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# Civil Society and Democratic Transition in East Central Europe

MICHAEL BERNHARD

With the collapse of communist regimes across the former Soviet bloc, reforms of one sort or another are now taking place throughout the eastern half of Europe. Progress towards democracy in the region seems unambiguously underway only in the area of East Central Europe—the former German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. In discussions of this democratization, the reemergence of civil society is often noted as a significant development. The first purpose of this account is to clarify the meaning of the term “civil society.” Its second and central purpose is to try to understand the relationship of civil society to democratization in the East Central European context and on a general theoretical level.

Modern democracy, as well as the limited forms of representative government that preceded it, have only existed in conjunction with a civil society. It constitutes the sphere of autonomy from which political forces representing constellations of interests in society have contested state power. Civil society has been a necessary condition for the existence of representative forms of government including democracy. One question that I will try to answer is whether it is, or can be, more than this. Before turning to a discussion of contemporary East Central Europe I will first discuss the concept of civil society in historical and conceptual terms.

## CIVIL SOCIETY

The contemporary notion of civil society is a relatively recent development. According to John Keane, before the eighteenth century the term roughly corres-

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ponded to that of the state.<sup>1</sup> Civil society defined in contrast to the state appears in political philosophy in the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century. It is part of the vocabulary of both Scottish Enlightenment thought, for example, Adam Ferguson's *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*,<sup>2</sup> and of German Idealism. The concept of a civil society juxtaposed to the state figures prominently both in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and in Marx's critique of Hegel and the Hegelians, particularly in *On the Jewish Question*.

Civil society as an historical phenomenon first began to take shape in late medieval-early modern Europe. It refers to social groups who were emancipated from restrictions placed upon them by feudal and absolutist systems. Historically, these elements developed in emerging commercial towns and cities. Certain urban elements, notably forerunners of the bourgeoisie such as merchants and guildsmen, were granted representation as an estate, privileges of local rule, and economic autonomy within the feudal system. After many of these political rights and privileges were nullified by absolutism, these social groups began to reassert themselves as a critical constituency of the increasingly public rule of the monarchy. By the late eighteenth century certain political forces within civil society became strong enough to successfully challenge the power of monarchies.<sup>3</sup>

In this process of emancipation, a sphere of autonomy for social actors emerged. This new public space came to be situated between the official public life of the monarchy, the state, and the nobility, and that of private and/or communal life. Over time a range of associations, organizations, parties, movements, and the like came to populate this public space. These included political groupings such as modern political parties, various associations (professional, cultural, social, union, etc.), social movements, as well as the press and publishing.

These forces were able to autonomously organize themselves outside the dominant official political sphere and to compel the state through political struggles to recognize and respect their existence. With time they were able to use this autonomy from the state to institutionalize influence over the official political sphere and radically alter it.

A critical component of the creation of this civil society was the establishment of legal boundaries that protected the existence of an independent public space from the exercise of state power, and then the ability of organizations within it to influence the exercise of power. The most important historical agent of these

<sup>1</sup> John Keane, "Despotism and Democracy, the Origins and Development of the Distinction between Civil Society and the State, 1750–1850" in John Keane, ed., *Civil Society and the State, New European Perspectives* (London: Verso, 1988), 35–36.

<sup>2</sup> Keane stresses that Ferguson saw a danger that the civil society of his time was preparing the ground for despotism. Ferguson advocated a new type of civil society as the way to avoid this. His normative prescription for public-spiritedness and civic association prefigures a modern liberal notion of what civil society should be. *Ibid.*, 42–44.

<sup>3</sup> Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1978), chaps. 3, 4, esp. 77–85.

changes, at least in the West, was the bourgeoisie. In other parts of Europe, an important role was also played by an autonomous intelligentsia.

In time, other parts of society thoroughly excluded from political life were able to assert themselves and extend citizenship throughout society. In particular, the proletariat organized in Labor and Social Democratic parties, and the women's suffrage movement<sup>4</sup> was able in some states to struggle for enfranchisement.

This capsule account is in certain ways too general. It attempts to condense important themes in the rise of modern Europe very schematically. Furthermore, individual national patterns differed in important ways. Yet this rough notion of civil society in an historical sense provides the basis for a structural and institutional definition. This exposition has yielded a notion of a public space structurally located between official public and private life and populated by a range of different autonomous organizations. Thus civil society has concrete structural boundaries and is populated by a diverse set of agents. However, civil society requires more than this. For these agents to constitute a civil society they need the sanction of the state; the public space must be guaranteed as a realm of freedom from the state by the state itself. Thus civil society, as well as the private sphere, must be legally separated from the state by law, and the actors within it must be guaranteed specific personal and group liberties so that they may pursue their broadly conceived interests. Barring this, a liberated public space would be but an anarchy of competing interests.

Within Europe, how autonomous civil society became and how much influence it was able to exert upon the state varied from state to state. The work of the Hungarian historian Jenő Szucs on the emergence of three distinct developmental areas in Europe (Western, East Central, and Eastern) provides a good starting point to discuss these distinctions. He traces the origins of these regions back to different responses to the "First Crisis" of feudalism (1300–1450). The western response was "the emergence of 'absolutism' and its threefold solution: preserving whatever was preservable from feudalism, preparing for capitalism, and forming the framework of the nation-state system." The Russian (Eastern) response was to bind the society in a much tighter relationship with the monarchy (that is, second serfdom, service requirements for the nobility, etc.). While these were both absolutist solutions Szucs demonstrates that they had very different results. In the West society was subordinated to the state but was able to preserve certain autonomies and later to reassert itself. In the East society was "nationalized." While the western response prepared the way for capitalism, the eastern variant consolidated feudalism in a new and stronger form.<sup>5</sup>

Szucs also notes that there was no uniform pattern of response to the crisis in the intermediate region, East Central Europe. Instead, states reacted in singular

<sup>4</sup> Agnes Heller makes this neglected point in "On Formal Democracy" in Keane, *Civil Society*, 31. For an excellent discussion of how civil society was limited by gender see Carol Pateman, "The Fraternal Social Contract" in *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Jenő Szucs, "Three Historical Regions of Europe" in *ibid.*, 311–12, 318.

ways that combined elements of the eastern and western solutions to the crisis with varying results (Prussia and Austria were clearly more effective in their responses than the Polish Commonwealth or the Kingdom of Bohemia).<sup>6</sup> While Szucs concludes his analysis well before the modern era, these patterns had important ramifications for the emergence of civil society and representative government in subsequent eras. While the boundaries of these historic regions have fluctuated over time, it still can be argued that these three distinct historical regions exist.

Only in Western Europe did the emergence of civil society coincide to a significant degree with the idealized account presented above. Here, this process culminated in the late nineteenth century in the creation of full parliamentary democracy. Political parties representing constellations of interests became the means through which competing forces in civil society contested state power.

East Central Europe included the lands of the Habsburg and Hohenzollern monarchies. Thus it encompassed present day Germany, Austria, Hungary, much of Poland, the northern parts of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Transylvania. Here the process fell short of the fuller development of civil society achieved in Western Europe. In these areas, civil society was able to carve out limited areas of autonomy from the ruling dynastic states. However, the monarchies were also able to maintain a great deal of autonomy from civil society. Critically, parliaments were constrained with respect to the monarchy, and governments were not fully responsible to parliament. The press was subjected to greater censorship than in the West, and certain ethnic groups were subjected to legal discrimination.

The pattern of political development in this region can be summed up under the rubric of *Rechtsstaat*—a state of law. Boundaries between the state and civil society were regulated by law. Exercise of political power was codified in a well defined system of law but at the same time fell short of fully developed parliamentary democracy.

With the collapse of European empires at the end of World War I, numerous successor states were created. For a time during the ensuing interwar period civil society achieved its most elaborated development in the region, at least until the present era. Initially the press, political parties, and other organizations enjoyed a greater measure of relative freedom than before or after the two great wars. At the beginning of this period, most successor states experimented with parliamentary rule. Czechoslovakia, however, was the only country where democracy lasted for an appreciable length of time. In most of the other states, democratic experiments collapsed into dictatorship. Yet in some of these states, the structures of civil society were not subjected to the leveling (*Gleichschaltung*) that was so frightfully practiced by Stalin and Hitler.

Even in the petty dictatorships of Józef Piłsudski in Poland and Miklos Horthy in Hungary, civil society was able to maintain and defend some of its autonomy.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 322–329.

Both countries enjoyed a fairly lively press, albeit subjected to censorship, but nevertheless not an official press in the Soviet and Nazi sense. While elected by less than fair franchise<sup>7</sup> and subject to limits on their ability to freely organize and in their power over the government, in both cases parliaments and political parties continued to play an important role in the system. These were dictatorships, but not dictatorships capable of inspiring the term “totalitarian” as in Germany or the Soviet Union. In the period that followed World War II, except for a short period of coalition governments from 1945–1948, civil society in those parts of East Central Europe that came under Soviet control was suppressed by the imposition of Stalinist institutions.

Szucs confines his discussion of Eastern Europe to the Russian Empire. In the Romanov dominions, the pattern of feudal society and absolute monarchy survived well into the modern era. In Russia per se there were some stirrings of the emergence of civil society. These included the *Zemstvo* (rural self-government dominated by the nobility) movement, the emergence of a *Duma* (legislature) with fairly broad power for a short period of time after the revolution of 1905, the birth of modern political parties and a modern press, and the development of councils during the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. Such stirrings were definitively and ruthlessly squashed by Stalin’s revolution from above.

The areas of Southeastern Europe, which remained under Ottoman domination into the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, might be understood as akin to the Eastern European pattern, particularly with reference to development of civil society. While Ottoman political and economic development differed greatly from Romanov, it also strongly retarded the development of civil society.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, the autonomous social organization that did emerge in the Balkans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was destroyed, except in Greece, when the region fell within Stalin’s sphere of influence.

#### FROM DISSIDENCE TO OPPOSITION

During the 1970s, some opponents of the communist system in East Central Europe changed their resistance strategy from what has been described as dissidence to what I will term opposition. It is the difference between these two

<sup>7</sup> For details on the electoral process in Poland and Hungary, see Andrew C. Janos, “The Politics of Backwardness in Continental Europe,” *World Politics* 41 (April 1989): 343; and Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 63–64, 69–72.

<sup>8</sup> For accounts of Ottoman organization in the Balkans and its long-term political and economic effects, see Robert Brenner, “Economic Backwardness in Eastern Europe in Light of Developments in the West” in Daniel Chirot, ed., *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press); Fikret Adanir, “Tradition and Rural Change in Southeastern Europe During Ottoman Rule” in *ibid.*; Gail Stokes, “The Social Origins of Eastern European Politics” in *ibid.*; Ivo Banac, “Political Change and National Diversity,” *Daedalus* 119 (Winter 1990); and George Schöpflin, “The Political Traditions of Eastern Europe,” *Daedalus* 119 (Winter 1990).

strategies and their practical achievements that made the reconstruction of civil society under communist rule possible. Dissidence emerged as a response to the collapse of the revisionist project of creating socialism with a human face in both Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1968, and the stark conservatism of the Brezhnev era that followed.

In the USSR the varieties of dissidence were typified by three outstanding figures: Aleksander Solzhenitsyn (traditional, religious, and nationalist in orientation); Andrei Sakharov (liberal and civil libertarian in orientation); and Roy Medvedev (in-party and appealing for a return to a “true” Leninist orientation). In a number of countries there were important dissident revisionists. In Hungary the Budapest School of Humanist Marxism was quite influential, until several of its important thinkers emigrated and younger activists switched to an oppositional mode of politics. In Yugoslavia the Praxis Group continued in this vein as did Rudolf Bahro and Robert Havemann in East Germany. In Bulgaria and Rumania harsh repression stymied almost all attempts at resistance. In Poland and Czechoslovakia dissenters remained on the defensive in the wake of post-1968 repression until the emergence of opposition revived resistance in both countries.

Dissidence was in essence a form of moral suasion; it addressed grievances to the party-state, chastising it as to how it should act.<sup>9</sup> After revisionism failed to bring the party-state under the control of reformers, some critical Marxists continued to struggle for a more humane socialism. However, after 1968, dissident Marxists were marginalized within ruling parties or forced to leave them. At this juncture, revisionist Marxism lost its rationale and would become increasingly irrelevant with the shift to oppositional resistance strategies. Other dissidents made their appeals from outside the framework of the party and Marxism, most often on the basis of liberal or traditional values.

For dissidence as a strategy to have succeeded, ruling elites would have had to heed the suggestions of dissidents. In retrospect, considering the ultraconservative nature of the rule in the region at this time, the prospect of dissidence bringing about real change was clearly limited. Ultimately, it was reduced to the articulation of an agenda of change without any concrete program to implement it, except a hope that those in power would listen.

The change from a dissident to an oppositional resistance strategy was marked by a shift of focus. Oppositionists ceased to be preoccupied with telling the party-state authorities how to act and concentrated their efforts on society as the basis for resistance. One of the earliest theorists to advocate this new position was the exiled Polish philosopher, Leszek Kołakowski, who was still quite influential in intellectual circles in Poland. In his essay, “Hope and Hopelessness,” he

<sup>9</sup> Janos Kis and Gyorgy Bence, writing under a pseudonym, observed that, “Even those people who have criticized the policies of the apparatus in the name of the working class have in fact addressed themselves to the apparatus and not to the working class itself.” Marc Rakovski, *Towards an East European Marxism* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1978), 105.



broke with the prevailing pessimism about the possibility of democratic political change in Eastern Europe after the Soviet normalization of Czechoslovakia. Given Poland's relation to the USSR, the prospects for democratic political reform seemed almost hopeless, yet Kolakowski found hope in the path of reform because he felt Soviet-type systems were entangled in a web of unresolvable contradictions.<sup>10</sup> Because the existing system was only able to maintain itself by preventing resistance on the part of society, Kolakowski believed that the system could be reformed by countertendencies of social resistance that exploited these contradictions. Thus he held out hope for a "reformist orientation in the sense of a belief in the possibility of effective, gradual, and partial pressures, exercised in a long-term perspective of social and national liberation."<sup>11</sup>

This thread was picked up from Kolakowski by certain members of the opposition in Poland in the mid-1970s, notably Jacek Kuroń and Adam Michnik, who developed this gradual long-term strategy even further. Both of them were important activists in the first group that effectively translated this new strategy into a practical politics, the Workers' Defense Committee [Komitet Obrony Robotników] (KOR). Though others had similar theoretical insights — philosophers Gyorgy Bence and Janos Kis in Hungary<sup>12</sup> and Vaclav Havel and others associated with the Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia<sup>13</sup> — nowhere did the strategy have such practical success as in Poland.

This shift in orientation from dissidence to opposition is dramatically illustrated in the political development of Jacek Kuroń. In the mid-1960s, he and Karol Modzelewski advocated a program of self-managing socialism in which workers and peasants, not the party, would exercise the key role in political and economic decision making. Yet they articulated their thoughts in a famous "Open Letter to the Party" and not to workers and peasants themselves.<sup>14</sup> Later Kuroń in his "Reflections on a Program of Action" would advocate change effected by social movements exerting pressure from below.<sup>15</sup>

Michnik succinctly summed up this shift to society in his highly influential essay "The New Evolutionism":

<sup>10</sup> Leszek Kolakowski, "Hope and Hopelessness," *Survey* 17 (Summer 1971): 42–48.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>12</sup> In particular, their chapter "The Intellectuals" on the possibility of a *samizdat* "counter-public sphere" created by critical intellectuals was an important contribution. Rakovski, *Towards an East European Marxism*, 39–72.

<sup>13</sup> Vaclav Benda coined the notion of a "parallel polis" alongside the existing system. It was adopted by others such as Havel in his essay "The Power of the Powerless." See Steven Lukes, "Introduction" and Vaclav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless" in Vaclav Havel, et al., *The Power of the Powerless* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1985), 11–12, 78–81.

<sup>14</sup> See Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski, *List otwarty do partii* [Open Letter to the Party] (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1966), 76–89.

<sup>15</sup> Jacek Kuroń, "Myśli o programie działania," [Reflections on a Program of Action] *Polityka i Odpowiedzialność* (London: Aneks, 1984), 124–142.



Such a programme of evolution should be addressed to independent public opinion and not just to the totalitarian authorities. Instead of acting as a prompter to the government, telling it how to improve itself, this programme should tell society how to act. As far as the government is concerned, it can have no clearer counsel than that provided by social pressure from below.<sup>16</sup>

In Poland the emergence of a range of social movements in the late 1970s marked the emergence of the first opposition in the Soviet bloc. Those efforts would later culminate in the birth of Solidarity and the reconstruction of a civil society in Poland.

#### DEMOCRATIZATION AND THE RECONSTITUTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY

As a result of the radical reforms and revolutions of 1989–1990 in East Central Europe, new elites throughout the region have committed themselves to democratizing political life in their countries. Clearly the reconstitution of civil society as a step in creating forms of authority dependent on societal consent is an essential part of this process. Civil society is a necessary condition for democratic government.

In order to understand the relationship of civil society to democratization and whether it is or can be more than a necessary condition for democracy I will comparatively analyze the differing roles that the reconstitution of civil society played in the democratic breakthroughs in the four countries of East Central Europe. The case of Poland is a particularly striking one. Here the reconstitution of civil society preceded that of the other countries in the region by ten years and remains the only East Central European case of the self-liberation of civil society.<sup>17</sup>

#### *The Polish Case*

The first step in the self-liberation of civil society in Poland was the successful implementation of an oppositional rather than a dissident resistance strategy in response to the crushing of the workers' strikes of June 1976.<sup>18</sup> The most important social actor in the creation of this opposition was the Workers' Defense

<sup>16</sup> Adam Michnik, "The New Evolutionism," *Survey* 22 (Summer/Autumn 1976): 274.

<sup>17</sup> There is evidence that similar self-liberations have occurred under a rather different set of circumstances in the Slovenian and Croatian republics of multinational Yugoslavia. For details see Paul Shoup, "Crisis and Reform in Yugoslavia," *Telos* 79 (Spring 1989): 141–43; and Tomaz Mastnak, "Civil Society in Slovenia: From Opposition to Power," *Studies in Comparative Communism* 23 (Autumn/Winter 1990): 305–14. I am grateful to Paul Shoup for alerting me to the significance of these events. Whether recent events in a number of the former Soviet republics can be seen in a similar light cannot be discounted.

<sup>18</sup> For details on this strike movement, see Michael Bernhard, "The Strikes of June 1976 in Poland," *East European Politics and Societies* 1 (Fall 1987): 363–92.

Committee (KOR). It was founded specifically to help those repressed by the party-state in the aftermath of the strikes.<sup>19</sup> KOR began the work of carving out public space in Poland by maintaining itself outside the official structure of party-state political life. In waging an amnesty campaign for the repressed, KOR also played the definitive role in creating an underground or *samizdat* press with a regular circulation.

KOR's foundation and practice inspired others in Poland to form organizations and to contest state policy. Some of these organizations belonged to the larger milieu of the KOR movement and benefited from direct support by the committee. Additionally, other oppositional groups with different political or ideological orientations competed with KOR. Opposition grew to a respectable size, then quite unprecedented in the Soviet bloc, in the period prior to the strike wave of July–August 1980. This broader movement became highly differentiated in terms of the functions played by different organizations, their political orientations, and their social composition. By the end of the 1970s, the proliferation of various organizations and movements, their geographic dispersion, the growing participation of society in their activities, and the broad dissemination of the underground press liberated the public space in Poland, and the actors arrayed within it were positioned as a potential basis for a reconstituted civil society.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, this array of social movements, organizations, and initiatives had developed a self-defense capability that forced the party-state to tolerate their existence. This was critical in establishing the boundaries of the public space and in enforcing the state-society separation critical to reconstitution of civil society. The opposition also developed capabilities to apply pressure upon the party-state to compel it to change certain unacceptable policies. This development marked the beginning of the process of curtailing state autonomy from interests in society.

While these developments were important landmarks in the self-liberation of civil society in Poland, they still fell short of a full reconstitution of civil society. This was because the Polish party-state had still made no *de jure* recognition of the opposition, its right to exist, or the boundaries of the public space it had carved out. The fact that the existence of these movements was based on their ability to defend themselves and the public space in the face of a hostile state makes these developments something less than the reconstitution of civil society.

Still, from the perspective of the late 1970s, this was a novel and unprecedented development. The Polish opposition liberated the public space that civil society came to occupy. This remains the only unambiguous case to date in Eastern and East Central Europe where an opposition created an extensive public space on

<sup>19</sup> For details on KOR's foundation, see Michael Bernhard, *The Origins of Democratization in Poland: Workers, Intellectuals, and Oppositional Politics, 1976–1980* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), chap. 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 6.

a national scale on the basis of its own power and successfully maintained its boundaries vis-à-vis the state through practices of social self-defense. This is the space into which Solidarity and other independent movements of the 1980s would emerge.

However, it is only with the strikes of the summer of 1980 that we can talk about the reconstitution of civil society in Poland. The massive working-class strike waves accomplished something that the opposition movements of the 1970s did not. In accepting the twenty-one demands of the Gdańsk Agreement (as well as the agreements negotiated in Szczecin and Jastrzębie-Zdrój), the Polish party-state legally recognized the boundaries of the public space and the autonomy of the organizations situated within it. The accords of the summer of 1980 and the subsequent struggles over their implementation marked the reconstitution of civil society in Poland, albeit only for a short time.

General Wojciech Jaruzelski's declaration of a martial law in 1981 temporarily disrupted the reconstitution of civil society by withdrawing legal recognition of independent organizations within the public space and attempting to destroy the organizations themselves. It was ultimately unsuccessful in this attempt, because the social forces of the deinstitutionalized civil society were able to organize a broad underground self-defense movement.<sup>21</sup>

Polish politics throughout most of the 1980s lapsed into a stalemate. The party-state was unable to successfully reform the stagnant Polish economy or to fully isolate the opposition from its sources of social support. The opposition, while successfully defending the public space and its organizational integrity, was unable to regain its legal status or to compel the regime to make much needed reforms of the economy and the political system. This deadlock was finally broken in late 1988 after two small strike waves led the party-state to seek compromise out of fear of further deterioration of the economy and renewed working-class unrest. Making use of the expanded room for maneuver afforded by Mikhail Gorbachev's leadership in the Soviet Union, the party-state regime entered into roundtable negotiations on reform with Solidarity as the only seemingly palatable alternative.<sup>22</sup>

The unexpected and spectacular results of these negotiations are well known. In brief, the party-state legally recognized Solidarity and other independent movements and allowed them to legally contest partially free elections. This development reinstitutionalized civil society after an eight year hiatus. Further-

<sup>21</sup> For details on the underground, see Maciej Lopinski, Marcin Moskit, and Mariusz Wilk, *Konspira, Solidarity Underground* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); and Michael T. Kaufman, *Mad Dreams, Saving Graces—Poland: A Nation in Conspiracy* (New York: Random House, 1989).

<sup>22</sup> I address developments in the 1980s in more detail in "Legitimation and Instability: The Fatal Link," Program on Central and Eastern Europe, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University, Working Paper Series 2, 1990, 42–52.

more, by unexpectedly allowing the forces within civil society to contest a number of seats in parliament, the party-state established institutional mechanisms for civil society to articulate its interests and even contest state power. By triumphing decisively in the elections and forcing the formation of a Solidarity-led coalition government, Solidarity took reform beyond the reconstitution of civil society and ventured into the realm of the reestablishment of parliamentary democracy.

Thus in Poland we see a unique relationship between the reconstitution of civil society and democratization. Civil society's self-liberation, growing out of the opposition movement of the 1970s, Solidarity's period of legal existence in 1980–1981, and the Solidarity underground of the 1980s were the driving forces behind the democratization of Polish politics. Not only was the Polish opposition able to carve out public space, but it also secured the legal guarantees necessary for a civil society. The actors in turn were able to affect a radical diminution in the autonomy of state from society by a program of democratization that has made the exercise of state power directly dependent on the support of social forces within civil society.

The central purpose of this article is to understand the role of civil society in the democratic transitions in East Central Europe. Were generalizations just to be drawn from Poland, a case where civil society liberated itself in a struggle for democracy, we might be tempted to conclude that civil society was the driving force behind democratization in the region as a whole. In the next sections, I will use the secondary literature on the democratic transitions in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany to see if such comprehensive claims about civil society are warranted.

To do so, I will comparatively analyze the role that the reconstitution of civil society played in the democratic breakthroughs in these three other cases. The Polish pattern will serve as the standard of comparison. By treating martial law as a temporary interruption, the Polish democratic transition can be understood in fairly linear terms. The self-liberation of civil society in Poland began with the formation of opposition movements. These movements then were able to effectively liberate and defend a public space from the party-state. Later they were able to compel the party-state to legally recognize their existence and the boundaries of the public space. This civil society was able to coexist for a time with a moribund authoritarian regime. Social forces within this reconstituted civil society then negotiated a compromise with the regime, which allowed them to contest state power through parliamentary elections. They continued and expanded the process of democratizing the state itself after triumphing at the polls.

In comparing Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia to Poland, I will pay attention to the extent to which opposition developed, whether it was able to liberate the public space and acquire the legal sanctions necessary for the reconstitution of civil society, and whether this played a role in the democratic breakthrough in each country.

## Hungary

On the surface there are a number of similarities between the Polish and Hungarian cases. After many of the important figures of the humanist Marxist Budapest school were sent into exile in 1973, an opposition began to emerge later in the decade. The Hungarian opposition was second only to the Polish in terms of development. It sponsored a number of modestly successful initiatives and averted full-scale repression. One of its more impressive successes was in the field of independent underground publishing, where the Hungarians brought out a number of books and several periodicals on a regular basis.<sup>23</sup> Some activists also established a Foundation for the Support of the Poor (SZETA). Over time such initiatives came to be joined by programs of uncensored lectures patterned on the Polish Flying University,<sup>24</sup> independent ecological movements such as The Danube Circle (*Duna Kor*), and peace movements like Dialogue (*Dialogus*).

Dialogue was able to stage a number of peaceful demonstrations in Budapest,<sup>25</sup> and to engage western peace movements in discussion on peace and human rights.<sup>26</sup> The Hungarian ecologists were also able to stage a number of protests.<sup>27</sup> The most impressive of these centered on the joint Czechoslovak-Hungarian Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros dam project, which evoked coordinated international protest.<sup>28</sup>

In the mid-1980s the scope of public involvement began to grow modestly. One change was a rise in the number of public demonstrations, which often included organized speakers and agendas. These demonstrations tended to draw larger crowds when they commemorated important events in Hungarian history, for example, the revolutions of 1848 and 1956, or protested maltreatment of the Hungarian minorities in Slovakia and Transylvania.<sup>29</sup>

While the Hungarian opposition managed to achieve modest success, it did not grow as extensively or become as differentiated as its Polish counterpart. It

<sup>23</sup> Underground books began to appear in Hungary in 1977 and were joined by a number of journals beginning in 1979. The first independent publishing house (AB) began to function in 1981.

<sup>24</sup> For more information on the Flying University in Poland see Bernhard, *Origins*, chap. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Andras Bozoki, "Critical Movements and Ideologies in Hungary," *Sudosteuropa* 37 (July-August 1988): 381.

<sup>26</sup> Bill Lomax, "The Hungarian Peace Movement," *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 6 (Winter 1982-83): 35-6.

<sup>27</sup> Andras Korosenyi, "The Emergency [sic] of Plurality Trends and Movements in Hungary's Society in the Mid-1980s," *Sudosteuropa* 37 (November-December 1988): 646; H. Gordon Skilling, *Samizdat and an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989), 184; and Gabor Revesz, *Perestroika in Eastern Europe, Hungary's Economic Transformation* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), 128.

<sup>28</sup> Janusz Bugajski and Maxine Pollack, *East European Fault Lines: Dissent, Opposition and Social Activism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), 212, 214; and Jacques Rupnik, "Central Europe or Mitteleuropa?" *Daedalus* 119 (Winter 1990): 264.

<sup>29</sup> Revesz, *Perestroika*, 128; Skilling, *Samizdat*, 186; and Timothy Garton Ash, *The Use of Adversity* (New York: Random House, 1989), 226-7.

carved out a limited public space, but was confined largely to the capital city, Budapest, and to a small number of intellectuals of liberal and social democratic orientation.

Hungary differs considerably from Poland in that the reform wing of the party played a critical role in promoting the reconstitution of civil society. Polish communists were forced to comply with the demands of well organized movements in an already extensively liberated public space; the Hungarian reform communists intervened to prevent such a development. The impetus behind this action was the exhaustion of the Kadarist path of reform. Reformers such as Imre Pozsgay, Reszo Nyers, and Miklos Nemeth saw that the economic reforms had come to a political dead end due to the inability of Janos Kadar and the party's conservative wing to move beyond limited marketization as Hungary's economy stagnated and living standards deteriorated. Political reform thus emerged as a prerequisite to a solution of economic difficulties. At a party conference held in May 1988, Kadar and a number of supporters were eventually ousted from the Politburo and Central Committee.<sup>30</sup> Kadar was replaced as general secretary by a low-key party bureaucrat, Karoly Grosz, who later was replaced in response to even greater pressure for a radical transformation of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party.

Considering the deterioration of the economy and the stirrings of opposition, the situation in Hungary was beginning to look pre-Polish. The Budapest critical intelligentsia consolidated their activity in a network of independent initiatives in fall 1987. They were joined in the late 1980s by new intellectual organizations such as an independent student movement—the League of Young Democrats [FIDESZ], some small independent unions,<sup>31</sup> and a better coordinated environmental movement.<sup>32</sup> A key development was the foundation of the Hungarian Democratic Forum in September 1987. It represented a new type of opposition, encompassing more traditional Hungarian populists and nationalists, many from outside Budapest.<sup>33</sup> The forum espoused a “third way” between western capitalism and Soviet communism. Its ideal was a “garden Hungary” of local communities with a multiparty system and a mixed market economy. It also put greater stress on local and economic autonomy—cooperatives, small farms, workers' councils, local self-government, etc.<sup>34</sup>

At this juncture, party reformers in Hungary also made use of Gorbachev's window of opportunity to push forward with more radical reforms including

<sup>30</sup> Revesz, *Perestroika*, 125–7; and Charles Gati, “Reforming Communist Systems: Lessons from the Hungarian Experience” in William E. Griffith, ed., *Central and Eastern Europe, The Opening Curtain* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), 235–6.

<sup>31</sup> Laszlo Urban, “Hungary in Transition, the Emergence of Opposition Parties,” *Telos* 79 (Spring 1989): 114.

<sup>32</sup> Bugajski and Pollack, *East European Fault Lines*, 215.

<sup>33</sup> Bozoki, “Critical Movements,” 383–4.

<sup>34</sup> Andras Bozoki, “Post-Communist Transition: Political Tendencies in Hungary,” *East European Politics and Societies* 4 (1990): 223.



the reestablishment of parliamentary democracy. Since the Hungarian opposition was still very limited in scope, reformers began to encourage its development so that it would have a credible partner in the reform process. The party literally acted as a catalyst in the reconstruction of civil society.<sup>35</sup> It did not do so for altruistic reasons. Some reformers like Pozsgay were genuinely popular and felt that a renovated Communist party could continue to play a role because of its history of reform and relative tolerance, and its success in promoting stability and relative prosperity after 1956.

In late 1987 the regime began informal discussions with official mass organizations, the established opposition, and new groups on the shape of reform.<sup>36</sup> Soon thereafter independent groups were officially allowed to form parties and other associations to become the state's partner in the process of democratization and further marketization of the economy. In the fall of 1988, historical parties such as the Smallholders and the Social Democrats were reconstituted by their surviving leaders.<sup>37</sup> This sequence of events initiated a process whereby the party tactically retreated from its controlling positions without obstructing the development of political competitors.

The reevaluation of the Revolution of 1956 was a key issue in both the struggle within the party and the activation of Hungarian society. The reinterment of the corpse of Imre Nagy, the executed leader of the revolution, from an unmarked grave to a place of honor in June 1989 was a watershed. For Hungarian society it represented a long overdue vindication of their actions in 1956 and a repudiation of both the Soviet invasion and Kadar's repressive policies during his initial period as party chief (1956–1961). The reburial also had a catalytic effect within the ruling party. Grosz was effectively demoted at the next Central Committee Plenum from first secretary to the only traditional party loyalist in a new collective party executive, the Presidium, which he shared with the reformers Nyers, Pozsgay, and Nemeth. Grosz eventually left the party when it transformed itself into the Hungarian Socialist Party.

Roundtable negotiations in June 1989 set free elections for the spring of 1990.<sup>38</sup> A coalition of conservative parties led by the Democratic Forum was able to

<sup>35</sup> This aspect of the Hungarian pattern of democratization became manifest in a conversation I had with Laszlo Schiffer, the head of the independent union of film industry workers. Schiffer spoke about how he as the head of a tiny union found himself thrust into the role of a full partner in discussions on the future of trade unions in Hungary. Reform Communist Imre Pozsgay, who became a prominent force in politics as general secretary of the People's Patriotic Front (a broad-based transmission belt to society), seems to have played a strong role in promoting greater societal activism in support of reform. He, for instance, attended some of the early meetings of the Hungarian Democratic Forum as an observer. Also his supervision of the press in the late 1980s allowed the official Hungarian press to become an important independent and critical voice for reform. See Urban, "Hungary in Transition," 114, 116.

<sup>36</sup> Elemer Hankiss, "In Search of a Paradigm," *Daedalus* 119 (Winter 1990): 205.

<sup>37</sup> Urban, "Hungary in Transition," 116.

<sup>38</sup> Hankiss, "In Search of a Paradigm," 205 n. 47.



defeat the Alliance of Free Democrats (organized by the Budapest-based urban opposition), the Socialist Party (the reform Communists), and others.<sup>39</sup>

### *East Germany*

Prior to the East German Revolution of 1989, there was only scattered resistance in the German Democratic Republic, mostly antiwar and ecological protest.<sup>40</sup> In comparison to the other countries of East Central Europe, opposition on human rights grounds and regular underground publishing got a late start.<sup>41</sup> New opposition movements, however, remained fairly isolated from society at large because of the efficiency of the East German security apparatus and because the regime had at its disposal a highly effective, low-cost repressive option—deportation to West Germany. This made it very easy for the security service to decapitate initiatives before they could gain political momentum.

This option ceased being effective in summer 1989, when large numbers of East Germans began to use Hungary's newly opened border with Austria to flee to the Federal Republic. This flight, combined with Gorbachev's refusal to sanction mass repression of demonstrators demanding change on the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the DDR in October 1989, shook the Honecker leadership.

The inability of the Honecker regime to bring an end to the demonstrations either by repression or promises of reform led to its downfall. A group of prominent communists from the ruling group who were more open to dialogue with society, including Egon Krenz, Gunter Schabowski, and Hans Modrow, replaced Erich Honecker and his more rigid supporters.

Krenz decided drastic action was necessary to stop the flight of East Germans westward. This flight symbolically was a ringing denouncement of forty years

<sup>39</sup> For a summary of the political tendencies in Hungary, see Bozoki, "Post-Communist Transition," 228–9.

<sup>40</sup> Some of the more important works chronicling and analyzing these movements include Roger Woods, *Opposition in the GDR under Honecker, 1971–85: An Introduction and Documentation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986); Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Nascent Civil Society in the German Democratic Republic," *Problems of Communism* 38 (March–June 1989); Bruce Allen, *Germany East, Dissent and Opposition* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1989); Werner Volkmer, "East Germany: Dissenting Views During the Last Decade" in Rudolf Tokes, ed., *Opposition in Eastern Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1979); and Michael J. Sodaro, "Limits to Dissent in the DDR: Fragmentation, Co-optation, and Repression" in Jane Leftwich Curry, ed., *Dissent in Eastern Europe* (New York: Praeger, 1983).

<sup>41</sup> Sodaro speaks of many of the problems faced by resistance movements in the GDR (See "Limits to Dissent," 82–116). Explicit human rights activism was pursued by the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights which became active in late 1985–early 1986 (Allen, *Germany East*, 133–6). In June 1986, it also began to publish a regular bulletin, *Grenzfall* (Borderline Case) which was often disrupted by police harassment (Tismaneanu, "Nascent Civil Society," 104, 110; and Allen, *Germany East*, 168–9). Publications also appeared under the auspices of the Lutheran Church, but these were subject to very restrictive official limits on print runs.

of Socialist Unity Party (SED) rule, and also the disappearance of large numbers of skilled laborers threatened to paralyze the East German economy. On the evening of 9 November, Schabowski, now official party spokesman, announced that restrictions on travel to West Germany would be abolished. Throngs of East Germans then forced the crossing points to West Berlin, and the whole dynamic of the East German events was radically transformed. Not only would East Germany never be the same, but the notion of a divided Germany collapsed.<sup>42</sup>

A new government with Modrow as prime minister began to negotiate for reform and free elections with independent political groups, most notably the New Forum, an umbrella group of different activists who began to channel to the regime the demands of the demonstrators. While this emerging opposition was able to compel the new leadership to enter into roundtable negotiations on free elections, both partners were soon rendered irrelevant by the actions of the demonstrators and the response of West German political parties to their demands. Reports on the life style of Honecker and his supporters, corruption, and the activities of the Security Service (*Staatsicherheit* or *Stasi*) as well as the inability of the new leadership to adapt to the growing radicalism of the demonstrators all led to the rapid evaporation of any credibility that the SED still had. Attempts to regroup as the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) under the leadership of Gregor Gysi did little to stem this irrelevance.

The New Forum also failed to respond to the radicalization of the demonstrators. The forum's activists still for the most part were partisans of a third way, who wanted to salvage certain aspects of the social system of the DDR in combination with a more democratic political system. They had been quite effective in galvanizing discontent when the demonstrators had been chanting "We are the people" to emphasize their demand for democratization. However, when the crowds began to chant "We are one people,"<sup>43</sup> which expressed their desire for reunification and a comparable standard of living to that of the Federal Republic, the New Forum failed to adequately respond to these demands.

When the demonstrators pushed the subject of reunification to the top of the political agenda, West German political parties began to assist local forces in the campaign for the upcoming elections. The East German party structure came to roughly mirror that of the Federal Republic. In short, political parties from the other Germany intervened in the DDR and in concert with local forces began to organize civil society along the West German pattern.

Thus in East Germany we see a markedly different relationship between the reconstitution of civil society and democratization from the indigenous Hungarian and Polish patterns because of the postwar division of Germany. The existence of the Federal Republic as an alternative vision of how German society might be organized had a decisive influence on how the Honecker regime fell.

<sup>42</sup> For an excellent summary of the events of 9 November, see Elizabeth Pond, "A Wall Destroyed: The Dynamics of German Unification in the GDR," *International Security* 15 (Fall 1990): 48–9.

<sup>43</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern* (New York: Random House, 1990), 72.

While the nascent opposition in East Germany, typified by the New Forum, was able to negotiate with the short-lived Krenz regime on behalf of the demonstrators for the liberation of the public space and the holding of free elections, it was not this opposition that came to dominate the newly liberated public space. Before East German civil society had a chance to reconstitute itself in a unique and indigenous fashion, the radical demands of the demonstrators for reunification permitted West German political parties to take a decisive role in shaping the political contours of the public space. Thus East German civil society has come to resemble an extension of that of the Federal Republic, and this in all probability will become even more marked now that the two Germanies have merged.

### *Czechoslovakia*

The Czechoslovakian case bears certain similarities to East Germany. Opposition was quite weak; mass demonstrations rather than the pressures exerted by an opposition led to the reconstitution of Czechoslovakian civil society and the democratization of the political system. The genesis of the Czechoslovakian opposition movement, as well as its weakness, was a direct result of years of effective repression by the Husak regime in the aftermath of the Prague Spring of 1968. Efforts to organize resistance to the party-state were made in the late 1970s by Charter 77 and the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted (VONS).<sup>44</sup> Charter's activities in some sense lay on the border of dissidence and opposition.<sup>45</sup> Much of its activity was geared toward demanding that the party-state authorities observe the human rights standards of Basket III of the Helsinki Accords. Charter also circulated a number of critical manifestos, analyses, reports, and worked to create a modest underground publishing sector. It also conducted a dialogue with western peace movements on questions of human rights and peace,<sup>46</sup> which later found an echo in Czechoslovak society.<sup>47</sup>

Charter did not aspire to become a mass movement.<sup>48</sup> It also was subject to exceptionally strong repression, which effectively isolated it from the population at large. Thus development of an unofficial public space and alternative institu-

<sup>44</sup> H. Gordon Skilling has done a masterful job of chronicling and analyzing the fortunes of Charter 77 and VONS in two studies: *Samizdat and an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989); and *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981).

<sup>45</sup> Within Charter, some participants were more concerned with conveying information to the "appropriate authorities" rather than reaching the broader public. Skilling, *Samizdat*, 27. Later, other Chartists participated in the formation of a new organization with a more oppositional outlook, the Movement for Civil Liberties. In October 1988, this group's founding declaration called for "liberal democracy, rule of law, and a mixed economy." See Ash, *The Uses of Adversity*, 237.

<sup>46</sup> See Jan Kavan and Zdena Tomin, eds., *Voices from Prague: Czechoslovakia, Human Rights and the Peace Movement* (London: European Nuclear Disarmament and Palach Press, 1983).

<sup>47</sup> See Ash, *The Uses of Adversity*, 69.

<sup>48</sup> Skilling, *Samizdat*, 45.

tional development in Czechoslovakia lagged behind that of Hungary and Poland. VONS was specifically organized to defend Chartists arrested and harassed by the security apparatus. Czechoslovakia also possessed a small but imaginative aesthetic counterculture. While this sphere was highly dynamic, its efforts were aimed at securing private space independent of state interference rather than political activity. Despite this, Charter defended independent cultural figures who ran afoul of the authorities on more than one occasion.<sup>49</sup>

In the late 1980s the climate of fear and the effectiveness of repression in Czechoslovakia began to decline. The replacement of Gustav Husak, the aging head of the Czechoslovak Communist party, with the hapless and unimpressive Milos Jakes and reform in the Soviet Union both played a role in this. Public demonstrations occurred with greater frequency and encompassed larger numbers of participants.<sup>50</sup> This new public activism seems to have been related to the maturity of a new age cohort for whom the Prague Spring and the most repressive early years of normalization were at best a vague memory. It was an officially sanctioned demonstration (to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the murder of a student by the Nazis) staged by students of this generation in Prague which sparked the Velvet Revolution.

After demonstrating students were roughed up by the police on 17 November 1989, the population of Prague and other cities began to demonstrate en masse against the regime.<sup>51</sup> In this climate an ideologically diverse group of oppositionists in both the Czechlands and Slovakia organized themselves respectively in the Civic Forum (*Obcanske Forum*) and Public Against violence (*Verejnost Proti Nasiliu*). Early talks with Prime Minister Ladislav Adamec did not yield concessions acceptable to the Forum and Public Against Violence. Then in rapid succession the opposition toppled Jakes, compelled Adamec to resign by rejecting his proposed concessions, and then chased Husak from the largely ceremonial office of president. This last feat was accomplished by a one-hour general warning strike, which left no doubt where the sentiments of the working class lay. The opposition was able to convince Adamec's more reform-minded successor, Marian Calfa, to incorporate opposition politicians, including Vaclav Havel as president and Aleksander Dubcek as Speaker of parliament, into an interim government. This prepared the way for free elections.

Like in East Germany, the relative weakness of the Czechoslovak opposition and the limited public space that it was able to carve out meant that democratic

<sup>49</sup> Skilling, *Charter 77*, chap. 1; and Skilling, "Czechoslovakia Between East and West" in William E. Griffith, ed., *Central and Eastern Europe, The Opening Curtain* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), 256.

<sup>50</sup> For examples, see Ash, *The Uses of Adversity*, 219, 237–8; Jeri Laber, "Fighting Back in Prague," *The New York Review of Books*, 27 April 1989, 39; and Vaclav Havel, "A Statement to the Court," *The New York Review of Books*, 27 April 1989, 41.

<sup>51</sup> For a far more detailed account of the events of November, see Ash, *The Magic Lantern*, 78–130.

change was finally affected only when the opposition was able to channel spontaneous, unorganized, mass demonstrations to force far-reaching concessions from the party-state authorities. As in East Germany, the public space and state recognition of its boundaries was secured before there was extensive autonomous development of movements, organizations, and initiatives. Thus civil society in Czechoslovakia was reconstituted only after the public space had been carved out by a spontaneous popular insurgence that the opposition was able to mobilize against the party-state.

### CONCLUSION

Poland, Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia now find themselves confronting the difficult task of consolidating democracy. For these attempts to succeed, the existence of a civil society compatible with a democratic state is an absolute necessity. Yet at the same time the role that the reconstitution of civil society played in each country's democratic breakthrough was quite different. In Poland, the process originated in the mid-1970s with the development of an opposition-liberated public space. The Solidarity movement was able to force the party-state regime to recognize the principle of autonomous organization and the boundaries of the public space. Civil society coexisted for a time with an authoritarian regime that tried to stifle it. When the regime found itself incapable of doing this, it acceded to demands for democratization of the political system.

In Hungary the opposition never developed to the extent that it did in Poland and remained incapable of formally institutionalizing the principle of autonomous organization or the boundaries of the more modest public space it had managed to carve out. The reconstitution of Hungarian civil society only proceeded once the party-state authorities took prophylactic action in order to avoid the sort of events that had occurred in Poland. The party-state in Hungary did not collapse as civil society liberated itself, but only after that state had intervened to create a framework for the reconstitution of civil society as a means to politically overcome the intensifying economic and political crisis.

In East Germany and Czechoslovakia effective political repression severely constrained opposition movements. The examples of Poland, Hungary, and *perestroika* in the Soviet Union created aspirations for far-reaching political change in these countries as well. When the Soviet Union demonstrated little or no desire to support stagnant antireformist regimes, the fear that had immobilized society in Czechoslovakia and East Germany began to disintegrate. These regimes toppled quickly in nonviolent revolutions by mass protest. In both cases the insurgencies from below significantly expanded the negligible public space that the oppositions had begun to create. Furthermore, the emergence of a political framework for democratic elections coincided with the legal recognition of the public space and preceded the proliferation of autonomous organization in society.

Yet the two cases differ significantly in what transpired after this point. In Czechoslovakia, the society set off on its own indigenous path of organizational development critical for the reconstitution of civil society. In East Germany, these forms were in large measure imported from West Germany as part of the framework for reunification of the nation.

In polities where civil society has been suppressed, its reconstitution is an essential part of any process to create forms of authority dependent on societal consent, including democracy. But as the interwar history of the region and the Polish case make manifestly clear, civil society can coexist with milder forms of authoritarianism and thus the existence of a civil society in itself is not a sufficient condition for democracy. Forces within civil society must establish mechanisms by which the exercise of state power is open to universal contestation and becomes dependent upon social forces within civil society.

This understanding of civil society as a necessary but not a sufficient condition for democratic government does not tell us much about what role a reconstituted civil society will play in democratization. Each one of these cases represents a unique national pattern of the reconstitution of civil society and the role that it played in the democratic breakthrough. Thus the recent experience of East Central Europe does not point to any universal conclusion about the role civil society plays in democratization or when its participation is necessary during the process.

The Polish case shows that it can be the driving force behind democratization. The other cases show it does not have to be. The only definitive conclusion that can be drawn is that the successful democratization of Soviet-type regimes will include the reconstitution of a civil society as a means to curtail state autonomy and as a basis for a new system of interest representation. These conclusions by no means exhaust the range of questions that need to be answered about the role that civil society plays in democratization. Further research is needed to understand the role that differently configured civil societies will play in the process of democratic consolidation and the transition to market economy in East Central Europe.