THE RISE AND FALL OF REVISIONISM

Stalin's death in March 1953 brought a succession crisis and a transient regime of collective leadership. Rigid dogmatism sustained by terror was no longer tenable, and the Soviet leaders launched a "new course" in economics, and eliminated Lavrentii Beria, the dreaded head of the secret police. The repercussions were quickly felt in East Central Europe because of the ties between the security apparatus there and in Moscow. In 1954 a Polish police colonel, J. Światío, escaped to the West and his revelations publicized the inner workings of the system of terror. Dismissals and arrests of high-ranking "accomplices of Beria" followed. Gomulka was quietly released; Imre Nagy became premier and for three years tried to de-Stalinize Hungary. His name became associated with a flexible policy in agriculture, revision of legal abuses, and respect of national rights. Eventually he was pushed out by Rákosi, who regained an upper hand. In Czechoslovakia, following Gottwald's death in 1953 Antonín Novotný became first secretary and A. Zápotocký president. Both were mediocrities who did their best to prevent change and to go slow on de-Stalinization.

In the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev made a denunciation of Stalinism in the secret speech of February 1956 at the Twentieth Party Congress, which was leaked out to the outside world. In an atmosphere which the Soviet writer I. Ehrenburg compared to a "thaw," intellectuals and artists long stifled by Stalinist dogma engaged in massive criticism. In Poland Adam Ważyk's "Poem for Adults" blasted socialist realism; the international youth festival in Warsaw heralded the end of complete isolation from the West. In Hungary the writers found themselves in the forefront of an anti-Stalinist campaign.

In June 1956 the workers in Poznaň demonstrated and the riot turned into an uprising which had to be suppressed by tanks. The event was a shock for Poland and communists everywhere. After initial confusion, the Polish leadership, deprived of Bierut who had just died, refused to stigmatize the rising as counter-revolutionary, and blamed past Party practices which had made it possible. The Kremlin decided then to intervene in the power contest within the Polish politburo and prevent Gomulka's elevation to the position of first secretary. A high-ranking Soviet delegation led by Khrushchev himself suddenly descended on Warsaw; Soviet army units stationed in Poland began to move on the capital. In a dramatic confrontation Gomulka called the Soviet bluff and won. Amidst great popular enthusiasm - for the first time since the war a popular movement converged with developments within the Party - Gomulka was hailed as the new leader of Poland. He proceeded to denounce the past period of "errors and distortions" and stated that the communists had no monopoly of building a socialist Poland. He allowed the collectivized farms to disband and stopped the Stalinist terror. Poland's blatant subordination to Moscow came to an end; contacts with the West began. Realizing the importance of the church and desirous of its support Gomulka ordered the release of Cardinal Wyszyński. These were indeed revolutionary changes and the term "Polish October" became current in contrast to the Russian October of 1917. Many Poles hoped that they were witnessing the first step in an evolutionary process of regaining independence.

The events in Poland acted as a catalyst on developments in Budapest. The Soviets made the hated Rákosi step down, but his successor Gerö was no improvement. The differences between him and the recalled premier Nagy amounted to dualism, which was fatal for Hungary. Gerö was already blamed for a major clash in the capital between the demonstrators, who manifested solidarity with Poland, and the secret police and Soviet troops. 'Many people had been killed and wounded. Gerö had to resign in favor of Kádár, an inmate of a Stalinist prison. The government-Party dualism receded into the background, as all Party and state institutions, including security units (AVO), the army, and the police disintegrated. The Soviet troops were defeated. Nagy may not have initiated it, but he came to preside over a process that involved a restructuring of administration, raising a new army, permitting a multi-party system, releasing Cardinal Mindszenty, and finally declaring Hungary neutral under the United Nations' protection and leaving the Warsaw Pact. Did this last move trigger the second Soviet intervention and the armed suppression, with the use of eleven divisions, of Hungary's freedom? This is a common, but not necessarily the only explanation of Moscow's move.

It seems likely that the Soviet decision, and it was not an easy one, was taken earlier. It was affected by such favorable circumstances as an explicit denial of any American aid to Hungary, and the Anglo-French action in Suez which threw the United Nations and the NATO allies into disarray. Noticing Soviet preparations for an invasion Nagy felt betrayed, for he genuinely worked for a political solution acceptable to Moscow. His repudiation of the Warsaw Pact and his dramatic message on the radio that the Hungarians were resisting the Soviet troops came after

the die had been cast. Nagy never used the term war, for he was frightened of the very idea of an armed struggle between two socialist states. Yet according to official figures, which may well have been lowered, the hostilities claimed the lives of 3,000 Hungarians and left some 13,000 wounded.

Kádár had switched to the Soviet side, and in the years that followed became Khrushchev's protégé. Nagy was singled out as the principál object of vengeance, and was executed with his closest associates. He did not cease to believe that history would vindicate him and condemn his murderers. This was also the view of many to whom Kádár was the arch-villain.

The "Polish October" succeeded while the Hungarian revolution failed for a number of reasons. Gomulka, coming on the wave of a reformist crest, had no rival who could, like Gerö or Kádár, effectively undermine his position. The Polish Party never lost control and the eruption of popular sentiments never spilled over. After the dramatic confrontation between Gomulka and Khrushchev both sides played a very cautious game. The Russians presumably became convinced that Gomulka was needed to save communism in Poland. Cardinal Wyszyński, acting as an arbiter between the Party and the nation counseled restraint; Cardinal Mindszenty appeared as the standard bearer of the right and he resumed his previous defiant posture. After the Hungarian revolution collapsed, Mindszenty was to spend many years as a refugee in the American embassy in Budapest until finally allowed to leave the country.

In a sense the Hungarian revolution greatly helped the Poles, but not vice versa. It is likely that the Soviet leadership, having made concessions in Warsaw, was less willing to make them in Budapest. The lesson of 1956 was manifold. It showed that a communist regime could be overthrown from within, but it also showed that the Soviets would intervene to prevent it. Were they mainly concerned with the loss of a satellite in East Central Europe or with ideological implications? The two aspects may well have been inseparable. As far as the "Polish October" was concerned it seemed to indicate the possibility of evolution of communism and a gradual self-liberation process. While the events in Budapest exposed the illusory nature of the American doctrine of Liberation, Gomulkism seemed to offer a chance for assisting domestic change toward greater freedom. American economic aid began to flow into Poland.

The twelve years between 1956 and 1968 were dominated by Kádár, Gomulka, and Novotný. In the USSR the Khrushchev era, characterized by somewhat erratic attempts at reform, lasted until 1964. The last four years were those of his successor, Leonid Brezhnev, who stood for orthodoxy and a freezing of the system.

The Kádár rule in Hungary began with harsh reprisals. Some 2,000 Hungarians were executed, ten times as many imprisoned, and 200,000 chose the road of exile. The Party underwent a drastic transformation with only 37,000 members remaining out of the original 900,000. Yet once the opposition was crushed the regime loudly proclaimed "never again" and did not seek to turn the clock back completely. A policy based on the notion that he who is not against us is with us differed considerably from the Stalinist paradigm. The power and authority belonged to the Party, which made it clear what it supported, tolerated, or prohibited, but everyday life was gradually depoliticized and rendered more tolerable. Educational and cultural activities became much freer than before; rather than jail the opponents the government encouraged them to leave the country. Just as the pre-1956 regime based its legitimacy on ideological correctness, and that of 1956 on popular consensus, Kádár placed the emphasis on economic progress. This was a "goulash" communism directed toward the consumer, in fact bribing him to acquiesce in the regime.

Kádár himself was a folksy populist rather than a dogmatic theoretician, a man of ideas as far as the ultimate goal was concerned, but also a pragmatist. He had few illusions about the Soviet leaders. A historian compared his attitude toward the Kremlin with Horthy's attitude *vis-á-vis* Hitler. Perhaps. Hungary's economic progress, assisted by the post-Second World War discoveries of bauxite and uranium deposits, was becoming visible. The 1957 treaty with the USSR improved the nature of economic relationship and brought in some Soviet loans. Agriculture was forcibly recollectivized between 1959 and 1968, but this was accompanied by a certain market-oriented flexibility. In 1968 the New Economic Mechanism, which abolished compulsory pian directives and gave the managers more freedom, was introduced. We shall return to the lights and shadows of Kádárism in the subsequent section dealing with the seventies.

Gomulka's Poland presented a rather different picture. It witnessed the rise of hopes for a revised form of communism, and indeed the leading philosopher Leszek Kořakowski envisaged the possibility of a political democracy developing under socialism. In the generál elections held in 1957 there were more candidates than seats, and one could speak of a consent election rather than the Stalinist formal exercise. Cardinal Wyszyński agreed with Gomulka that to cross out communist candidates might endanger Poland's very existence, and thus lent a powerful support to Gomulka' s policies. A small Catholic representation entered the parliament. In an atmosphere of de-Stalinization that saw a rejection of stifling dogmas in art and literatuře, the release of political prisoners, and the toleration of

religious instruction (at first even in school buildings), the gains of October were reál enough. The theater of Mrožek exposed and ridiculed the absurdities of totalitarianism.

Hopes placed by revisionists in Gomulka proved, however, unfounded. The man was an idealist, nay a puritan in public life, but he was also a tough fighter, a self-educated man with a distrust of the intelligentsia. Steering a middle course between the revisionists and the dogmatists who wanted a return to sterner methods, Gomulka cracked down on both groups. He also restricted the educational role of the church. Was this departure from the October ideals really surprising? If we assume that Gomulka's object had been to bridge the gap between the Party and the nation, and thus legitimize the Party, he had no interest in a further evolution that could weaken communism. Virtually the entire Party apparatus opposed change. Furthermore, the early *rapprochement* between Gomulka and the West, and his proposals for a nuclear-free zone in Germany and East Central Europe, began to weaken as the USSR and the United States entered a collision course over Cuba and Berlin.

Gomulka's "little stabilization" came to an end in the mid-1960s. A Party-church confrontation over the celebration of Poland's millennium centered on the role of Christianity in Polish history. The episcopate took the initiative in matters affecting the nation, for instance the earlier-mentioned address to the German bishops. This infuriated the Party, which accused the church of being unpatriotic. Nationalism was a handy weapon in a frustrated society, and the so-called partisans' wing in the Party led by M. Moczar quickly seized it. The Six Day War in June 1967 had created pro-Israeli feelings in many Polish (and Polish-Jewish) circles, and Gomulka allowed himself to be maneuvered by the partisans into a major "anti-Zionist" campaign. It led to a purge of people of Jewish origin in the leadership of the party, the army, and the administration. Gomulka, who was not an anti-Semite himself, tried to apply brakes, but found his authority challenged by political rivals. An incident - possibly a provocation - over the banning of a classical play by Mickiewicz because of its anti-Russian lines resulted in a showdown between the hardliners in the Party and students and intellectuals. At this point many Poles eagerly watched the reformist trend in Czechoslovakia; their slogan "all Poland waits for its Dubček" appeared most dangerous to Gomulka; he was also anxious lest Germany, then embarking on its *Ostpolitik,* come closer to Czechoslovakia and isolate Poland. The crackdown on the students, courageously defended by Catholic deputies, and the mass exodus of Jews, almost hounded out of the country, belonged to darker pages of Polish history. They were further blackened by Poland's participation in the Soviet-led intervention in Czechoslovakia.

There was no counterpart to Nagy or Gomulka, or indeed any leader of stature in post-1956 Czechoslovakia. Its stand toward the Polish and Hungarian developments of the year had been negative. With economic stability the prevailing de-Stalinization was confined to such minor gestures as the removal in 1961 of Stalin's monument in Prague. Seeking to weaken the church, the authorities made use of Archbishop Beran's journey to Róme, where he received the cardinat's hat, to prevent his return. His successor František Tomášek proved, however, a worthy successor. The leading role of the Party was inscribed in the 1960 constitution; it proclaimed that the country had progressed to the socialist state, hence the new name, Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (CSSR). The constitution virtually emasculated all provisions for autonomy in Slovakia, deepening Slovak resentment over the slower development of their country's economy and the dominance of Czechs in the Party. Novotný's insensitivity to Slovak national feelings indicated that there was no change of heart in Prague. In the years 1963-6, however, the Slovak Party went through a revolt against Novotný's men, gained the rehabilitation of some of the Slovak victims of purges, and obtained, at least in principle, a restitution of local bodies affected by the new constitution. A new leader emerged, Alexander Dubček, a young, shy man with a long apprenticeship in the Soviet Union and the Party apparatus, yet open to ideas of reform and aware of Slovak interests.

While the Slovak issue was among the principal causes of the approaching Prague Spring, one must also stress the economy, badly in need of substantial change, a deepening conflict between the Party apparatus and the intelligentsia, and the "metaphysical" issue of rule of law versus rule of fear. It was necessary to dissociate the political system from the past terror. The shadow cast by the cruel and arbitrary trials of the 1950s had to disappear and the victims amnestied or posthumously rehabilitated. Lawyers, writers, and journalists took an increasingly large part in a campaign that aimed to achieve this goal. Novotný, a living symbol of Stalinism, maladroitly tried to maintain himself in power, even by resorting to a coup, but he became isolated and was slighted by Moscow. Dubček, in whom both the hardliners and the reformers placed great hopes, was chosen first secretary. He was a communist who believed in the leading role of the Party and in Moscow, but who also felt that the system could be revitalized through Czech humanist traditions and a new model created. The general "Action Program" of April 5, 1968 indicated the direction in which he wanted to proceed; it was summed up by the slogan "Socialism

with a human face."

Could Dubček's program of economic and political reform, involving a real federalization of Czechoslovakia, be kept within bounds now that public support for it was being enlisted and certain institutions were to be emancipated from Party control? The Prague Spring became a great public debate, based on freedom of speech, in which public opinion played an increasingly large role. A civil society was reborn with the emergence of youth organizations, political debating clubs, and church-sponsored activities. The role of radio and especially television in disseminating ideas and acquainting the people with emerging leaders could not be overstressed. The atmosphere was, in the words of the British ambassador, "intoxicating" and he added that "for the first time in 350 years the Czechs found themselves in a heroic role."[57] An illusion of unity obscured conflicting tendencies. Party-led reformism was not identical with the intelligentsia's goal of a socialist democracy. The radical youth advocated far-reaching changes. The "Two Thousand Words" statement, published in June by the intellectuals, was meant to strengthen the reformist trend in the Party, but it was also seen as a call to action from below, hence a threat to Party leadership. Was this a reform movement or a revolution? The object was not a destruction of socialism, but its transformation was to be so drastic that it appeared revolutionary. That is how the leaders of East Germany, Poland, and the Soviet Union perceived it.

Dubček was caught between Soviet demands to contain the popular movement and restore full Party control, and the demands of Czechs and Slovaks for freedom and democracy. He seemingly believed that he could reconcile the objectives of the Kremlin and of the people, and to rule through the Party with a genuine consent of the population. Why and when did Moscow decide to intervene, justifying its military action by the Brezhnev doctrine of "aid" to a socialist country threatened by counter-revolution? As Brezhnev told the Czechs later he could not tolerate policies that had no prior consent from Moscow. Czechoslovak borders were also Soviet western borders and nothing must be allowed to affect the postwar settlement in Europe. Probably the scheduling of an extraordinary meeting of the Czechoslovak Communist Party to formalize a new statute departing from Leninist principles was the last straw as far as the Soviets were concerned. In a series of complex moves and counter-moves in July and August, the Czechoslovak leadership was pressed to reverse the process and it was threatened with military intervention. The last round of negotiations at Čierná seemed to provide some modicum of understanding and it created a falše sense of a lull. The actual invasion on August 20-1, in which Polish, Hungarian, Bulgarian, and East German (but not Romanian) forces joined the Red Army, caught Czechoslovakia unprepared and stunned Dubček.

As on similar occasions in the past the dilemma of resistance versus surrender came to the fóre. No military preparations had been taken, although as a Czech philosopher, Ivan Sviták, argued, two thousand tanks would háve been more effective than two thousand words. The chances were that the Soviets could be reasonably sure that they would not meet with any armed resistance. But, was it necessary to counter-sign the death warrant - again earlier analogies come to one's mind -as Dubček and his colleagues did, admittedly under duress, in Moscow? The accord they signed meant tearing up the reform program with their own hands, and this, to cite Sviták again, "broke the back of the nation" for at least twenty years to come.[58]

There were similarities and profound differences between the Hun-garian and Czechoslovak revolutions of 1956 and 1968. The former was bloody while the latter was relatívely peaceful and complicated by a national (Slovak) angle. Initially, political, social, and economic objec-tives were similar. The political evolution went much further in Hun-gary, with its multi-party government and attempts at neutrality. The Party as well as the army and security had disintegrated in Hungary; in Czechoslovakia they survived and presided, to some extent, over the process of change. While intellectuals and students were in the forefront of both revolutions, in Czechoslovakia the role of the workers and the input of the economists was more noticeable. The year 1968 marked the demise of revisionism, which fell victim to Soviet tanks rumbling through Czechoslovakia and to rubber truncheons and anti-Zionist slogans in Poland. Was communism reformable at all? This question preoccupied many people in East Central Europe. In Czechoslovakia an additional issue claimed attention: the perennial "Czech question," which acquired a new meaning and a new urgency. How was a small nation to survive in the late twentieth century? How essential was state independence for this survival?

TOWARD SOLIDARITY AND THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM

Under the heavy hand of Gustav Husák, who replaced Dubček as first secretary in 1969 and became president six years later, Czechoslovakia experienced no bloody reprisals comparable to those in Hungary after 1956. But mass purges and oppressive measures were carried out systematically, and they affected an entire generation. The intelligentsia especially was hit hard, with many members dismissed from their positions and forced to do manual work. Fear of change was the cement

that held together the leadership in which former victims of Stalinism sat next to ex-Stalinists. The country was bitter. For the first time Russian soldiers had carried out an invasion of Czech lands; this was a new page in the history book. Czech Russophilism was seriously damaged.

Perhaps the only lasting product of the Prague Spring was a formal federalization of the state. Implemented in January 1969 it provided for a bicameral federal parliament - although its actual location led to a joke that it was something between a theater and a museum: two governments (in additon to the federal executive) and a constitutional court. Czechoslovakia was declared to derive its legitimacy from the right of self-determination of the two nations and their will to live in a common state. This was important from the Slovák point of view even if Prague's centralism did not disappear in practice and the Party's rule rendered some of the new provisions theoretical. Similarly the actual working of the Law of Nationalities that recognized the existence of national minorities: Hungarian, Polish, German, and Ukrainian, left much to be desired.

The Czechoslovak economy, assisted by the USSR, for instance by oil deliveries at cheaper prices, performed fairly well unril the mid-1970s, even though basic structures deteriorated and quality of products declined. Internationally Prague obtained the West German recognition that the Munich dictate of 1938 was null and void from the inception. Two years later, in 1975, the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) reaffirmed the inviolability of the existing borders in Europe. The Final Act also included a formal engagement on the part of the signatories to respect human rights. This proved to be of great importance for the rise of a new type of opposition in East Central Europe. In Czechoslovakia, partly inspired by similar developments in Poland, it took the form of the Charter 77 signed by around 1,000 people. It was followed in 1978 by the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted (VONS). Both were firmly anchored on the provisions of the Helsinki Act and the Czechoslovak constitution - which paid lip service to human rights - and constituted themselves as monitoring bodies of the actual adherence to these laws. Operating in the open, the Chartists insisted that their activities were absolutely legal; the authorities responded with harassment. A leading Chartist, Václav Havel, spoke of the "power of the powerless." This was more than a seeming paradox and harked back to the notion of civil society.

While Husák's Czechoslovakia was a product of the Brezhnev era, Hungary under Kádár still reflected the Khrushchev heritage. The regime was a kind of paternalistic dictatorship promoting limited democratization, seemingly offering people as much as was possible under the circumstances. Around 1979 the New Economic Mechanism was revived with a price reform, greater amounts of self-management on the collective farms, and more freedom of decision in industrial enterprises. Smaller units were encouraged, competition promoted, and the profitability stressed. Private initiative was permitted in agriculture, retailing, and services. Yet the system remained essentially a half-way house in which the Party's grip was arbitrarily tightened or loosened, and in which the economy, heavily dependent on foreign trade, could not fully react according to the law of the market. There was not enough domestic capital and Hungary began to borrow. A debt of $1 billion in 1970 rose to $15 billion in the latě 1980s. The country was the "best barrack" in the Soviet camp, a fact recognized at home and in the West, but it was also becoming an expensive barrack to live in. Prices were rising and many Hungarians needed to have two or even three jobs to make ends meet.

The initial hatred for Kádár turned into a grudging acceptance by many people. Cultural and artistic life was freer than elsewhere in the bloc and contacts with the West more regular. The United States' approval of the Hungarian evolution was symbolized by the return of St Stephen's crown, which had been captured during the war. Intellectuals such as Gyorgy Konrád spoke of their goal of "anti-political politics."

There were some superficial similarities between Hungary and Poland as it entered the decade under the new first secretary Edward Gierek. Gomulka had scored his last success in 1970: a treaty with West Germany that recognized the Odra-Nysa frontier. He was toppled by a major strike in the Baltic harbors of Gdańsk, Gdynia, and Szczecin. This December 1970 upheaval was bloodily suppressed, and it showed that the workers could cause the fall of a communist leader, but could not choose his successor. Still, Gierek, a pragmatist with West European experience, appealed directly to the workers to help him modernize the country's economy and raise living standards. Initially he met with a positive response. Cleverly exploiting the West-East détente, which the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia had not really damaged, Gierek brought into the country large Western credits and technology. The mounting debts were to be repaid by exports. But after a few years the program ran into insoluble difficulties.

Gierek's consumerism raised expectations and produced hopes that could not be fulfilled. The incoming capital and technology were largely wasted by a badly thoughtout and uncoordinated expansion, inefficiency, and corruption. Without basic structural changes the experiment could not work; an external factor, the worldwide oil crisis, dealt the finishing blow. The strategy of investments and trade

was in a shambles and Gierek kept borrowing to cover the mounting debts.

Within society the gap widened between Gierek's "red bourgeoisie" (which had never liked Gomulka's austere style) and the masses, exposing the supposed communist egalitarianism. A secular outlook spreading throughout Poland in the 1960s was in turn losing to a religious revival, which the efforts of Cardinals Wyszyński and K. Wojtyla infused with a new spirit and dynamism.

In 1976 the Party miscalculated badly, assuming that improved living standards would permit new price increases. The workers responded by strikes. There were attacks, as in 1970, on Party committees and brutality on the part of the riot police. Then developments came that later served as an example for the opposition throughout East Central Europe. The idea was that a civil society could exist outside of and in defiance of the totalitarian state. As one of the dissident leaders, Jacek Kuroń, put it: do not burn Party committees, let us create our own. In 1976 the Committee for the Defense of Workers (KOR) came into being, at first to assist the penalized and persecuted workers, later to become an organism for social self-defense. KOR was a bridge between the intelligentsia and the workers which hitherto had acted separately or even at cross-purposes. Other committees (for instance the Movement for the Defense of Man and Citizen - ROPCiO) followed. The church spread a protective umbrella over their activities: cultural, educational, or self-aid. This was also a novelty, connected with the overtures of the leftist intelligentsia (heavily represented in KOR) to the church. Abandoning their traditional anti-clericalism, people such as Adam Michnik stressed the common ground between the church and the leftist opposition: concern for freedom and human dignity. The governmental harassment of the dissidents and church-related groups was selective and relatively restrained. In the era of détente Gierek had to tread cautiously.

The anti-communist movement in Poland acquired a new dimension with an event that took place in Rome in late 1978: the election of Cardinal Wojtyla as Pope John Paul II. A year later the Gierek regime agreed to his visit to his homeland. The visit, in which huge crowds participated, endowed the intelligentsia-workers-church alliance with an all-national, patriotic, and ethical dimension. People also realized their strength *vis-á-vis* the Party and state apparatus which could do little beyond minor chicaneries. During the papal visit Poland was a free and different country. The stage was set for a major upheaval.

A strike began as a minor one in the Gdańsk shipyard but spread like wildfire through the country. The government was obliged to sign an official accord with the strikers, who were led by an electrician with an uncanny political flair and personal charisma: Lech Walesa. The August 1980 accord, composed of 21 points, was economic and political. It belied the thesis that the workers were concerned only about their narrow material interests. It showed that people realized that economic changes were impossible without a political transformation of the country. An "Independent, Self-governing Trade Union Solidarity" (Solidarnosc) grew to comprise 10 million members.

Solidarity represented the most important development in East Central Europe since the Second World War, perhaps even earlier. A Czechoslovak historian called it

> *„...the only spontaneous and genuine working-class revolution which had ever occurred in history, directed against the "socialist" state governed by bureaucrats (in the name of, but in reality against the working class) and carried out under the sign of the cross and with the blessing of the Pope."*

Unlike the 1956 and 1968 revolutions it began outside the Party and was not a political movement in the sense that it fought principally for the creation of a civil society, and did not aim to govern the country. At the same time it had to fulfill a political function whether it liked it or not. In broader ethical terms, as J. Tischner put it, Solidarity stood for a dialogue and rejection of violence, for the dignity of work and the worker, and for national consciousness as ethical consciousness. Garton Ash characterized Solidarnosc as a social crusade of national rebirth which constituted its strength and attraction.

The Solidarity movement lasted for over fifteen months before it was banded by the introduction of martial law. Was the government determined from the beginning to destroy it, the question being simply of means? Did Solidarity sign its death warrant because it grew too radical and could not be satisfied without the demise of communism? Or was it doomed because it turned out to be a "self-limiting revolution" that refused to make a bid for power? Volumes have been written on these and other controversial points. Paradoxically every success as well as every failure brought Solidarity closer to defeat. Having only one real weapon at its disposal, the strike or the threat of a strike, it was driven into an ever more confrontational position. The ruling establishment was provoking Solidarity by refusing or delaying concessions and seeking to destroy the movement. Yet we must remember that the Party and the government were internally divided and did not follow a single and consistent line. There were also differences between the central authorities and the lower echelons. Solidarity was not a monolith either. It was pulled in diverse directions, even if we dismiss the role of provocateurs, and was obliged to fulfill various functions. Finally, as a historian put it, "Solidarity played the main role

in the spectacle, but as in a Greek tragedy, fate directed events."

Gierek did not survive the birth of Solidarity and made room for Stanisíaw Kania. In February 1981 General Wojciech Jaruzelski became premier and moved to the center of the stage. He made a contrast to the preceding leaders in many respects: in social background (gentry), profession (military), even the stiff external manner that made him look inscrutable behind the habitual dark glasses. Since he had lost his parents in Russia from where he was deported as a boy, people asked themselves whether he could be a true communist.

The 1980-1 winter was hard, and Soviet armed intervention appeared at times imminent. Solidarity had to fight for every governmental concession, step by step. In March an anti-Solidarity incident in Bydgoszcz - possibly a provocation - brought Poland to the brink of a general strike and open confrontation. Solidarity refused to take the step, but it could not go along with Jaruzelski's proposal of a moratorium on strikes. The situation in the country was growing chaotic. On December 13, Jaruzelski, who had become first secretary in the autumn, proclaimed martial law; this took Solidarity and everyone by surprise. Was this move dictated by the fear that otherwise the USSR would intervene and invade Poland? This motive has been advanced by Jaruzelski's defenders. He himself mentioned the threat of an armed confrontation with Solidarity, the deadlocked talks with Cardinal Glemp (Wyszyński's successor) and Walesa, and Soviet economic pressure.

The martial law which paralyzed all the country was brutal, yet if one thinks of Solidarity as a revolution, its suppression resulted in few victims. But the nation felt its humiliation deeply, and would find it difficult to forget and forgive in the years to come. Under the martial law the role of the Party, already weakened by dissent and resignations, dwindled. The martial law was in a sense an admission that the Party could no longer govern. A Military Council of National Salvation (WRON) assumed all power. Later attempts to broaden the basis of the regime by the creation of a patriotic front and a consultative body proved unsuccessful. With most of the Solidarity leadership in internment camps or prisons, an underground Solidarity, led among others by Z. Bujak, continued their resistance through clandestine publications, even broadcasts, and other activities. In 1982 Walesa, who had become the symbol of Solidarity, was released from confinement, and a year later martial law was formally lifted. Jaruzelski and his associates may well have been a cut above the previous ruling teams in postwar Poland, but they achieved nothing positive through the law or the measures that followed. A long-range strategy seemed absent, especially in the economic field where conditions steadily deteriorated.

During this period the stature of the church grew perceptibly, although on May 26, 1981 it had lost Cardinal Wyszyński, and two weeks earlier it nearly lost Pope John Paul II, who was seriously wounded by an assassin's bullet. The pope recovered and in 1983 again visited Poland. But if the visit was to show that the country was stabilized, this object was not achieved. The papal message was one of hope and encouragement and both were badly needed. In 1984, under circumstances still not fully elucidated, the secret police arranged the assassination of a popular young priest associated with Solidarity, Father Jerzy Popieluszko. For the first time in communist history the policemen involved were arrested and tried. Did this indicate that the assassination had also been aimed at Jaruzelski and his policy of seeking some accommodation with the opposition? Be that as it may, the Polish situation appeared to be a stalemate. Few people realized then that the election of a new general-secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, Mikhail Gorbachev, in 1985, was opening a new era in the history of communism, the Soviet Union, and East Central Europe.

The entry of the Western world into what Zbigniew Brzezinski called the technotronic age, characterized by high technology, especially in information and Communications, dramatically widened the gap with the Soviet bloc. While the armaments race was straining the Soviet economy, the inherent backwardness and anachronism of the communist system could no longer be conjured away by ideological incantations. The absence of market mechanisms encouraged arbitrariness in economic policies; the negative selection of Party cadres weakened the leadership and encouraged graft and favoritism; the absence of corrective political mechanisms resulted in factionalism and made elections a farce and a change of leadership an upheaval. The system in which there were no clear limitations on responsibility fostered irresponsibility. Society was becoming demoralized, indeed ill. Discontent mingled with cynicism or apathy.

Gorbachev realized the need for a drastic reconstruction *(perestroika)* of the economic base and the political superstructure. It was to come from above, but in order to overcome the vested interests of the nomenclatura and the inertia of the masses, people had to be enlisted in an open process *(glasnost)* of democratization. This was a bold program that involved the risk of awakening forces long suppressed, political and national. It had also to affect the whole bloc, East Central Europe included.

Reformers in the region could now view Moscow as an ally: a drastic change from the past when the cold winds blowing from Russia had frozen or destroyed the developments of 1956, 1968, or even 1980. Gorbachev was willing to push his

policies even at the cost of diminish-ing the role of the Party. This was of crucial importance for East Central Europe, because it undermined the communists' claim of having a monopoly in cooperation with Moscow. While the rule of law, democratization, and especially reforms in the direction of market economy were the principal ingredients of change, the Russian and the East Central European contexts were, as always, different. Far-reaching changes in the region could result in the collapse of communism. This Gorbachev may not have realized, nor was it foreseen by sovietologists who had tended to dwell on common features of communism in the bloc, and not on the distinct features of East Central Europe. What was the region like in the mid-1980s?

The four postwar decades had seen many changes. The population had greatly increased in Poland, from roughly 24 to 38 million, and in Czechoslovakia, from 12 to 15 million. It remained stationary in Hungary at 10 million. The percentage of urban or industrially employed people grew significantly in Poland and Hungary, but urbanization and industrialization had not always meant progress. Czechoslovakia dropped from its prewar presence among the first ten industrialized countries in the world to perhaps a thirtieth pláce. It was well behind Austria and France. It was still the most advanced in the region, with $10.140 GNP per capita as compared to Hungary's $8.660 and Poland's $7.270, but the distance behind the United States ($19.770 per capita) was telling. Moreover Czechoslovakia, as well as the more industrialized parts of Poland and Hungary, was paying a terrible price with an ecological catastrophe. And, as many people feared, the national spirit of the Czechs seemed broken.

The Polish economy was in a shambles; the national income was falling. The Solidarity period and the martial law added to the financial burdens. Western, mainly American, sanctions against the Jaruzelski regime, while necessary on moral and political grounds, deepened the slump. In 1988 Polish indebtedness of $38.5 billion ($1,030 per capita), Hungarian of $18 billion ($1,820 per capita), and even Czechoslovak, officially estimated at $6 billion, although probably double that amount, showed the economic plight of the region. For all the progress achieved under Kádár it was marred by inefficiency, inflation, and the stagnation of large enterprises. Hungarians were asking why Austria or Finland, whose position was comparable, were so much better off. The credibility of Kádárization was in doubt. The Party, though internally divided over tactics, sought to preside over a controlled liberalization. This involved an improvement in state-church relations. It was characteristic throughout East Central Europe, although it was most striking in Poland, that religion, far from being the opium for the masses, as Marx had asserted, has been the "best guarantor and promoter of their freedom," to cite John Paul II's utterance in 1990.

POSTCOMMUNIST EAST CENTRAL EUROPE

The deadlock between the regime and the outlawed Solidarity was broken in Poland by the round-table talks, held, with the church acting as intermediary, between February and April 1989. The finál accord provided for the legalization of Solidarity and for free elections to the newly established senate and to a limited number of seats in the lower chamber. The unexpected landslide for Solidarity in June gave it nearly all the contested seats and eliminated the leading Party figures. After a series of complex maneuvers another compromise occurred. The presidency went to General Jaruzelski and the premiership to a close Walesa associate, Tadeusz Mazowiecki. His cabinet was based on a coalition with the populists and the democrats, the two satellite parties of the communists which had defected and joined Solidarity. This was the first non-communist-led government in East Central Europe, a great event that started a chain reaction. By January 1990 the Party dissolved itself and a drastic economic program was begun by the deputy premier Leszek Balcerowicz. Its object was the restitution of market economy. In June 1990 local government elections took pláce, and once again the Solidarity candidates swept the field. But a serious rift, of which more later, pitted Walesa against Mazowiecki. It destroyed the unity of Solidarity and injected much bitterness into the presidential election, which was held in November-December 1990 and returned Walesa as president. The future will show whether unity will be restored along different lines, and political-economic evolution continued. Developments in Hungary indicated at first that the Party was more adroit than in Poland while the opposition was still in an embryonic stage. The largest groups, the Democratic Forum and the Free Democrats began to organize themselves only in 1987. Kádár's fall from power in May 1988 and his death roughly a year later marked the end of an era, but no great personalities emerged on either communist or opposition side. A period of fluidity foliowed. The solemn reburial of Nagy and his associates in June 1989, attended by huge crowds, represented a rehabilitation of the Hungarian 1956 Revolution and of its leaders. Talks between the government and the opposition, somewhat resembling the Polish round table, led to an accord in September that put an end to the communist monopoly of power and

provided for presidential and generál elections. These events coincided with the opening of the Hungarian border with Austria and a mass exodus of East Germans, leaving their country via Hungary and Austria for West Germany. This development shook the foundations of communism in East Germany and played a major role in a rapid course of events that culminated in the demolition of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. The issue of German unification suddenly appeared on the international agenda, and, in the months to come turned out to be the object of intensive East-West negotiations. An agreement was reached in October 1990. But would the unified Germany respect the Odra-Nysa border with Poland? The Mazowiecki government insisted on iron-clad commitments, and even at one point spoke of retainment of Soviet troops on Polish soil as a reinsurance. This stand contrasted with firm Hungarian and Czechoslovak demands for a speedy evacuation. On November 14, 1990 a final and solemn German-Polish treaty was signed, followed by one on good neighborliness on June 19, 1991, hopefully opening a new era in the relations between the two countries.

To return to Hungary, parliamentary elections in April 1990 resulted in a victory of the Democratic Forum which formed a coalition with a revived Smallholders Party. J. Antall became premier. The Free and Young Democrats constituted the opposition and they improved their standing through local elections held in the autumn.

Poland and Hungary had outdistanced Czechoslovakia in their quest for freedom. Throughout the first half of 1989 communism seemed unshaken. "Solidarity is promising Poland a future that is about as realistic as posthumous life in paradise," jeered the Bratislava paper *Pravda* on June 1. Nothing seemed to have changed since the resignation of Husák in 1987 or Gorbachev's visit to Prague the same year. The Charter continued to serve as a lightning rod for reprisals and persecutions. Contacts between Chartists and Solidarity resulted in arrests. It was a crime to bring a Bible to Slovakia. But the upheaval in East Germany coming after Polish and Hungarian changes finally isolated communism in Czechoslovakia. Mass demonstrations began in August and October 1989, and the police brutality in dispersing them increased popular anger. The November 17 demonstration led to a crisis. Intellectuals and students were joined by workers, who proclaimed a brief general strike; unrest spread throughout the country. The communist government resigned and the Party abandoned its power. The Civic Forum in the Czech lands and the Public against Violence in Slovakia group came into being as the leading anti-communist forces. Havel was elected president: the veteran of the Prague Spring, Dubček, became the speaker (president) of the Czechoslovak parliament.

The events in Czechoslovakia were so rapid and relatively painless that people spoke of a "velvet revolution" and boasted that while it took the Poles ten years and the Hungarians ten months to do away with communism, the Czechs and Slovaks did it in ten days. Naturally, this speedy victory was only possible because everything around the country was crumbling. If the collapse of the communist pillar, East Germany, gave the finál push, the earlier examples of the northern and southern neighbors must not be forgotten.

After the Hungarian general elections and before the local elections in Poland, Czechs and Slovaks went to vote in June 1990. The Civic Forum and its Slovak counterpart emerged victorious, although the communists gained a respectable vote. In Bohemia-Moravia they were the second largest party. While the name of the Party was changed, as in the Polish and Hungarian case, it continued in its new guise as a significant political factor. This was again apparent after the local elections held in latě November. The Civic Forum led with 35.6 percent in the Czech republic, and the Christian Democrats with 27.4 percent in the Slovak republic. But, the communists still scored 17.2 percent in the former and 13.6 in the latter. The government moved cautiously in economic matters, submitting the first blueprint for reform in September 1990, and taking the first concrete steps in January 1991. The Czechs hoped to proceed toward a free market economy and privatization much more gradually than the Poles.

East Central Europe rejected communism, as a body rejects a transplant, because it was contrary to freedom, and because it was foreign. While liberty has once again become the most cherished value, there have been fears that it might degenerate into license. Democracy is not a panacea but, as Churchill put it, a system that is less bad than any other. The same is true for market economy. In the present convulsions that accompany the birth of a new era, "it would be tragic indeed were liberty to be identified . . . with unacceptable economic deprivation," in the words of an American economist.[61]

A common struggle against communism had provided the chief bond among the various groups of the opposition. The ethos of Solidarity, or Havel's "power of the powerless" had been the banner in the struggle for ideals; now the anti-communist revolution has reached the second stage, the struggle for power. The effect ít has on the relationship between ethics and politics worries Polish leaders; Havel deals with the same issue in his remarks on the anatomy of hatred.

Then there is the question of the communists who made up a sizeable percentage of the population: 10.9 percent in Czechoslovakia, *7.7* percent in Hungary, and 5.8 percent in Poland (in 1988). Embedded in the society and its economic structures

they controlled most walks of life and have been related to many more people in the country. Both the Havel and the Mazowiecki governments, and to a large extent that of Hungary, have rejected the idea of massive purges and witchhunts. This course may have been the only alternative, but it has raised the danger of the communists' survival and even retention of power. A grim joke that the communists have gained their goal of being a leading force through free elections reflects a prevailing malaise. Similarly, many members of the nomenclatura transferred their activities to business and underwent a metamorphosis from communist bosses to capitalist entrepreneurs. There is a mounting pressure for punishing communists, outlawing the neo-communist parties, and confiscating all their assets.

The demand for "acceleration," a battle cry of the Waíesa camp, has combined with criticism of the Mazowiecki government as being too lenient and too elitist. Waíesa, his own ambitions apart, has been stressing the need for a strong leader, a demand heard also in the neighboring countries and implying that East Central European society is not yet ready for parliamentary democracy.

There has been a good deal of talk about a left-right struggle in East Central Europe; the left being associated, or represented to be, with the discredited communism. This distinction belongs more to partisan polemics than to cool analysis. An intellectual of the "leftist" pro-Mazowiecki camp somewhat snootily remarked that his group stood West and not left of the Walesa supporters, implying that the latter were Eastern-type populists. True, the urbanist-populist dichotomy seems to have resurfaced to some extent in Hungarian politics. Also, the Forum may be more genuinely right-centerist and the Free and Young Democrats more leftist than the corresponding groups in Poland. In the Czech case a recent meeting of the left showed that the word does not have the samé unfavorable connotation in that country. Still, the old historie parties, be they of the left or right, háve not been able to re-emerge in any other than marginal form so far. Although parties, movements, and groups multiply, there is a certain political vacuum in the three countries. In Czechoslovakia, where the Civic Forum has largely disintegrated, only two parties are considered to be really well-organized: the communists and the Slovak Nationalists.

The constitutional model still remains to be worked out by the parliaments, and the relationship between the executive and the chambers determined. Neither the French presidential paradigm nor the British (or German) system in which the prime minister (or chancellor) is the key figure are likely to be adopted. In Czechoslovakia the process has been complicated by the Czech-Slovak issue. It has led to a dualist structure of the state, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic (ČSFR), with limited powers of the federal authorities. Even so, the demands of Slovák extremists for complete independence have not entirely disappeared and may yet prevail.

The unprecedented transition from a communist-type to a free market economy has so far been boldly tackled only by the Balcerowicz pian in Poland. It succeeded in stopping the hyper-inflation and gaining at first a trade surplus. But reorientation of trade and finding new markets after the loss of Soviet and East German ones remains a great problem. So is a decline in production that proved to be larger than anticipated. The virtual wage freeze and a stabilization of currency *vis-á-vis* the dollar cut into the standard of living of many; the peasantry felt especially bitter about the discrepancy between prices of agricultural and industrial products. The Mazowiecki government's economic policies have not been above criticism, and hardships are real. However, a sweeping economic reform in Poland, as in Czechoslovakia and Hungary (bearing in mind that these last two were better off to start with), is unlikely to succeed unless the mentality of the population changes drastically. For over four decades people had become used to a system in which bribes, connections, bypassing of laws and lack of interest in quality work and expertise were accompanied by low wages and low performance. An overnight change into honest entrepreneurs, dedicated managers, and conscientious workers is virtually impossible. Working incentives while undoubtedly crucial have to be accompanied by a new working ethos. To create, or to recreate, it is a lengthy and painful process which can only take place in an atmosphere of at least some confidence and stability.

The role of the church could be very important in this respect. Having been the mainstay of opposition to totalitarian communism and a protector of freedom, national and individual, the church must now become the great educator of the alienated nation, teaching it good citizenship, communal solidarity, and tolerance. This concern permeates the encyclicals and utterances of John Paul II. His visit to Prague, which Havel termed a miracle, infused the papal message into the humanist Czech tradition. But the abortion issue and reintroduction of religion in schools (in Poland) brought forth criticism of undue interference by the church.

The frequently used phrase, East Central Europe's "return to Europe," refers to a multitude of issues on diverse levels. There is the question of being oneself again. Wishing to obliterate the communist half-century, Poles, Hungarians, Czechs, and Slovaks have engaged in a massive restoration of old symbols of independent statehood. The Polish eagle is crowned again and the Hungarian flag displays its ancient emblem. Monuments to communist leaders, foreign and domestic, are disappearing together with street names that had honored them. Interwar history is

being rehabilitated if not glorified. Does all this mean that East Central Europe is returning to its pre-1939 identity which, as Joseph Rothschild opines, has survived in a remarkable fashion the communist decades? Chief elements of this identity were, as he perceives them, extreme nationalism, a non-democratic tradition, a rule of elites alienated from the masses, and a "balkanization" in interstate relations.

Nationalism and populism have indeed re-emerged, but largely as a reaction against the trampling over and the manipulation of national sentiments by the communists and their failure to satisfy demands for social justice. An intolerant attitude toward national minorities and a largely verbal, although nasty, anti-Semitism are also visible. At the same time efforts to overcome this xenophobia are more serious than in the past. Moreover, the prevalent trends in Western Europe, which had always affected the region, are now toward internationalism and integration, and this is a drastic change from the pre-1939 decades.

Since 1945 East Central Europe had been cut off from democratic processes which have produced a highly successful West German system and effected a transformation of Spain. The interwar crisis of democracy has been replaced by a new democratic élan. Once again, the East Central European region will have to catch up with and learn from the West. If historical analogies exist they would (in the Polish case at least) be of the eighteenth-century "modernization" versus the old regime's anarchic tendencies. Such key works as pluralism and democracy that arose as ideals in opposition to imposed uniformity and totalitarianism, have to be adapted to real conditions of everyday life. Hence the unavoidable clash between lofty ideas and practice, between the intelligentsia's political concepts and the down-to-earth needs of the man in the street. Yet a revival of the "strong man" ideal and authoritarianism modeled on the 1930s is likely to be a transient phenomenon.

The traditional difference between the elites and masses, more deep-seated than in the West, has, all appearances notwithstanding, been permanently affected by the postwar leveling down, upward mobility, rising educational standards, and social intermixture. The traditional leadership of the intelligentsia is being successfully challenged by new forces that in the long run are likely to resemble those in the West. This has not yet been fully understood by the intellectuals who speak disparagingly of populism.

The lifting of the communist lid over the boiling cauldron has fully revealed the existing conflicts between nations and states in the region. The Czech-Slovak controversy has resurfaced although its character is very different from that of the prewar republic. The issues of the Hungarian minorities in Transylvania and Slovakia have created an outery among the Magyars. There are tensions between Poles and Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Germans. Extréme nationalists draw maps which display expansionist appetites. Yet, as mentioned earlier, the size of national minorities has shrunk dramatically, and near ethnic purity was achieved (but at what price!) through the region. Possibilities for resolving controversial issues appear far greater than before the war. The talk about a perennial "balkanization" of this region is hardly helpful, and in many instances misleading. Again the international context of these conflicts is very different in the Europe of today that has abandoned war as a means of resolving disputes.

If one concludes that all the símilarities notwithstanding East Central Europe cannot simply return to its prewar past, its present and future relationship to the West also exhibits quite novel features. The "return to Europe" is affected by contradictory hopes and apprehensions. What kind of Europe does the region want to return to? There is the West that had always been an inspiration and the stark day-to-day real Europe with inequalities, its rich and its poor, with Spain, Portugal, Ireland, or Greece representing the old periphery. The hope, indeed the absolute need for Western capital is mingled with fears of becoming a sphere of exploitation, a poor relative whose assets are all in foreigners' hands. East Central Europe cannot progress economically unless the debts that stifle it and discourage foreign investors are eliminated, and outside capital poured in to assist the reconstruction of the entire economy. The first encouraging signs, however, grew dimmer as the whole international situation underwent changes. West Germany, the most likely investor, became absorbed in a rehabilitation of the former German Democratic Republic, the costs being much higher than anyone had imagined. The Middle Eastern crisis of 1990-1 not only affected oil deliveries - Iraq had been paying Poland with oil - and cost the Polish economy a few billion dollars, but it turned the world's attention away from East Central Europe and its problems. The ongoing disintegration of the USSR has alerted the West, especially Germany, to the necessity of assisting the Soviet economy. Indeed, the Soviet situation with its far-reaching ramifications looms large. Western aid in order to be effective needs to be linked to political demoeratization, evolution toward market economy, and the transformation of the USSR into a new Commonwealth of Independent States. The Baltic republics refused. to join, but the relationship of the Ukraine and Belorussia to the Commonwealth is ambiguous and remains to be worked out. AU this affects East Central Europe. Soviet troops have already left Hungary and Czechoslovakia but they linger on in Poland. The tendency

in some Soviet quarters to retain maximum influence in East Central Europe may have largely collapsed as a result of the anti-Gorbachev coup, Yeltsin's victory and the formal demise of the USSR. One hopes for good relations with the successors, but there is uncertainty. In these conditions economic aid to ex-Soviet republics could take the form of credits for the purchases of East Central European goods, thus assisting both economies. Polish and Hungarian leaders and most recently Czechoslovakia's President Havel háve outlined such a pian in some detail.

There are other problems connected with the USSR that could assume gigantic proportions, namely mass exodus of people from the East and into the West. Already the first trickle of Russians, Ukrainians, Romanians, and Gypsies has alarmed the neighboring states. Unless the economy of the eastern part of the continent of Europe be reconstructed and its inhabitants assured a decent life at home, migratory problems might get out of hand. The Iron Curtain must not be replaced by a "gold curtain" that divides a prosperous West from a prostrated East, and impedes a European integration that modern technology makes inescapable.

Some version of a new Marshall Pian for the eastern part of the continent seems imperative. Will the West háve enough imagination and willpower to propose and carry it out? Will East Central European states assist it by cooperating among themselves? Addressing the United States Congress in February 1990 President Havel said that he hoped to coordinate Czechoslovakia's return to Europe with that of the other countries, above all Poland and Hungary. Subsequent meetings of the leaders of the three states at Bratislava, Warsaw, and Visegrad have shown both a willingness to cooperate and the existence of differences in perception and approach of international issues. A certain solidarity and a convergent policy has been in evidence *vis-á-vis* the Soviet Union over matters concerned with trade and the dismantling of CEMA and the Warsaw Treaty Organization. There has been less unanimity, at least at first, in dealing with the West concerning such matters as debts, the accession to the Council of Europe, and the transformation of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) into a more effective organization. Let us not forget that the three states are at this point neither in the Warsaw Pact nor in NATO.

Efforts toward regional collaboration encouraged by the West and partly successful háve been noticeable more among politicians and intellectuals than on the popular level. An average Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, or Pole has little consciousness of a regional community of interests and experiences. Regional cooperation has not taken any systernatic or organizational form as yet. Italy has been promoting a pentagonal grouping (with Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, and Yugoslavia), recently joined by Poland. The group's future appears uncertain. Warsaw, mindful of its eastern connections, has its eyes turned toward Moscow, Vilnius, Kiev, and Minsk. But how to proceed so as **not** to antagonize Russia, nor alienate Lithuania, the Ukraine, and Belorussia? A hard task for Polish diplomacy.

Post-communist East Central Europe has taken, as in all revolutions, a leap into the unknown, and it would be hazardous to try to predict the course of future developments. Yet, the region remains molded by the heritage of its history. To appreciate it properly one has to approach it in Braudelian terms of "longue durée." For centuries challenges coming from the West and an ambivalent relationship with the West constituted an essential element of East Central European history. The center-periphery pattern has become established. There was continuity even in exceptions, the Czech lands being more advanced than the rest of the region in the fifteenth as well as in the twentieth century.

In the past the contributions of East Central Europe have been more spiritual than material. From Hus's insistence on freedom of conscience to Masaryk's "Christ not Caesar," from Paulus Vladimirt's rejection of conversion by force to Solidarity's ethos, from Gábor Bethlen's fight for freedom and religion to Hungarians dying in 1956 for "Hungary and for Europe," the liberty bell has tolled in East Central Europe for generations. It would be pretentious to maintain that freedom means more to Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, or Slovaks than to other nations of Europe. It is just that history has forced them to defend and to fight for it more frequently than in many other lands. But freedom, as everything else, has a price and its nature varies. At present the price seems largely economic, but it has other dimensions. Freedom is not an absolute in itself, but a condition of meaningful existence of individuals and society. It must be self-limiting in order not to become license and lead to oppression of others. Freedom in East Central Europe has been gained at a high price and must not be lost. As John Paul II expressed it in his Encyclical Letter "Solicitudo Rei Socialis" of 1987, "Each [nation] must discover and use to the best advantage its *own area of freedom.* Each must likewise realize its true needs as well as the rights and duties which oblige it to respond to them." Thinking about the past and pondering about the present and the future, these deceptively simple words need to be remembered.

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