

to nationalistic and racial ideas, submission and subordination to any authoritarian power, and ruthlessness in combatting adversaries are all a legacy of that epoch."¹⁹ The Communist apparatus inherited, adopted, refined, and intensified a deplorable tradition of conducting domestic politics not as an exercise in compromise and consensus building among fellow citizens, but as a mode of warfare against enemies.

7

The Various Endgames

I

Mikhail Gorbachev's intended initial economic reforms were consistently sabotaged and aborted by the Soviet bureaucracy. His response was to veer in 1987/88 toward accepting hitherto unthinkable systemic political changes as necessary to rescue Soviet society from the decay and miasma fostered by its hidebound bureaucratic apparatus. As part of his "new political thinking," Gorbachev also discounted the utility of military force to solve political problems. This double jolt to the East Central European regimes in effect imploded their residual calculations that they could forever stonewall their peoples' political hopes because, when push came to shove, Soviet armed intervention would always bail them out. Gorbachev was putting them on notice that henceforth they lived in a world of real political risk. While he was proclaiming and demonstrating Communism's need for political reform, however, Gorbachev also announced that the Soviet Union no longer wished to be viewed as an obligatory model by the other Communist states. The net effect was to prompt considerable confusion both in the area and in the West about future Soviet-East Central European relations. The trio of new commitments—to political change, against the use of the Soviet army as a safety net for other Communist regimes in trouble in their own countries, and against imposing compulsory emulation of Soviet processes elsewhere—formed one aspect of Gorbachev's strenuous effort to end the Cold War and erase the image of the Soviet Union in Western eyes as an expansionist, militarist, aggressive, imperialist "evil empire." For most East Central European

Communist regimes, it tolled doom. Gorbachev eventually formalized his triple jolt in a speech of July 7, 1989, to the Council of Europe at Strasbourg, explicitly rejecting the Brezhnev Doctrine of 1968 (see Chapter 5, section 5).

2

Retrospectively, the 1980s in Poland can be viewed as the learning curve of Wojciech Jaruzelski. A military man who was initially convinced that statism, centralization, regulation, efficiency, and incorruptibility were the answers to Poland's problems and to his regime's quest for legitimacy in the eyes of its public, he long refused to contemplate any reconciliation with the supposedly subversive, discredited, underground Solidarity movement. This meant that he also hesitated for a considerable period before adopting Gorbachev's judgment that the Communist world needed structural political reforms and openings. Jaruzelski rather aloofly presided over an incremental fissure within his regime. On the one hand, traditionalist "orthodox Leninist" hard-liners would have preferred to do without this "Bonapartist" (and thus, threatening) general and to revert to party-apparatchik rule, and, on the other hand, relative appeasers of civil society were prepared to experiment with some "marketizing pluralism" within the framework of continuing Communist hegemony. The leaders of these two camps within the Communist party were, respectively, Stefan Olszowski and Mieczysław Rakowski. There appears also to have been an ultra-repressive faction of unreconciled Stalinist types, cosseted within the security apparatus, which vented its spleen on civil society and deliberately embarrassed Jaruzelski by, for example, assassinating Father Popiełuszko as well as several other priests (see Chapter 6, section 1).

These factions within the regime, as well as Jaruzelski's own cluser, hoped and assumed that the Solidarity movement would wither away in its illegal, hunted status, doomed by its inability to extract any concessions for, or to deliver any rewards to, Polish society. Indeed, Solidarity was in a precarious condition at mid-decade, with its fervor and its level of active support slipping, its occasional appeals for nonviolent strikes going unheeded, and its older generation wearying of the battle. Meanwhile, many in the youngest generation of workers and students, who had come of age since the epochal crisis of 1980/81, sought new outlets for their frustration in semilegal em-

ployment abroad. Yet the regime misjudged these tribulations within Solidarity as working ultimately to its own advantage. The movement's underground network was able to survive police hunts; Lech Wałęsa's attraction to Polish society proved resilient; his advisers showed themselves wiser, more adept, and more realistic than Jaruzelski's. Thus the regime and the society remained locked in their stalemate until the intervention of the "Gorbachev factor" in 1987/88. At the height of his authority and acumen in those years, the Soviet leader decided to support Jaruzelski against his critics and would-be challengers within the Polish Communist regime, but to urge him toward serious political reforms. After weighing this advice during an extended period of caution and deliberation, Jaruzelski adopted it with a vengeance and pressed it into execution with the same stubborn resolve that had earlier marked his resistance to change. And Solidarity's Wałęsa met him halfway.

But it was a difficult dialogue to bring to fruition. As in 1980/81, both protagonists came under heavy sniper attacks from their own flanks (see Chapter 6, section 1). Jaruzelski had taken the initiative with a general amnesty on September 15, 1986. Though much appreciated, this gesture of reconciliation did not earn him a blank check, and the public narrowly rejected his plea for one to correct the desolate economy a year later, in a referendum held on November 29, 1987. While his proposals were defeated, the very fact that Jaruzelski had submitted them to a general referendum was a signal of his new flexibility. And he read the referendum's outcome correctly: the Polish people would not settle for economic reforms, even direly needed ones, without prior structural political changes.

Late April–May 1988 then saw a resumption of social unrest, led by the youngest generation of blue-collar workers demanding both higher pay (to keep up with post-referendum price increases) and the relegalization of the still underground but widespread Solidarity movement. Wałęsa put his popularity at risk to "contain" (but not oppose) this wave of strikes by the chafing young militants—and he did this again in a similar situation in August of the same year. Of course, these episodes put Solidarity under great stress, exposing its inner generational, ideological, and political discords.

Still smarting from his loss in the November 1987 referendum, Jaruzelski prudently refrained from interpreting his escape from this pair of strike waves in 1988 as a victory. It had been too thin and costly an evasion for any such triumphalism. Instead, he offered "round-table"

talks to Wałęsa, with a view to legalizing Solidarity and giving Poland a fresh start. Though extremists in both camps opposed them, and though they periodically threatened to founder, these talks opened on February 6, 1989, and were pressed to a successful outcome two months later, on April 5. While closely monitoring them, Jaruzelski and Wałęsa wisely stayed in the background of these negotiations, which were orchestrated with tactical skill by interior minister General Czesław Kiszczak for the regime and Professor Bronisław Geremek, a medieval historian, for Solidarity. At what turned out to be the midpoint in these talks, on March 7, the Polish Communist authorities finally conceded what Polish society had known for half a century—that the Katyń for-est massacre of 15,000 Polish officers early in World War II had been a Soviet NKVD atrocity, not a Nazi German one (see Chapter 2, section 2).

The two sides agreed to hold bicameral parliamentary elections two months hence, with 65 percent of the 460 seats in the lower house, the Sejm, being *a priori* reserved for the ruling coalition, dominated by the Communist party, while Solidarity could contest the remaining 35 percent. All seats for the freshly resurrected 100-member Senate (abolished by the Communists in 1946) would be contested. Following these popular parliamentary elections, the two houses would jointly elect a president endowed with extensive powers. There was an “understanding” that this individual would be Jaruzelski.

The open and honest elections of June 4 and 18, 1989, proved to be a fiasco for the Communists—a humiliating, definitive repudiation by the Polish people. In the first round, Solidarity candidates won 160 of the 161 Sejm seats not reserved for the governing coalition and 92 of the 100 Senate seats. In effect, the regime held only the 65 percent of Sejm seats that had been preallocated to it and about which the electorate was thus not genuinely consulted. Even here they needed Solidarity’s technical help on the second, runoff vote because the electorate had gleefully crossed the names of the Communists’ preferred candidates off the first ballot, leaving 33 of the 35 noncontested Sejm seats temporarily vacant. To be sure, Jaruzelski was designated president on July 19, but by only a one-vote margin, with the Communists’ hitherto pliant satellites (the Democratic and United Peasant parties, a small faction of tame Catholics) now feeling their oats by defecting, and with Solidarity, ironically, confirming its founder and jailer of the early and middle 1980s in the office. Jaruzelski announced that he wished to be “a President of consensus.”

Thanks to the earlier “self-organization” of Polish society outside of, parallel to, and in the teeth of an incompetent and repressive state-party regime, the marginalization of Polish Communism now proceeded with amazing speed. At its next (and last) congress in January 1990, the Communist party split in two, with both heir-halves appropriating the once despised (and false) appellation “Social Democratic.” As the party’s organizational control fell into ruins, its apparatus plundered the country’s economy by exploiting their residual administrative leverage to transfer vast state properties to themselves and their cronies as private entrepreneurs—“privatization” having become the ideology-of-the-day.¹ It was a truly shameless close to a shameful reign.

Meanwhile, the newly but narrowly elected President Jaruzelski had commissioned his fellow Communist military officer Kiszczak to form a government that could obtain parliamentary endorsement. This task proved unachievable. Despite the formal arithmetic majority it commanded as a result of its 65 percent bonus of Sejm seats, the erstwhile regime coalition was in disarray. The Communist party’s hard-liners were mulish, and its small satellite parties were desperate to demonstrate more independence, lest four years hence (when parliamentary elections would again fall due, but without the 65 percent bonus) they be wiped out by an electorate disgusted by any ongoing servility. So the prospective prime-ministerial ball passed into Solidarity’s court. The bulk of its parliamentary delegation would probably have preferred the formidable political tactician Geremek. But Wałęsa (perhaps jealous of that intellectual’s burgeoning popularity) imperiously insisted that the office go to the decent, honorable, but melancholic and hesitant Catholic intellectual-journalist Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who was duly confirmed on August 24, 1989, and then spent the next three weeks cobbling together a coalition cabinet drawn from members of Solidarity, the United Peasant party, and the Democratic party, with four portfolios including Defense and Interior initially left to veteran Communist officers. This last arrangement was, of course, intended as a reassuring gesture toward the Soviet Union. Having served this purpose, it was ended on July 6, 1990, when Mazowiecki replaced three of the four ministers.

In rather rapid sequence, this initiation of a radical, peaceful, political, and legal revolution toward democracy and human rights was followed and then accompanied by a remarkable convalescence of Poland’s hitherto near-chaotic economy. By the summer of 1990, the

galloping rate of inflation had slowed to a walk; exports had revived; the risibly worthless currency (*złoty*) had recovered in value; once-empty stores were stockful of goods as production resumed and decapitalization was reversed; and the westward brain-drain of the country's "best and brightest" abated. Credit for this spectacular improvement was generally conceded to the "shock therapy" of an abrupt shift away from socially planned and toward open markets that was imposed on the economy by Mazowiecki's American-trained and American-advised finance minister, Leszek Balcerowicz.

The immediate cost of this attempted "cold turkey" ending of the former system was borne by the workers, who were obliged to adjust to an ambience of "First World prices and Third World wages." But they did so, since the political structure extracting these sacrifices from them was at last a legitimate one in their eyes. Yet the differential impact of the reforms hurt, and the hurt prompted much anxiety within the intelligentsia lest the workers' patience snap and they lash out in a populist rage. This brings us to the breakup of Solidarity.

The "round-table" agreements of 1989 had been predicated on the pragmatic assumption that both the Communist regime and its Solidarity opposition were in the political arena to stay. The originality of the agreements lay precisely in the fact that both parties shared this assumption. But the Communist partner more or less disintegrated during 1989/90, under the multiple blows of the elections, the defections of its satellite parties, its loss of governmental hegemony, and its ensuing crisis of morale, culminating in its fragmentation. Without a serious Communist antagonist, Solidarity now lost its solidarity. Wałęsa himself turned out to be the catalyst of this process.

Wałęsa had declined to be a candidate in the parliamentary elections of June 1989 or to become a minister in the Mazowiecki cabinet that was formed during August–September. His decision did not stem from false modesty but from an understandable judgment that his authority in Polish society would only be diluted and degraded by his acceptance of peer status with 460 Sejm deputies or 100 senators or a score of ministers. He could, of course, have designated himself to be prime minister, but he had no taste for management. So he returned as a private but immensely prestigious citizen to his hometown of Gdańsk on the Baltic coast, expecting to be respectfully consulted as the authoritative father and arbiter of the nascent Polish democracy. In this hope he was soon disappointed.

During the spring and summer of 1990, public attention and political power gravitated toward the apparently successful Mazowiecki government in Warsaw, while Gdańsk appeared to be relegated to the status of a provincial backwater. Fretful, frustrated, and suspicious, in early 1990 Wałęsa seized upon the disintegration of the Communist party to demand an acceleration (*przyspieszenie*) of democratization, beginning with the early retirement of President Jaruzelski, who no longer led a weighty political force and was therefore no longer the deserving beneficiary of the understanding about the presidency reached at the "round-table." Initially coyly but then explicitly, Wałęsa signaled his own readiness for the office—whereupon Solidarity founded on the rocks of some very old but resilient Polish divisions and snobberies.

The Mazowiecki government and its supporting retinues embodied a generous contingent (one might even suggest an oversupply) of intellectuals and free professionals—social categories that in East Central and Eastern Europe are termed the intelligentsia. The modern Polish intelligentsia is the social, cultural, and (often) genealogical heir of the historic gentry (*szlachta*), preserving its values, styles, and manners—both positive and negative. In this tradition, the intelligentsia tends to take for granted its supposedly unique qualification for public affairs. Accordingly, it quickly emerged that much of the intelligentsia around Mazowiecki viewed Wałęsa as a coarse peasant (albeit a blue-collar proletarian one) who would be an embarrassment as Poland's president, especially at a time when neighboring Czechoslovakia and Lithuania had designated to their highest offices the sophisticated literateur Václav Havel and the cosmopolitan musicologist Vytautas Landsbergis (both scions of "old" elite families). These two men seemed models of judicious wisdom compared to the combative, mercurial Wałęsa, whom the bulk of Poland's intelligentsia now dismissed as culturally and temperamentally not up to the job.

But Wałęsa fought back and, as he had a decade earlier, proved a master at wooing, charming, and swaying crowds. He was already the blue-collar workers' tribune, but his folksy and ungrammatical speech patterns also appealed to the peasants. A minority of intellectuals applied their talents to his support, as well. Only a small role in the rift between the Wałęsa and Mazowiecki camps was played by ideological or policy differences; it was primarily a matter of social animosities and personal alienations. Meanwhile, in a gesture that was both dignified and realistic, Jaruzelski announced that he would resign the presidency

early. He chose not to await the outcome of a Wałęsa-launched campaign to collect signatures for his recall, thus clearing the ring for a showdown between the two rival camps of the once-solid Solidarity phalanx. Popular (not parliamentary, as a year before) presidential elections were scheduled for November 25, 1990; a runoff, if needed, for December 9.

A runoff was indeed needed, as the residual Communist hardliners now opted, as their last hurrah, to support the mysterious candidacy of one Stanisław Tymiński, a political unknown who had spent his adult life in Canada and Peru as a successful businessman. He now returned to Poland to run for president with a seemingly bottomless campaign chest, appealing siren-like to the toiling poor as a tycoon with a special insight into Western secrets for acquiring wealth swiftly and easily, and with a supposedly benign readiness to apply this magic to Poland's benefit. Nor did the Roman Catholic Church refrain from fishing in these troubled political waters, as it pressed the embattled Mazowiecki, in his prime-ministerial capacity, to make vast concessions to its social agenda in such matters as including religious instruction in public schools and banning abortion. Though harboring reservations about the Church's demands in these matters, neither the Wałęsa nor the Mazowiecki camp dared resist them, for fear of alienating prospective voters.

Some 40 percent of the potential electorate abstained from the first round of the presidential elections. Of those who did participate, a respectable but disappointing 40 percent supported Wałęsa's candidacy; a mere 18 percent (probably the intelligentsia and incipient middle class) endorsed Mazowiecki's. Stunningly, the interloper Tymiński drew 23 percent, necessitating a humiliating runoff between Wałęsa and him two weeks later. This time, the Polish electorate seemed to reverse its judgment by casting 74.25 percent of its votes for Wałęsa, who with all his faults was still a serious figure, and 25.75 percent for Tymiński. But the first-round returns stood as a stark warning of the fragility of the nascent Polish democracy.

These elections and their outcome in effect closed the Communist era in the history of postwar Poland. In retrospect, it is valid, if slightly facile, to note that the Communist regime's origins—its imposition on the nation by an alien power over the corpses of the Katyn officers, over the rubble of the Warsaw insurrection, over the hunted remnants of the Home Army—had always barred its quest for legitimacy and doomed it to failure and rejection. The ceremonial coda

that now ensued was symbolically fitting: the surviving "London" Poles terminated their exile activities and restored the interwar republic's regalia-of-state to Warsaw—where Wałęsa chose to receive his presidential office from them rather than from Jaruzelski on December 22, 1990.

3

If the 1980s in Poland demonstrated Wojciech Jaruzelski's learning curve, then the decade in Czechoslovakia confirmed Gustáv Husák's and Miloš Jakeš's unteachability. That their regime was extraordinarily smug, impenetrable, crude, and cruel—even by conventional Communist systemic standards—and that society's resistance to it was rather weak and precarious are usually overlooked in American assessments. Americans are inclined to be sentimental about Czechoslovakia, often recalling that country's democratic heritage and appreciating that, in the interwar decades, it alone in East Central Europe retained a law-abiding, parliamentary system while its regional neighbors succumbed to military, royal, or authoritarian dictatorships. Americans tend to be less aware that interwar Czechoslovakia, while procedurally a parliamentary democracy, was substantively a rather stagnant gerontocracy, with no momentum between "government" and "opposition" and little serious effort to involve younger generations in political responsibilities. Postwar Communist Czechoslovakia, in turn, "competed" with Ceaușescu's Romania for the dubious distinction of being the nastiest regime in the Soviet bloc.

When Husák vacated the Communist party leadership to the younger Jakeš (while retaining the state presidency) at the end of 1987 (see Chapter 6, section 3), the regime had degenerated into an oligarchy, incapable of reassessing, let alone repudiating, its reinstallation by the Soviet invasion two decades earlier. In the eyes of the Husák-Jakeš entourage and their whole governing class, justifying August 1968 and retaining the possibility of its repetition were basic to survival. In practice, survival had also come to require coddling the blue-collar working class, especially in heavy industry, into remaining aloof from the rather modest and isolated intelligentsia-generated criticisms of Charter 77 and VONS. That this purchase of proletarian acceptance (no longer really enthusiastic support) with absolute job security and subsidized consumption entailed slippage into economic and technological

stagnation was a price that the regime regretted, but was willing to pay. It fitfully toyed with administrative improvements but rigorously repressed notions of systemic political reform. Meanwhile, the early 1980s were characterized by economic contraction as blue-collar absenteeism and loafing swelled to flood proportions, yet personal consumption remained higher than elsewhere in the Soviet bloc. Many investment projects were left unfinished, tying up enormous capital resources while producing nothing.

Enter the boat-rocker Gorbachev, whose impact on Czechoslovakia was more abstruse than on Poland. On the one hand, a reformist leader in Moscow was a potential threat to the Husák-Jakeš team in Prague. On the other hand, Gorbachev was going out of his way to repudiate the traditional role of the Soviet Union as an obligatory model for other Communist states (see section 1). Indeed, had Gorbachev been less "modest" and more traditionally assertive on this point as the Soviet bloc leader, the reflexively reactionary Jakeš would probably not have become Husák's designated successor. Gorbachev was, in a sense, blocked by his own anti-imperial reformist stance from vetoing that succession, but he was nevertheless a source of attraction to Czechoslovak society and hence of acute discomfort to Husák-Jakeš. Under the circumstances, the Czechoslovak leaders thought it best to bide their time, pleading Czechoslovakia's national particularities as their rationale for shunning *glasnost* and *perestroika*, while awaiting Gorbachev's ouster by their fellow Brezhnevites (or Stalinists) in the Soviet Union. This hoped-for event would, they trusted, end the magnetism of reform on their society and its threat to themselves. But in the late 1980s the prospects for a return to the old days seemed dubious. Gorbachev was riding high, retiring the surviving Soviet seniors who had a personal stake in freezing the outcome of August 1968, and sidelining more conservative colleagues whom the Czechoslovak hard-liners deemed sympathetic.

Rumor had it that the Czechoslovak prime minister of those years (1970-1988), Lubomír Štrougal, led a shadowy contingent of would-be reformers, chafing under the ultra-conservatism of Husák-Jakeš. The evidence for this countertendency (and Štrougal's role in it) is thin. Štrougal does appear to have been a relative pragmatist who proposed administrative and even some economic innovations on the hidebound, ideologically hallowed structures and procedures of the Husák-Jakeš system; but he was a member of the post-August 1968 team, in no way pressing for systemic political reforms. He was also a diffident, risk-

averse man, reluctant to commit himself to a controversial course of action and not up to challenging the ruling team's inner consensus. While he may have stood on the pragmatic side of that consensus's fairly short wingspan, Štrougal was part of the consensus. On balance, the rather unified Czechoslovak regime simply adopted a bunker stance toward both Gorbachev and its own people, gingerly experimenting with a modest administrative-economic reform in agriculture but categorically rejecting a systemic political one.

Since Gorbachev himself was self-restrained, the hypothetical initiative for moving Czechoslovakia off its dead center of inaction passed to its own civil society, which was politically weaker and more "penetrated" by the regime than was Poland's. Though courageous and even heroic, Charter 77 and VONS were small and elitist. Their natural constituency consisted of the students (more so than the professors, who, as usual and as elsewhere, were largely time-servers) and the heavily alienated youth in general—groups that became the conventional and "designated" targets for police repression and beatings. In theory, the dissidents' problem was clear: how to achieve "Polish-style" trust and mutual support among students, intelligentsia, workers, and the underground youth culture. In practice, the solution proved immensely difficult and was not achieved until November 1989—and even then to general surprise. But even in Poland achievement solidarity among these (and other) social groups had been a slow and difficult process occupying much of the previous decade (see Chapter 6, section 1).

Given this painfully leaden development of a secular political opposition phalanx, the first massive oppositional postures came to be inspired by religion, which was also something of a surprise, because the nominally Roman Catholic Czechs have a long tradition of laicism and even anti-clericalism. (This is not true of the Slovaks, who tend to be more practicing and pious Roman Catholics.) The election of the first Slavic pope, John Paul II, in 1978 seems to have inspired both Czechs and Slovaks, apparently prompting the hitherto compliant Primate František Cardinal Tomášek, archbishop of Prague, into a newfound toughness as articulator of the church's reservations toward the regime. The fact that Tomášek was in his eighties imparted additional patriarchal authority to his new stance. The first palpable mass expression of this religiously inspired opposition came at ceremonies marking the eleven hundredth anniversary of the death of the "apostle to the Slavs," St. Methodius, held at his burial site in Moravia in July 1985.

The momentum initiated on that occasion was sustained in subsequent years by growing popular pressure and by increasing international attention to the regime's sorry record on human and civil rights. It culminated on July 26, 1989, in Husák-Jakeš's long-delayed assent to the filling of several long-vacant diocesan sees. Not only did this struggle steel the society's resolve; it also proliferated into secular political forms that, while usually covert, expressed a wide ideological spectrum — from free marketeers to social democrats.

Charter 77 and VONS were thus no longer alone. Indeed, though still highly respected, they had, in a sense, been rendered somewhat old-fashioned by their nostalgic identification with the Prague Spring of 1968 and hence with its ideology of "Socialism [Communism] with a human face." Many younger Czechs and Slovaks had already leaped over that reformist commitment to a categorical rejection of any form of Socialism or Communism whatsoever. But these prospective rifts within the opposition were not to emerge until that regime's overthrow in the so-called Velvet Revolution at the end of 1989, when the effective dissidence in neighboring countries at last proved contagious to Czechoslovakia.

Turbulence had been increasing on the streets and squares of Prague during 1989, but it usually involved fewer than 5,000 people and had always been quelled by police brutality that, though unfavorably received internationally, was notably efficient. But the sight of thousands of East Germans fleeing to the West via the German embassy in Prague during the late summer and early autumn, followed by the fall of the Honecker regime in East Germany, emboldened the Czechoslovak opposition. It was also actively encouraged and schooled by Polish and Hungarian dissidents. The street demonstrations now spread from Czech Prague to Slovak Bratislava and to other cities. Even more portentously, the students took to visiting factories, explaining to the blue-collar workers why their endorsement of the sclerotic Husák-Jakeš regime was wrong and would, in the long run, prove self-defeating. The dissident Václav Havel, who had much bitter experience of that regime in its prison cells and who enjoyed a sterling national and international reputation for courage and sound judgment, founded Civic Forum with other intellectuals in an effort to channel and manage the burgeoning groundswell. In Slovakia, the analogue to the Civic Forum was the Public Against Violence.

Though Husák-Jakeš were still behaving true to form — repeatedly rejecting dialogue with "anti-Socialist forces" and unleashing savage

police brutality against Prague street demonstrators as late as mid-November 1989 — their dike was palpably crumbling. On November 25, a public opposition rally in Prague drew 750,000 participants. Two days later, a nationwide two-hour general strike called by Civic Forum triumphantly attracted much blue-collar participation, at last registering a successful correlate to the intelligentsia-proletarian reconciliations in the neighboring states. The extended period of "salamis in exchange for submission" had finally run its course in Czechoslovakia. Tenacious old tensions between Czechs and Slovaks also abated at this time, though they would resurface in the early 1990s. Jakeš was replaced as Communist party leader on November 24, and Husák resigned the country's presidency on December 10. Havel was swept into that prestigious and respected office de facto by popular acclamation and de jure by a unanimous vote of the Federal Assembly on December 29, 1989, with the ringing endorsement of the belatedly vindicated Alexander Dubček (see Chapter 5, section 5) — just in time to deliver a dignified and thoughtful New Year's day address to the country.²

4

The endgame of Communism in Hungary during the second half of the 1980s was more convoluted and descriptively more confusing than those in Poland and Czechoslovakia. This was primarily because both the regime and the opposition to it were more visibly and candidly fragmented in Hungary than in the two states to the north — and the fragments were less synchronized with each other. The Hungarian splits and divisions were exacerbated by the gloomy finding that Kádár's NEM, which during the 1960s and 1970s had seemed such a promising mode of reconciling centralized planning in the state sector with free-market activity in the "second economy" (see Chapter 6, section 2), was faltering after all. At least three flaws eventually crippled the once auspicious NEM venture:

1. Hungary's state-owned, heavy-industrial economic sector continued to be ideologically favored for resource allocations, and it remained locked into CMEA and the Soviet economy. But the resultant barter exchanges with these undemanding trade partners fostered a steady degradation in the quality of Hungarian products and workmanship,

eroding the nation's ability to compete in other (especially Western) export markets.

2. The blue-collar industrial workers became steadily more aggrieved and apprehensive at their relative inability (*vis-à-vis* managers, peasants, bureaucrats, and entrepreneurs) to take advantage of the opportunities posed by the "second economy." Feeling victimized by reformism, bearing many of its resultant social pathologies, and frightened by its polarizing implications (especially the specter of unemployment), many industrial workers reacted by demanding a return to Leninism—an ideology that defined them as the vanguard class of Socialism and prescribed for them the cream of society's benefits, beginning with job security and social welfare. Thus the introduction of a dose of private entrepreneurship into a basically planned economy proved politically disruptive.
3. The performance of the "second economy" ceased to be exhilarating. Though it produced about one-third of the national income, the "second economy" was wrenched by enormous and unhealthy self-exploitation, as its denizens increasingly yoked themselves to hideously long workdays at several jobs in the pursuit of high-consumption life-styles.

For Hungarians, the prospect of losing access to Western markets appears to have been subjectively even more appalling and depressing than it was for Poles. Poles regretfully but realistically discerned that, for the time being, they were trapped in a geographical vise between the Soviet Union and East Germany and that this vise precluded escape into the West. But Hungarians, as direct neighbors of affluent free Austria, were more mesmerized by dreams of such escape—dreams that ceased to be fantasies and became plausible for both peoples in 1989, but not until then.

Among the social expressions of Hungary's economic travails in the 1980s were deteriorating nutrition and health; crumbling housing; increasing alcoholism, drug indulgence, and suicide; and burgeoning divorce and falling birth rates. Compounded by abundant crime and corruption and by pollution, these trends generated a social atmosphere of anxiety, demoralization, and miasma. Against this background, the political developments of the decade may now be assessed.

Allusion was made earlier to the sudden and rather callous discharge of János Kádár as the Communist party's first secretary, on May 22, 1988, and his replacement by Károly Grósz (see Chapter 6, section 2).

Kádár was indeed past his prime by then, but nevertheless, given his impressive achievements at "rehabilitating" his country and his party after the revolution of 1956, he might reasonably have expected to receive more considerate treatment at the hands of his entourage. His dismissal in 1988 amounted to an intraparty coup staged, if not at Moscow's initiative, then at any rate with its assent. Whereas Kádár had over the decades developed good working relations with Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Brezhnev's two short-lived immediate successors, Andropov and Chernenko—all of whom felt a strong stake in the success of Kádár's commitment to stabilize Hungary and hold it within the Soviet bloc—he was simply incompatible with the far younger, more radical, and effectively non-Leninist Gorbachev. And Gorbachev's slighting and snubbing signals of contempt for Kádár were bound to be noticed and exploited by the latter's ambitious, young epigones—functionaries who were united by little more than their craving to commit political suicide. Where did they come from?

The personally most ambitious and politically most pro-pluralist, pro-Western, and *pro-glasnost* among them was Imre Pozsgay, a former minister of culture whom Kádár had demoted to the supposedly emasculated chore of heading the country's "front" mass organization, the People's Patriotic Front. But Pozsgay had exploited that seemingly barren responsibility to nurture a network of reformers prepared to push far beyond Kádár's outer limits of gentle but still centralistic Leninism. Allied with him was Rezső Nyers, whom Kádár had also supposedly neutered in response to a demand by the increasingly conservative Brezhnev for a dilution of the NEM in the mid-1970s (see Chapter 6, section 2). On that occasion, Kádár had designated Nyers, the conceptual father of the NEM, for sacrifice in an effort to assuage Moscow's displeasure. But this scapegoat survived his exile in the political wilderness and returned in 1988 to help the other epigones wreak collective vengeance on Kádár and his immediate entourage. We then come to Károly Grósz, reputed to understand economic problems and to have strong political skills. Unlike the preceding pair, Kádár had never "rusticated" him; to the contrary, Kádár had elevated him from the provinces to direct the capital's party organization. Ideologically the most orthodox and least reformist of this trio, Grósz nevertheless appreciated that the Hungarian economy required an overhaul. A workaholic, Grósz appears to have hoped that recovery could be achieved through pragmatic lubrications of the economy, plus austerity and moral-ideological restimulation of the work ethic. He did not intend to introduce struc-

tural political reforms. Prime minister since June 1987, Grósz was the effective pointman of the mutiny against Kádár in an atmosphere of plunging party morale signaled by a stream of resignations from membership.

After replacing Kádár as Communist party leader on May 22, 1988, Grósz proved oddly indecisive. His unexpected vagueness in power probably stemmed from the delusion (which Gorbachev and Jaruzelski had eventually overcome) that a Communist system's economy could be reformed without touching its polity. Grósz's expressed commitment to "Socialist pluralism," with relative autonomy for "interest organizations" such as trade unions, agricultural associations, and youth leagues, was simply incompatible with his parallel commitment to a "lasting one-party system."³ Like the predecessor whom he had toppled, Grósz sought escape from a political dead end through economic innovations. But by this time, the East Central European societies were too mature to be beguiled any longer by such devices.

The maturity of Hungarian society was demonstrated symbolically by the nation's autonomous decision to rebury Imre Nagy and four other heroes of the 1956 revolution in a grave of honor in Budapest, on the thirty-first anniversary of his execution, July 16, 1989. Though the Grósz regime as a whole viewed this cathartic ceremony as "fascist," it lacked the moral authority and self-confidence to prohibit what was, in effect, a vindication of 1956 and a rehabilitation of national dignity. Pozsgay, indeed, participated—another example of the fragmentation within the Communist establishment. Substantively, society demonstrated its maturity by self-organizing a series of independent political bodies and parties that refused to be satisfied with the Kádár-to-Grósz transition as a solution to Hungary's political travail, insisting instead on real, structural redistribution of power and the establishment of the rule of law through an independent legal system. Dissent had ripened into opposition. Though this opposition to the regime also soon fragmented organizationally, its sheer existence and stamina during the years 1988/89 proved of transcendent political importance, aborting the attempted stabilization of the Kádár-to-Grósz succession.

Thus political prudence, not yet legal restraint, inspired Grósz to refrain from repressing the numerous emergent oppositional sociopolitical groups during his term, which ranged from the Stalinist Ferenc Münnich Society to the resurrected Christian Democratic People's party. In addition to countering these "known" oppositions, Grósz had

also to be on guard against political backstabbing within his own beleaguered camp. Kádár was unforgiving; Pozsgay's selective and dubious party loyalty has already been noted, and skeptical conservatives within the Politburo were marshaled by the chief official ideologist János Berecz. Meanwhile, the Soviets sent no signals of support. Indeed, throughout the winter and spring of 1989 they repeatedly indicated their judgment that Hungary's internal politics did not impinge on Soviet security interests; that it was up to the Hungarians to decide what political arrangements, institutions, and personalities they deemed most suitable for themselves; and that they had no intention of intervening even on behalf of Communism itself, let alone any particular Hungarian leader.

Though a process that somewhat resembled the Polish "round-table" negotiations was patched together (June 13–September 18, 1989), it failed to achieve a Polish-type authentic agreement on the modalities for transferring power and turning over a new page. The regime was too fragmented, the opposition was too incoherent, and both lacked political persons with the authority and skill of, say, Jaruzelski, Wałęsa, Kiszczak, and Geremek for such a historic understanding. Grósz's dike simply crumbled against the accumulated weight of the rising domestic and external floodwaters. The reburial of Nagy occurred on June 16; Kádár died on July 6, at age 77; strikes were legalized later that month; in mid-August, the Communist party accepted in principle a transition to a market economy, and on September 10 Hungary's foreign minister "temporarily" reneged on formal treaty obligations by permitting between 15,000 and 20,000 East Germans to transit through Hungary in fleeing westward. Finally, during a party congress of October 7–10, the Communist party renamed itself the Socialist party and retired Grósz in favor of Nyers as its leader. (Grósz proceeded to resign even his membership in order to help found a new and explicitly Leninist party, which suggests that he took ideology seriously.) On October 23—the thirty-third anniversary of the start of the 1956 revolution—the Hungarian People's Republic was officially renamed the Republic of Hungary, symbolizing the repudiation of Marxism–Leninism–Stalinism.

But the book was not closed on Communism in Hungary. The summer's "round-table" had not yielded an authentic consensus, either substantive or procedural. Three important issues remained unresolved: the Socialist (Communist) party's presence in the workplace; the survival of the Workers' Guard, the party's armed militia

detachments; and the staging and method of parliamentary and presidential elections. FIDESZ (Federation of Young Democrats), the Alliance of Free Democrats, and the Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions, which had declined to sign the "round-table"'s nominal understanding on these matters, now proceeded to expound their reservations to the public, arguing that too many gratuitous concessions had been made to the Communists. They won their first two contentious points in parliamentary votes (to exclude party cells from the workplace and to disband the Workers' Guard), and they forced the third to a popular referendum on November 26, which they won by a narrow margin: Hungary's new president would be elected by its new parliament, rather than by the general electorate directly. This outcome finished the promising career of Pozsgay, the most reformist of the erstwhile Communists, whose stances had earned him genuine popularity and who might well have won a general presidential election. In any case, the Communists were finally voted out of power—and accepted this vote—in free elections of March 25 and April 8, 1990. Ironically, the decisive victor in these elections was the Democratic Forum, which, though definitely in the opposition to the Communists, had been more indulgent toward them in their terminal spasms than had FIDESZ and the Free Democrats. For example, the Democratic Forum had endorsed the "round-table" agreements and had opposed the referendum that reversed them on the presidency issue. Representing populist, provincial Hungary in contradistinction to the cosmopolitan capital Budapest, the Forum was nationalistic and latently anti-Semitic. But this deplorable aura was offset by the fact that its chairman, and Hungary's first post-Communist prime minister, József Antall, was born into a family with an impeccable record on this point: his father had been commended as a "Righteous Gentile" by the Israeli Holocaust Memorial Authority (Yad VaShem) for having saved Jews from the Nazis in World War II at great personal risk.

On May 17, 1990, having won 43 percent of parliament's seats in these elections, in contrast to the Socialists' (quondam Communists') 8 percent and the Free Democrats' 24 percent, the Democratic Forum teamed up with the like-minded Independent Smallholders (11 percent) and Christian Democrats (5 percent) to form, for the first time since the end of World War II, a Hungarian coalition government without Communists. Though politically eminently legitimate, this government proved much more cautious than Poland's analogous one at

dismantling the relics of the state-planned economy. It had, of course, the cushion of the residual NEM to justify its caution.

5

From Hungary we move south into the Balkans. Because the Yugoslav situation remains in such turbulent flux, we shall postpone its analysis and proceed first with Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania. Here one generalization emerges immediately: not only do civil societies and political oppositions learn from each others' experiences (as among those of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary), but ruling elites can, too. Specifically, the Communist parties and regimes of Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania, astutely assessing developments in the countries to their north, learned that they could retain power by exploiting the very mechanism of competitive elections in situations of weak civil societies and feeble oppositions. One need not be an admirer of these three Communist elites to appreciate, from an amoral political-technical perspective, the cleverness and skill with which they maneuvered to maintain power during the crisis years of 1989–1991. Shrewdly milking the West's craving for stabilization, they preserved themselves *de facto* in new trappings. The way they played their respective endgames thus made casualties (not for the first time) of the political-science profession's "domino theory" and "contagion theory."

We left Romania at a fork in the road in the early 1980s. On the one hand, the sequential Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceaușescu regimes had successfully mobilized Romanian nationalism to achieve the country's desatellization from the Soviet Union by skillfully exploiting Khrushchevian errors and vulnerabilities, the Sino-Soviet rift, and Western interest in weakening the Soviet bloc. On the other hand, Ceaușescu was jeopardizing these achievements as well as his legitimacy in the nation's eyes by overreaching himself with personal Stalinist hubris, economic irrationality, and the mixture of nepotism, corruption, arbitrariness, and intimidation with which he ruled (see Chapter 5, section 4). During the decade of the 1980s, these pathologies worsened. Yet Ceaușescu was spared a reckoning until the decade's close, thanks to his tactical success in muzzling and then atomizing society; exploiting the weakness and docility of the churches; aggravating the alienations between and among workers and peasants, workers and intelligentsia, Romanians and ethnic minorities (chiefly the Magyars