themselves outside the institutionalized regime. Third, they had to be able to present themselves as representatives of the majority of people who wanted a break with the communist regime. While presenting themselves as a different body of people (the society) against the communists (the regime), they made clearly visible the dividing line between "us" and "them". Therefore, at the end, by "unmasking the hypocrisy" they had to present a democratic political alternative to participate in the negotiations and to compete successfully in electoral politics.

The communist era represent different legacies for countries of Central Europe. It was most damaging for those, which had had democratic traditions, and flourishing market economy. Those countries had to suffer most which had inherited the most developed social structure from the pre-communist times. The damage was most clearly seen in the Czech part of the former Czechoslovakia, and also in East Germany, in other words, in the most developed parts of the region. In these countries, communism systematically destroyed the functions of civil society, social relations, and of the prospects of a rational economy. In other countries of East Central Europe its effects were a bit more mixed. Here, totalitarianism destroyed social solidarity and civil society, but also destroyed the semi-feudal structures of the pre-communist regime. There is a debate in the literature whether state socialism should be seen as a traditional or a modernizing regime. In the most modernized countries of Central Europe communism meant a sort of refeudalization: the communist party hierarchy cut other previous social relations and replaced the previously existed horizontal relations with a vertical and politically dominated one. Communism also prevented people in Central and Eastern Europe to experience the emancipatory impact of the "quality of life revolution" of 1968, which occurred in many western societies and transformed fundamentally the way of thinking of young people over there. It is also important to note that Communism was *not* a result of an endogenous political development in Central Europe: it was forced on these societies from outside. Communism was not a home-grown system, it was implemented by the Red Army and by the Moscow-trained party-apparatchiks who followed and copied mechanically the Stalinist model. With the partial

43 Cf. Václav Havel, *Living in Truth*, op.cit.

exception of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, communist movement never had mass following in these societies.

However, in many ways, communism was still a modernizing regime – especially in the Soviet republics, but also, to some degree, in Central Europe. In the 1950s, it violently fostered urbanization and (an outdated model of) industrialization. It pushed millions of people to move from the countryside to urban centers. By opening up the labor market for women, for economic and ideological reasons, it officially pushed society towards the acknowledgement of some sort of female 'emancipation'. Female suffrage was also generally acknowledged, although voting remained meaningless in the lack of political freedom. Finally, and most importantly, it put high emphasis on general elementary and high school education and by doing so it virtually eliminated illiteracy.

An interesting side-effect of communism was that the lack of achievement motifs in the formal economic and political spheres made many people to turn either to the private sphere or to top performances in the non-political and non-economic spheres. Sports served that goal on the popular level, but this situation also helped the survival of the traditionally high prestige of high culture (classic music, arts, literature, philosophy) in Central Europe. For a period under communism, Central Europe itself was increasingly identified with high culture in the eyes of non-communist intellectuals. As an escape from reality, these intellectuals interpreted Central Europe as the land of individual giants like Bartók, Dvorák, Freud, Haydn, Kafka, Koestler, Lukács, Mahler, Mozart, Neumann, Schiele, Wittgenstein and others. This idealized perception of the intellectuals helped to maintain their own self-esteem and distinctive identity in order to keep their relative autonomy under the communist regime.

It is not easy to summarize pros and cons of communist legacy, because the communist system, despite its generally negative uniformization effects, did not have the same impact on the countries in Central Europe. It hurt the most developed countries and regions most. In general, needless to say, it had much more and deeper negative, devastating effects, than positive ones. Even its positive effects should be seen as *relatively* positive ones, and only in retrospect, in the light of post-communist development. The following table, compiled by the author, summarizes these effects.

Table 7. *The communist legacy: pros and cons in retrospect*

Positive	Negative
Supported social mobility	Oppressed freedom, trust, and civil society
Stressed equality	Created a culture of corruption and fear
Eliminated illiteracy	Double standards (formal vs informal rules)
Urbanization	Minimized foreign travels and interaction
Available healthcare & housing	Dependency on the omnipotent party-state
Regional mobility inside the country (relatively developed, available public transportation)	Made Central Europe as satellite of the Soviet Union (lack of sovereignty)
Eliminated semi-feudal hierarchies	Created rather closed societies (xenophobia, racism, prejudices, cynicism, pessimism)
Women to enter the labor market	Created new hierarchies based on loyalty and not on achievement (refeudalization)
Invisible unemployment (hidden inside the workplace)	Cynical attitudes to public good
Free (but quantitatively restricted) access to higher education	Oppressed or distorted national identity and citizenship
	Women were 'emancipated' as workforce only
	Relativized ethical standards in society

The pros and cons of the communist legacy should not be taken quantitatively only. In fact, most of the positive sides had its own negative consequences for further development. At the end of the day, it is clear that the negative effects proved to be far more important, and it would have been much better for these societies to avoid the whole communist experience as such.

There are only few peaceful and democratic periods to be found in the 20th-century history of Central Europe. Scanning the decades of the 20th century for moments of historical significance, it is beyond doubt that the 1989 change ranks as one of the most outstanding events of the century.

Most participants of the Central European transitions were eager to establish a new regime with full legitimacy. Therefore they often turned to particular historical events in the pre-communist past to justify their political actions concerning the definition of political community, elite change and moral-historical justice. Unfortunately, the pre-communist past, as it was mentioned, did not contain many democratic elements. What they wanted

was first of all to distance the communist past and "bring back" some useful or usable traditions to the then present political life. These traditions could be distinguished whether they belonged to the category of revolutions or institution-building.

DISTANCING THE PAST: HISTORICAL REFERENCES

Concerning past references, participants of the transition were trying to employ both revolutionary and non-revolutionary (reformist and nation-building) traditions to popularize and legitimize the regime change. Contradictory as it was they tried to use symbols and historical events to emphasize both continuity and change. Images of reform and revolution were utilized next to each other.

The revolutionary tradition

Most participants of the regime change in Hungary wanted to avoid repeating the model of action set by the 1956 revolution. The only exception was the radical-plebeian Hungarian October Party, which would not participate in the roundtable talks and opted for a revolutionary strategy, thereby marginalizing itself in political life. It denounced the negotiating partners as a set of elite-groups talking above the heads of the people, and implied that the parties at the roundtable talks were only pursuing their own interests and not the common good. All the other parties were determined to move from dictatorship to democracy by non-violent means, and rejected the revolutionary path.

Still, the legacy of 1956 could not be ignored in Hungary; it had to be addressed. The crushing of the revolution by the Soviets and the execution of Imre Nagy, the Prime Minister of the revolutionary government, made the political position of those who supported János Kádár, and associated themselves with his policies, morally untenable. To remind the public that the Kádár regime[44] had been born in a state of "original sin" was the best way for its opponents to de-legitimize the communist regime. 1956 was important in so far as it helped the opposition to distinguish itself from the Kádár-regime and to denounce it on moral grounds. While for some speakers at the reburial of Imre Nagy and his fellow martyrs Nagy was a political role model, for the young radical, Viktor

[44] On this, see William Shawcross: *Crime and Compromise: János Kádár and the Politics of Hungary Since the Revolution.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1974.

Orbán, Nagy was an honorable person only because he had renounced his communist beliefs.[45] No groups in the opposition wanted seriously to adopt Nagy's ideas of a "democratic socialism", or follow the revolutionary practice of 1956. After June 16, 1989, when communism received its symbolic death sentence, the legacy of 1956, as the first anti-totalitarian, anti-communist (but not necessarily pro-capitalist) revolution faded away as well.

The participants of the roundtable talks were obliged to search for suitable historical precedents, other than 1956. This did not prove difficult, as Hungary's long history had produced some similar patterns of change, which could offer some symbolic points of reference for the tasks of 1989. First and foremost, there was the "lawful revolution of 1848" when the strata of the lesser nobility initiated a bloodless transition, a "glorious revolution"[46] from a more traditional to a more civic and liberal regime. In early 1849, too, it was the old parliament that passed the necessary bills for change, similar to the situation of 1989, and put in power the notable Lajos Batthyány-cabinet (which included among its ministers, some famous 19th century Hungarian politicians as Lajos Kossuth, István Széchenyi, and József Eötvös). Historians at the roundtable referred often to the example of 1848 as a model worth emulating.

Before the transition in Czechoslovakia, the Czechs and Slovaks often referred to Gorbachev as "late Dubcek", that is, a communist politician who started *glasnost* and *perestroika* following the Prague Spring model of 1968. The old Alexander Dubcek himself was present at the Wenceslas Square in November 1989, together with Václav Havel, to cheer the masses and to symbolize continuity between 1968 and 1989. The presence of both leaders, the representative of reform-oriented communists (Dubcek), and the moral hero of the democratic opposition (Havel), gave a clear sign to the protesters to accept both legacies. However, the velvet revolution in Czechoslovakia occurred very quickly for the participants of the December 1989 negotiations to set up a revolutionary legacy. The anniversaries of the crush of the Prague Spring by the Red Army in August 21, 1968, and the creation of independent Czechoslovakia in October 1918, served as occasions to speed up unrest in an increasingly revolutionary situation.

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45 Viktor Orbán's speech of June 16, 1989. In András Bozóki (ed.): *Tiszta lappal: A Fidesz a magyar politikában, 1988–91.* [With a Clean Slate: Fidesz in Hungarian Politics, 1988–91] Budapest: Fidesz, 1992.

46 The notion of "glorious revolution" stems from the English "transition" of 1688. For the application of this term to 1989 see Ferenc Fehér & Ágnes Heller: *Kelet-Európa 'dicsőséges forradalmai'.* [Eastern Europe's 'Glorious Revolutions'] Budapest: T-Twins, 1992.

The tradition of institution-building

Since the Hungarian revolution of 1956 was crushed by Soviet troops no long-lasting institutional achievements could be used in 1989 from that revolution. The original institutions of the revolutions, the worker's councils and co-operatives, were regarded as somehow naive, romantic efforts for better socialism, but also as outdated attempts for making democracy. One of the slogans of the time stated that there was no economic democracy without political democracy. (The decline of Tito's "self-organizing" worker's co-operatives in Yugoslavia[47] just reinforced this conviction.) Countries of Central Europe had to reinvent and reconstruct examples of successful non-communist institution-building from their history.

The rebirth of political life after World War II offered a good reference point. In Hungary, bill 1946:I. on the legal status of the President of the Republic has frequently been quoted as a "little constitution" of those times.[48] This legislation detailed the procedure to be followed in the election of the President, and by adopting that bill, the opposition aligned itself with the *parliamentary traditions* of Hungarian politics over any other presidential system or the tradition of monarchy. Metaphorically, the post-WWII rebuilding of the country was often quoted to compare it to the enormous task of the near future. Communism was frequently compared to the destruction of war. Democratic politicians sometimes remarked bitterly that post-communist society lacked the enthusiasm and optimism of the post-WWII generation. In Hungary, the period of 1945-46 was clearly seen as new beginning, even if it had been halted by the communist coup. 1945 also offered the legacy of a peacefully established democratic regime, based on a non-communist center-right umbrella party (which was the Independent Smallholders' Party at the time). That did not work that much in Poland and Slovenia since for them communist takeover took place with extreme speed after the second World War.

Further back to history, 1848, the "Springtime of the Peoples" provided the idea of national liberalism (which demonstrated that the more traditional values of "homeland" can be brought into harmony with the ideal of "progress"). In Central Europe, 19th century represented the beginning of the era of nation-states, which linked inseparably to institution-building. There-

47 On this, see Dennison Rusinow: *The Yugoslav Experiment, 1948–1974.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977.

48 The text of the 1946: I. bill can be found in *ARF*, Vol. 3, 1999. 645–648.

fore, interestingly, 1848 was more important historical reference as peaceful institutional change than a revolution and nationwide fight for freedom and independence. Both legacies were seen as favoring institutional rearrangement rather than revolutionary upheaval.

It was an important achievement of the Hungarian Opposition Roundtable to establish the historic continuity of 1848 - 1945 - 1989, and thus to present itself as the proper heir of all the peaceful, yet radical, democratic traditions of the history of Hungary.[49] Poland rediscovered the legacy of General Józef Pilsudski,[50] which was an argument to introduce a semi-presidential democracy later on. In Czechoslovakia, Václav Havel, the newly elected president referred often to an early "founding father", Tomas G. Masaryk.[51] However, the Slovaks later made clear that for them the tradition of Czechoslovakia did not represent any attractive alternative to independence. While the democratic opposition led by Havel was relatively influential in Bohemia, its activities were far less known in the Slovak part of the country. Havel was not a "moral hero" for most Slovaks who were searching for an alternative historical legacy to represent both democracy and independence. (That search proved to be problematic since the only independent Slovak state existed in modern history had been, in fact, a puppet state of the Nazis.)

Other countries, liberated from the Soviet Union in 1990-91, tried to dig deeper to reconstruct national, liberal, and/or democratic traditions from their pre-Soviet past, back to the early 20th century. Latvia, for instance, reinstalled its 1922 constitution. In Hungary, despite some right-wing governmental efforts to revitalize the Horthy era (1919-44) and to make it somehow more respected, past nostalgia embraced rather pre-World War I. Austria-Hungary, and the progressive legacies of the dualist Monarchy (as the era of economic development, constitutional liberalism, early federalism). These elements gave the idea for Jürgen Habermas to claim that these transitions were, in fact, "rectifying revolutions" (*Nachholende Revolution)*, which tried to recover continuities and to reconnect present societies to the broken, pre-communist past.

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49 See especially the contributions of József Antall in the August 29 meeting of the Opposition Round Table. See: János Kis: 1989: a víg esztendő. [The Merry Year] *Beszélő*, Vol. 4. No. 10, 1999. 22–46. For the documents, see: *ARF*, Vol. 3, 1999. 520–653.

50 See Andrzej Garlicki: *Józef Pilsudski, 1867–1935.* Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995.

51 Cf. Edward P. Newman: *Masaryk.* London – Dublin: Campion Press, 1960.

The idea of Central Europe itself had different meanings in the 1980s.[52] First, and foremost, it was the legacy of dissent and the recurrent fights for freedom in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.[53] Second, by the revitalization of Central Europe, most people thought a project to recreate historical similarities between cities like Cracow, Prague, Dresden, Vienna, Bratislava, Kosice, Budapest, Cluj, Braşov, Timişoara, Zagreb, Ljubljana and Trieste. Third, it had some historical resonance to the Habsburg Europe as a reference in the post-Iron Curtain period. Fourth, and finally, some people, revived the pre-WWI German concept of *Mitteleuropa* advocated by Friedrich Naumann and other German national liberals at the beginning of the 20th century. These thoughts, however, have been partly swept away by the attractivity of a larger unit, the European Union. The idea of Central Europe, however, has not been forgotten, rather it contributed to the formation of the so-called Visegrád-countries, a co-operation between Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, and Hungary after 1991.[54]

SMOOTH TRANSITION VS. NEW BEGINNING?

The negotiations of 1989 created an unprecedented historical situation in some Central European countries in which a political elite was able to draft a constitution and create the institutional frameworks of a democracy without bloodshed. Was it, after all, a clear break the old regime and a "new beginning" of a democratic one?

In the categories of Hannah Arendt a revolution has two sides: 1. an extrication from the old regime and 2. the beginning of the construction of a new institutional order.[55]

In Hungary, the break with the past occurred rather symbolically on June 16, 1989, when the Prime Minister of the 1956 revolution, Imre Nagy, and his fellow-martyrs were reburied officially. Kádár, himself, died three weeks later, while rule of law was introduced with the ratification of the new

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52 Cf. George Schöpflin & Nancy Wood (eds.): *In Search of Central Europe*. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble Books, 1989; Timothy Garton Ash: *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe*. New York: Vintage, 1990; Stephen Borsody: *The New Central Europe*. Boulder: East European Monographs, 1993.

53 Cf. Gregorz Ekiert: *The State Against Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

54 See Béla K. Király (ed.) & András Bozóki (assoc. ed.): *Lawful Revolution in Hungary, 1989–94*. Boulder: Social Science Monographs, distributed by the Columbia University Press, 1995.

55 Hannah Arendt, op. cit.

constitution on the 33rd anniversary of the revolution, in October 1989. This moment in June made clear that 1989 fulfilled many claims of the revolution without replaying it or implementing all of its visions, many of them burdened with illusions) for the future. After the reburial of Imre Nagy, the second phase of the revolutionary process began. The phase of reconstruction occurred at the negotiating table during the trilateral negotiations between June and September 1989. These negotiations could be interpreted both in the framework of the old and new regimes. On the one hand, it was a "social debate", characteristic element of the communist legislative process. On the other hand, it was a functional equivalent of a "constitutional assembly" an emblematic feature of all major revolutions. Participants of this constitutional revolution acted without popular legitimacy but they presupposed the existence of popular support.

Since nobody elected the participants of the roundtable talks, so they were eager and worked hard to get some positive feedback from the society. During the course of the roundtable talks, the establishment of the institutional order of the new regime preceded the popular legitimacy of the "founding fathers". And that made a difference, because usually the logic of revolutionary action is the following: 1. the destruction of the old regime; 2. the revolutionary/popular legitimacy of the "founding fathers"; and finally, 3. the creation of the new institutions of the new regime. In Hungary, however, after the first step came the third, and then the second one. The institutional order and its creators were legitimized in March 1990 only, at the first free elections.

Perhaps, that is exactly the reason why the roundtable talks mean a mixed tradition and became somehow ambivalent legacies in the past ten years, especially in Poland and Hungary. Those were not seen as a "clean" process. The negotiations of 1989 were tainted by the inclusion of the former communists: their leaders also had their say in the creation of the new democracy. Although they were sitting on the *other side* of the table, they were undeniably there. Some think it corrupted the genesis of the new democracy, because it meant negotiations, i.e. talks, communications, compromises, interactions, personal contacts between the outgoing and incoming elite. It was represented by the collaboration of democratic and non-democratic elite groups, instead of a clear-cut revolutionary change. Therefore, the legacy of 1989, the "negotiated revolution" became an increasingly uneasy tradition for those who would have preferred to repaint themselves as uncompromising revolutionaries. The popularly recognized moral break of June 16, 1989

was not followed by a widely perceived revolutionary-political break later on. A picture was somehow created that people of continuity are stronger than are people of the break.[56] Popular dissatisfaction with the regime change also fueled this perception of the negotiations: as a secret, non-democratic, conspiratorial, well-designed elite-game over or against, the masses. The revolutionary process, in the Arendtian sense, was completed but, ironically, not fully recognized.

Elite change and democratic transition: the price to pay

As it was demonstrated in Table 4, the tasks of transitions from communist rule were the following ones: 1. political regime change to democracy, 2. transition to capitalism in the economy, 3. defining the boundaries of political community (nation-state)[57], 4. to complete the elite change[58], 5. to initiate change in the moral-normative standards of society by doing some sort of "historical justice", and finally, 6. to change the focus of foreign policy to return to "Europe".[59]

While participants of the transition in 1989-90 were mainly concerned with tasks 1 and 2, and they also had to face, in some countries, with task 3, later on, it became clear that people of these societies felt these changes incomplete. It was the right wing political forces, which aimed accelerating the process of elite change and historical justice. This created a clash between left and right in which the left preferred to stick to the norms of rule of law, while the right wanted to suspend rule of law for a while, until historical justice is completed. The idea of democratic society then confronted with the idea of just society. While for the left fair procedures were seen as the soul of rule of law, for the right, democracy was understood as the realization of just society.

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56 This is certainly not a unique phenomenon in post-revolutionary situations. Cf. Alexis de Tocqueville's classic, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution.*

57 On this problematique, see Rogers Brubaker: *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; János Kis: Beyond the Nation State. *Social Research,* Vol. 63. No. 1. Spring, 1996. 190–245; Stefan Auer: Nationalism in Central Europe: A Threat or Chance for the Emerging Liberal Democratic Order? *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 14. No. 2. Spring, 2000. 213–45.

58 Cf. Iván Szelényi & Szonja Szelényi: Circulation or Reproduction of Elites During the Postcommunist Transformation of Eastern Europe. *Theory and Society*, Vol. 24. No. 5. October, 1995. 615–38.

59 Cf. Csaba Békés: Back to Europe: The International Background of the Political Transition in Hungary, 1988–90. In András Bozóki (ed.), op. cit., 2002. 237–72.

The uneasiness of the former opposition forces with this beginning was evident in a statement by the Hungarian prime minister, Viktor Orbán, in 1999, ten years after the regime change. Although he had been an active, and even enthusiastic participant of the 1989 negotiations, he subsequently expressed the opinion that the costs of the negotiations were considerably higher than their benefits. In a June, 1999 speech in Vienna, at a conference on the roundtable talks, he said:

"I ask myself, is there anything of lasting value we can hold onto from l989? Many people think that was our first year of liberty. Others, including myself, believe that 1989 was the last year of dictatorship. I think the less we hold onto from 1989, the better off we are."[60]

This is the typical case of the bottle, which can be half-full or half-empty. Of course, 1989 *was* the last year of the dictatorship, because it was also the year of the *collapse* of the dictatorship. Orbán's statement served political purposes: He felt the need to sharpen the discontinuity, to distinguish between the movers and shakers of 1989 and those of 1990. He dubbed the l989 negotiators the "people of political of continuity" because they were willing to sit and negotiate with the communists. On the top of that, he further claimed, the negotiators of l989 were only interested in partial changes and in slowing the pace of change. They favored changes in the institutional order, but not changes of personnel in the media; moreover, they did not support measures to ensure fair and equitable privatization or a just economic transformation. By contrast with the negotiators of 1989, the political actors of 1990 represented a radical break, according to Orbán; they were responsible for free elections and they were not willing to fudge differences as the l989 group was all too willing to do.

Among the costs, Orbán pointed out the fact that former communists dominated the public and commercial media, and the privatization processes, through which they could transfer public moneys into (their) private hands. This was an arresting thought: to picture the roundtable talks as the safety-net whereby communists could preserve themselves for the future. Polish President Lech Walesa also used similar arguments many times between 1990 and 1995 to undermine the credentials of the roundtable elites. This line of argument often targeted the intellectuals who played a vital role in the process of non-violent transition. No wonder that both Walesa and

60 See prime minister Viktor Orbán's speech in a conference entitled "Ten Years After" in Vienna, Austria, on 26 June 1999.

Orbán found themselves in the battleground to fight against the politically engaged intellectuals.[61]

If we study the transition process in the light of this criticism, we can readily see that the talks were structured to address, at least theoretically, both political and economic issues. And the political negotiations proved to be far more important than the talks about the economy. Why was this the case? Because, in Hungary, the Opposition Roundtable, which favored a negotiated settlement, insisted that they were there to legislate new bills. For the members of the Opposition Roundtable, the major goal was to legitimize popular sovereignty (pluralistic democracy), and they fiercely opposed any alliances between organizations, which would result in a power-monopoly. They were interested, first and foremost, in bringing about the fundamental institutional changes necessary for a new democracy. They did not enter into extensive discussions about privatization and issues of economic transformation. Why did not they? Were they completely uninterested in these matters? It was not the case. Rather, they simply did not feel entitled or empowered by the people to discuss issues of economic policy. At the very beginning of the talks, the Opposition Roundtable resisted re-writing the constitution. They argued that this is something that should be done in the future: by the freely elected parliament and the new government.

Economic change was to prove more challenging than political change. One can set up a new institutional-administrative order in a matter of months, but controlling the processes of privatization, and putting into practice the plans of economic transformation, is far more difficult. Especially, given that the negotiators of the opposition were not at all certain whether they should control privatization at all. In Hungary, non-communist participants of the transition finally acceeded to spontaneous transformation, although they had always spoken against it. They thought the best way to arrive at capitalism would be to start with socialist/market societies. But, if they were in favor of capitalism, they could not credibly oppose spontaneous privatization. They interpreted this spontaneous privatization as a form of original capital accumulation, the "hardware" of capitalism. They opposed heavy elite change in order not to lose experts.

Their logic went something like this: From a historical perspective, it does not matter much who will be the new propertied classes. The most im-

61 Cf. András Bozóki: Intellectuals in a New Democracy: The Democratic Charter in Hungary. *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 10. No. 2. Spring, 1996. 173–213.

portant thing was not whether ethical or reliable elements became the new owners, but to effect fundamental changes in economic and political relationships. They thought this way, perhaps because of their ideological foundations, or perhaps because they faced a *fait accompli:* the outgoing communist technocratic elite had already secured their role in the economic transformation, they had already enacted privatization legislation prior to the trilateral talks in June 1989. New laws dealing with the future of state-owned enterprises and with economic transformation had been already been passed in 1988 or early 1989. Therefore, these topics were not at issue at the roundtable talks. The economic committees found themselves in a vacuum at the negotiations. The members of these committees discussed possible approaches to privatization, new agrarian policies (etc.), but they did not come to any agreements. In the end, it was left to some ad hoc expert committees to come up with concrete recommendations.

While political and constitutional transformation came under close public scrutiny and so was subject to greater accountability, the games of economic transformation were beyond social control. The early legislation of the outgoing government and its installation of expert committees to determine the strategy of economic transformation fit the model of top-down elite reform much more closely than the case of the political negotiations.

The anger expressed by those who arrived too late, in the post-privatization phase, is certainly understandable, but it does not appear likely that a "second revolution" is in the wings to correct what, in the final analysis, is simply their misfortune. Those radicals, who would like to re-stage the revolution or re-enact the 1989 changes, cannot win elections. Revolutionary rhetoric is not currently a winning strategy. The regime change has been accomplished, and another democratic regime change is not on the agenda of the majority of society. Radical elements may wished to expand the idea of transition from the strictly political-institutional sense to a much broader social transformation encompassing cultural and economic, as well as political change, but post-1989 radicalism had its democratic limits.

In a "cost / benefit" analysis of the outcome of the roundtable-type revolutions,[62] we would have to say that the benefits were far more significant than the costs. The costs have been mainly psychological, observable in pub-

[62] Cf. Andrew Arato: The Roundtables, Democratic Institutions and the Problem of Justice. In András Bozóki (edl): *The Roundtable Talks of 1989: The Genesis of Hungarian Democracy*. Budapest – New York: Central European University Press, 2002. 223–35.

lic morale: People feel that something was done without their participation, that the economic transformation and the redistribution of wealth were effected without democratic controls. They feel the emerging Big Business interests have somehow robbed them. The managers, the technocratic elite – all those who were already co-opted by the Kádárist elite in the 1980s – are viewed as the ultimate winners of the transformation. Ordinary people tend to think that they were the victims of communism before the regime change, only to become the victims of globalization after the regime change.

In the narrower arena of political transformation, there was a clear case of *elite settlement*: a rapid re-negotiation of the political and legal-institutional situation by internal elites to get out of the crisis.[63] The transformation of the economic sphere, however, was effected through a more complex mix of elite settlement, elite co-optation and convergence. These were parallel processes. The new technocracy had no competitors among the elite. Being still close to the circles of power, the economic elite of the late Kádár era could not be excluded from the benefits of economic transformation.[64] Like it or not, they were part of the game. This was the price to be paid for a bloodless revolution and a peaceful transition to democracy.

The old regime had collapsed and the institutions, created in the negotiations of 1989, firmly survived. Groups of the elite, people, mentalities, practices, and the popular perceptions of change – all of these changed much more slowly. The "End" was clear, while the "Beginning" remained much more complex, multifaceted, controversial, partly done, and endlessly debated.

CONCLUSIONS

The fact that countries of Central Europe became new democracies, is not attributable to a single factor only. There are numerous internal and external causes that brought about the collapse of the old regime in this particular way, in this particular time.

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63 Michael G. Burton & John Higley: Elite Settlements. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 52. 1987. 295–307; John Higley & Michael G. Burton: The Elite Variable in Democratic Transitions and Breakdowns. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 54. 1989. 17–32; John Higley, Jan Pakulski & Wlodzimierz Wesolowski (eds.): *Postcommunist Elites and Democracy in Eastern Europe.* London: Macmillan, 1998.

64 On this see: Erzsébet Szalai: *Gazdaság és hatalom*. [Economy and Power] Budapest: Aula, 1990; John Higley & György Lengyel (eds.): *Elites After State Socialism: Theories and Analysis.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000.

As far as the *internal* causes are concerned, one must stress 1. the impact of previous revolutions and reform attempts, 2. the diminishing performance of the economy, 3. the exhaustion of the social reserves of the regime, 4. the disintegration of the ideology, and 5. the willingness to compromise on the part of the new and the old elite.

Among the most important *external* factors, one must number 1. the defeat in the Cold War, 2. the crippling consequences of the arms race, 3. the social and ethnic conflicts that made the Eastern Bloc bursting at the seams, 4. the coordinated, evolutionist strategies of the democratic opposition in a number of these countries, 5. the corresponding, human rights-based foreign policies of the Western countries initiated by US President Carter in the 1970s, and finally, 6. the rise to the top of the Soviet party hierarchy of First Secretary Gorbachev who introduced a style of politics open to compromise. Taken by them, any of these causes constitute an important and integral part in the process, but the fact that they occurred more or less simultaneously created highly favorable circumstances for the democratic turn.

Educated people compose the societies of Central Europe. Despite the economic and social grievances – the poor salaries in the public sector, the comparatively low level of living standard,[65] and the growing gap between rich and poor, between urban centers and the countryside, and between different regions of the country – the social structures of these countries do not resemble to those in Latin America or Southeast Asia. Knowledge, high culture, and human capital in general, enjoys high respect, while democratization and economic transformation were based on the patience of the deprived.[66]

The largely successful transitions to democracy in Central Europe resulted in a longer process of consolidation. Although consolidation has its own special problems, which might be independent even from the transition itself, the prospects of consolidation look promising too. In the transition period the popular wish to get rid of the old regime helped to overcome the social costs of economic transformation. In the period of democratic consolidation the very chance to join the European Union contributed largely to main-

65 It is important to note that Central Europeans always compare themselves to citizens of Western European societies, and never to the peoples of Asia, Africa, or Latin America. The meaning of their relatively low living standard should also be understood accordingly.

66 Cf. Béla Greskovits: *The Political Economy of Protest and Patience*. Budapest – New York: Central European University Press, 1997.

tain efforts in deepening and extending democracy. While Central European countries received no aid comparable to Marshall Plan in post-World War II western Europe, and therefore they had to make painful efforts themselves for catching up, external influences worked in favor of success in consolidating democracy.