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# Civil Society in Reforming Communist Regimes

## The Logic of Emergence

*Marcia A. Weigle and Jim Butterfield*

Analyses of the development of a “civil society” in Soviet-type regimes began during the 1980–1981 Solidarity period in Poland, as scholars attempted to explain patterns of autonomous social participation in the face of a state-directed society.<sup>1</sup> Since 1985, as tens of thousands of unofficial groups and political parties emerged in the USSR in response to Gorbachev’s reforms of *glasnost’* and *perestroika*, the same concept of civil society has been applied there to characterize independent social activism.<sup>2</sup> Despite the ubiquitous use of the concept in both Central Europe and the USSR, there has been little attempt to compare the development of civil societies in Soviet-type regimes, largely because the USSR presents a unique case, given its particular historical experience and the indigenous development of Marxism-Leninism.<sup>3</sup> Despite the obvious national differences, however, such a comparison can prove fruitful as western political science strives to place the pieces of the posttotalitarian puzzle together from information on group activity and collective action by encouraging more systematic analyses of the causes and forms of increased social participation in reforming Communist states.<sup>4</sup>

While the swift and complex social developments in Central Europe and the USSR defy strict categorization, we base our analysis on discernible trends in civil society development as it has emerged in Central Europe and compare them with those of the (now former) Soviet case. The experience of Central Europe suggests that there are four stages in the ongoing development of civil society: defensive, in which private individuals and independent groups actively or passively defend their autonomy vis-à-vis the party-state; emergent, in which independent social groups or movements seek limited goals in a widened public sphere which is sanctioned or conceded by the reforming party-state; mobilizational, in which independent groups or movements undermine the legitimacy of the party-state by offering alternative forms of governance to a politicized society; and institutional, in which publicly supported leaders enact laws guaranteeing autonomy of social action, leading to a contractual relationship between state and society regulated eventually by free elections.

It is our contention that during the first two stages, “defensive” and “emergent,” civil society in Central Europe and the USSR can be compared on the basis of regime type. That is, the Communist regimes of posttotalitarian social systems shaped the character of civil society development. In Soviet-style regimes, systemic crises in the context of posttotalitarianism engendered the particular form of civil society development during its first two stages, as social actors attempted to protect their autonomy from party and state penetration and, when afforded the opportunity, to express their interests or press their claims in an expanded public sphere. Expanding independent activism increasingly contradicted the legitimacy and power base of the single ruling party, leading to the end of

Communist rule. Once social actors in the emerging civil societies mobilized to offer alternative forms of governance by which they attempted to institutionalize gains made by an independent society, the pattern of civil society development in Central Europe and the USSR diverged. In the latter stages of civil society development, mobilizational and institutional, the character of civil society is unique to each country and depends largely on historical precedent, political culture (especially the propensity of society to organize and the relationship of social classes), particular forms of nationalism, and the social context of institutional development.

In this article we compare the first two stages of civil society development in the Central European countries of Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia with that in the USSR on the basis of regime type and with the aim of discerning a logic in the emergence of civil society in Soviet-type regimes. The final two stages, in which social and cultural characteristics take precedence over regime type in determining civil society development, are the subject of further study. Here we begin by clarifying the context of "regime type" and "civil society" and proceed to the substance of the comparison.

### **The Context: Posttotalitarianism**

"Posttotalitarian" regimes acquired their definition as a particular type of authoritarianism in Juan Linz's well-known essay.<sup>5</sup> Linz's argument is that authoritarian regimes of the posttotalitarian type differ from other authoritarian regimes by the fact that the former have at least the intent to be "total" regarding the basic *raison d'être* of the Stalinist state. The model of the posttotalitarian state is characterized by a conflictual political process completely insulated from claims made by independent social groups, an imperfect mobilization and manipulation of social participation, the party-state's assertion of legitimacy on the basis of ideological grounds and functional performance, and the party's claim to a monopoly on value and interest representation.

The characteristics of the posttotalitarian system emphasize the party-state's predominance over social processes and refusal to allow for independent social activity, while recognizing that Stalinist methods of state dominance and coercion, resulting in the atomization of society, are no longer tenable in conditions of national diversity and modernizing societies. Whereas totalitarian regimes of the Stalinist variant emphasize centralized mobilization for party-directed fulfillment of ideological and social goals, posttotalitarian Communist regimes must deemphasize mobilization by reducing control over social processes, granting increased autonomy for select groups.<sup>6</sup>

The liberalization of posttotalitarian regimes as pertaining to increased social and national autonomy was a major theme in studies of the political process in Soviet-type societies in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In noting the impact of increased social participation, some analysts argued that Soviet-type states functioned according to a modified interest group model.<sup>7</sup> The party-state recognized certain institutional interests as legitimate but attempted to incorporate and control these interests within party-dominated institutions.<sup>8</sup> While the process of posttotalitarian politics was characterized by interest aggregation, conflict, and resolution, it was contained within the parameters of the party-state; the political process remained insulated from freely associated, nonstate social interests. During the 1980s the

inability of this model to satisfy either the needs of the regime or the aspirations of its people became a central issue precisely in the field of citizen participation: the transition from mobilized participation to free association and interest articulation prompted the study of emergent civil societies in Central Europe and the USSR. Before examining the substance of this process, we turn to the context of civil society.

### **Civil Society**

The term “civil society” has been used widely in Central Europe and the USSR, both by scholars and the activists themselves. While the term is not applied systematically by either group, one point is definite: the topic of civil society emerged in connection with Communist regimes only with the appearance of social activity based on free association, not mobilized participation, and the articulation of interests from below as well as above. Here it is necessary to clarify what is meant by civil society and how, from a theoretical standpoint, it could emerge in the context of posttotalitarianism.

As a working definition of civil society we employ a variance of a usage widely accepted in recent literature on Central Europe: the independent self-organization of society, the constituent parts of which voluntarily engage in public activity to pursue individual, group, or national interests within the context of a legally defined state-society relationship. According to this definition, civil society contains two parts. The first is a legal framework which permits social self-organization and defines the terms of the state-society relationship, thereby guaranteeing the autonomy of social groups. This is the institutional basis of civil society, a universal necessity, but one which varies from state to state according to the national contexts within which institutions and legal codes develop. Second, the identity of the social actors and the goals toward which their activity is directed further specify the character and organization of civil society. This we call the orientation of civil society, and it can vary radically from society to society, depending upon the values underlying independent activity in the public sphere.<sup>9</sup>

This distinction between the institutional basis of civil society and its orientation is a precondition for understanding how a civil society develops in particular historical and national contexts. The early contractarians stressed the institutional basis of civil society, that is, the social contract binding members of a voluntary community to common mores” for the mutual preservation of their Lives, Liberties, and Estates. . . .”<sup>10</sup> Hegel, in developing a more organic model of state-society relations, blurred the lines between the legal existence of a civil society and the substance of activity which takes place within it by asserting that the state contains civil society, so that while independent activity occurs in the realm of civil society, the orientation of social actors is in accord with the aims of state leaders, resulting in the ultimate rationality of the state-society relationship.<sup>11</sup> Marx, referring to Hegel’s organic model, eliminated all distinctions between the legal existence of an independent public sphere and the orientation of its actors. That is, any legal framework of a civil society established within the context of bourgeois social relations would necessarily be dominated by public activity oriented toward the pursuit of bourgeois interests. Alternative orientations of social actors, for example, towards workers’ interests, could never be realized within the context of a bourgeois institutional framework. Gramsci,

in politicizing Marx, saw more potential for oppositional interests to take hold within a framework of exploitative social relations and legal structures. Oppositional groups could advance their interests if they countered the hegemony of the ruling classes by developing a "war of position" in promulgating their interests in public life.<sup>12</sup> Gramsci's civil society is functional in a way that Marx's is not. As an arena of expression, interest articulation, and associational activity, civil society could be used by the working class to slowly create its own hegemony of interests, cultural orientations, and ideological outlooks to mark the prelude to its own domination of the state and the eventual absorption of the state into a civil society dominated by working class interests.

In the context of the posttotalitarian Communist rule in Central Europe, the contractual approach to independent public activity was obviously not an option.<sup>13</sup> Unable to freely choose representatives to the state and thus to influence policy or pursue private interests in a legally protected public sphere, those individuals in society who did not accept the regime's domination of public association and participation either withdrew into the private life of the family or developed alternative, underground networks of association and participation. A revolutionary overthrow or radical change of the state or its social basis of power was out of the question; this was forcibly demonstrated to independent and reformist party activists by the experiences of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. As much of the population increasingly developed its own agenda for reform in the 1970s and 1980s, the only option for independent participation was to accept the systemic boundaries of Communist rule and the regime's control over "high politics" while carving out as much autonomy as possible in an independent sphere of public activity.<sup>14</sup> The outlines of a civil society could thus develop, in a Gramscian sense, within the context of an oppressive state.<sup>15</sup> In other words, social groups would form on the basis of independently articulated interests and goals, limiting their goals to those which would not threaten the power or legitimacy of the regime. The interpretation and expression of interests would be pursued independently of (though necessarily related to) the structure of state domination and economic relations.<sup>16</sup>

The proponents of independent activity in Central Europe beginning in the 1970s thus assumed that a civil society could emerge within the parameters of the posttotalitarian state. It would do so by defending the autonomy of social actors, who through concerted participation would develop a "war of position" against the hegemonic interests of the Communist regime, while working within accepted systemic boundaries of that regime and not threatening its legitimacy. The result would be a balance of power between a state dominated by a single party which retained control over broad political and economic agendas and an increasingly autonomous society allowed to formulate private and local interests which would be realized through forms of "self-management" or "self-government." The initiative for this unique arrangement, embodied in Adam Michnik's "new evolutionism," came from social actors in Poland. The formula, from a different perspective, was applied in the form of "socialist pluralism" by Gorbachev in the USSR.

An examination of the specific set of circumstances within which civil society developed in Central Europe and the USSR, as well as the dynamic of its development, indicates that this neo-Gramscian balance between state domination and increasing social autonomy was a necessary condition of civil society development in these countries, but one that was inherently unstable and thus temporary. In Central Europe the basis of regime legitimacy

was weak, and society had the resources to provide alternative sources of governance. In the USSR, where the legitimacy of the Communist regime was tied more closely to some variants of Russian nationalism and independent groups proved less cohesive in their opposition to the regime, the period of instability was prolonged. Eventually, however, the tension inherent in a transfer of power from a reforming party-state to a society testing the limits of its participation must be resolved either by the state's retraction of participation privileges and use of coercion or the mobilization of an opposition capable of offering alternative forms of governance. Patterns of civil society development produced the paradox of continued one party rule in the context of increasingly independent and politicized social action. Here we trace the road to that paradox through an examination of the early stages of a civil society which first defended itself against party penetration and then emerged in eruptions of activity to challenge party rule.

### **Systemic Crisis: I**

Autonomous social values and activism, and thus the seeds of a civil society, developed in posttotalitarian regimes as a result of a systemic crisis. The crisis had its roots in the failure of the regimes to adequately perform self-defined functions of value formation and interest representation. In the first case, the state's unsuccessful attempt to impose its value package on the population can be considered the failure of enculturation. Touraine has noted this with respect to Poland. "Poland has always had two faces: the real country has never been entirely obscured by the official one, intellectual life has never been reduced to the dominant ideology, and the subjection to socialist realism, however brutal were the pressures which sought to impose it, was only a brief, black episode."<sup>17</sup>

Clearly, the values promulgated by the party-state were not internalized by the population.<sup>18</sup> As with the attempt in the Soviet Union to develop a new homo sovieticus, the regimes' attempts to recast the social value system in the image of the politically imposed value system failed. The official press and documents in these countries were conducted in one language, while social discourse functioned in another.<sup>19</sup> One particular value that failed to take hold was a Soviet-dominated socialist internationalism. This failure is evidenced in the national roads to communism which emerged in Soviet bloc countries after Stalin's death and the impact of the Russian nationalist intelligentsia on Communist policies in the USSR.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Communist regimes focused less on propagating socialist values than on consolidating society's increasingly complex set of interests within its own institutional framework. Having failed to recast society in its own image, posttotalitarian regimes attempted to build constituencies, especially among managers, the intelligentsia, and, most important, the workers. In claiming to represent the diverse interests of a rapidly modernizing society, the party sponsored organizations to incorporate these constituencies within the regime's organizational boundaries. As attempts to channel social participation proved unsuccessful, the incongruence between the interests of the party-state and those of society led to public expressions of discontent.

The regimes' persistent claim to hegemony of interest representation and control of channels of participation in the face of the increasing gap between private and public values

and interests led to calls for the “self-defense” of society. At this point a rejection of the party’s monopoly of both intangible (moral and cultural) and tangible (social organization) components of the social system was made explicit. Forms of the self-defense of individual and social autonomy varied from country to country, depending on institutional relationships and cultural propensities.

**The Central European Case** Poland had a long history of formal structures of self-defense: the church, underground social organizations, active workers’ groups. While most of society remained apathetic toward the formal political process,<sup>21</sup> relatively autonomous institutions and social groups were visible reminders that the party-state’s hegemonic claim to representation of social interests was tenuous at best. The Polish state tolerated these various degrees of autonomy during the defensive period for purposes of stability and accommodation. It was only when the regime needed to widen the allowable sphere of public activity during the crises of the late 1970s that these forums provided ready-made vehicles for popular input to weaken the party’s control and legitimacy.

In Hungary and Czechoslovakia, which paid the price of Soviet intervention for fostering independent social activity in 1956 and 1968, the calls for the defense of autonomous social values by the intelligentsia had to be consciously directed toward a more recalcitrant population at a more fundamental level. Thus, Vaclav Havel reminds the Czechoslovakian citizen that seemingly innocent public behavior designed to satisfy regime demands leads to moral degradation if in fact the regime’s values are not internally accepted. “Living in truth,” that is, a congruence between individual values and public behavior, even in the face of regime retaliation, became an essential element of social defense against the dominance of the party-state.<sup>22</sup> In East Germany, a group of East German pacifists recognized individual independence not as a moral, but as a civic obligation.<sup>23</sup> It was during this phase, in the 1960s and 1970s, that the notion of a “parallel polis” began to emerge in the East European literature.<sup>24</sup> In some cases, the “parallel polis” characterized moral autonomy of citizens in the face of attempts by posttotalitarian regimes to eradicate an independent public sphere, either by discouraging civic initiatives or providing party-sponsored organizations to channel social participation. The parallel polis was populated by citizens who had not internalized the values of the regime.

At times, the self-defense of society assumed an organizational form, as social actors created independent groups to prod the regime to fulfill those promises it had made to social groups or the society at large. Groups emerge in the 1970s such as the Committee for the Defense of Workers (KOR) and the Movement for the Defense of Human and Civil Rights (ROPCiO) in Poland and the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted (VONs) and Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia. KOR was created to provide workers and their families aid in the face of the regime’s brutality toward strike participants. ROPCiO and Charter 77 were groups formed by the intelligentsia to hold the regime responsible for upholding its own promises in protecting human and civil rights, put forth in domestic constitutions and as signatories of the Helsinki accords. The tendency for the self-defense of society to assume organizational forms was dependent upon the degree of identification with the regime,<sup>25</sup> the level of economic satisfaction, the autonomy of the intelligentsia and the propensity of society to organize. Thus, the most active groups emerged in Poland. In Hungary, where

individuals had more confidence in the leadership, the standard of living was higher, and the gap between party and nonparty intelligentsia was not so wide as in either Poland or Czechoslovakia, the call for self-defense was more limited.<sup>26</sup>

During the 1970s, discussions of a “parallel polis” emphasized moral autonomy as an alternative to the regime’s hegemony over official social values and representation of interests more than institutional channels of participation. There was no question of providing an alternative to party rule or even to espousing alternative forms of interest representation. Independent organizations limited their activity either to providing social groups with aid against state oppression (KOR) or to holding the state responsible for its own articulated social duties (Charter 77 and ROPCiO). The state did not concede the right of such groups to organize and make public claims, although in some cases groups were allowed to exist if their membership was limited and their goals sufficiently narrow as to not question the regime’s legitimacy.<sup>27</sup>

**The Soviet Case: Defending Autonomy** Signs of a defensive civil society appeared in the Soviet Union much as they had in Central Europe, through dissent and attempts to defend moral and legal autonomy against the onslaught of state penetration into all forms of social life. The preconditions for a latent civil society were established, as they were in Central Europe, by virtue of a systemic crisis. The party-state was unable to completely eliminate or control all forms of social independence, largely because it had proven ineffective in its claim of universal representation.<sup>28</sup> Independent groups then emerged to either respond to interests ignored by the state (in the Soviet case this was largely the dissemination of information) or to hold the state responsible for its policies. This defense against state domination took the form of the dissent movement.

Although dissidents diverged radically as to the goals of reforming the Soviet state,<sup>29</sup> they all agreed on one point: the state had no moral or legal right to deprive individuals and groups of autonomy or independent action. While much of the progressive intelligentsia was heartened by the potential of Khrushchev’s reforms to loosen the state’s control over social activity in the late 1950s, it soon became clear that decentralization of the state and liberalization of social life threatened the very core of party dominance (and thus official privilege). By the early 1960s, any long-term cooperation between the party-state and the reformist sectors of Soviet society became impossible.<sup>30</sup>

In the repressive conditions of the 1960s reformists either utilized the limited structures of expression and participation tolerated by the state or turned to underground activity. Those who went underground defined their purpose as resisting state dominance by defending the moral autonomy of individuals and society. For example, in 1973 a member of the small Democratic Movement dissident group, Dmitrii Nelidov, characterized the group’s goals as “expressing the humane in an environment where human nature was perverted and repressed. . . . [the Movement] attempted to transfer [state-sponsored reforms] to the struggle for man, for the value of human personality. It attempted to tear it out of the system of the unconscious mechanism of instilled ideological impulses.”<sup>31</sup> To aid this process and to compensate for the state’s refusal to recognize the legitimate needs of society, the Democratic Movement introduced its samizdat bulletin, *Chronicle of Current Events*, which first appeared in April 1968.<sup>32</sup>



Though some of the group's members advocated sweeping economic reforms (private property), civil liberties (freedom of speech and the press), and recognition of nationality-based demands (self-determination), the Democratic Movement as a whole recognized the prerogative of the party-state in introducing changes and initially directed its efforts toward persuading the party-state to reform itself.<sup>33</sup> In this endeavor the Democratic Movement was only one example of the increasing, though sporadic, dissent activity that developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the purpose of which was to hold the state accountable to its own legal standards. Some members of the intelligentsia sought to protect the autonomy of their actions by challenging the regime to adhere to its own standards of "socialist legality," designed to pressure the state to adhere to official legal norms. The proponents of this strategy behaved as if party and state leaders were bound by the law even though it was commonly understood that this was not the case.<sup>34</sup> Since, indeed, party and state leaders were not bound by formal legal standards, individuals using a socialist legality line of defense had no recourse to press their claims. Nonetheless, coherent independent groups formed to hold the state publicly responsible to its officially recognized commitments in domestic and international forums. Examples include the Helsinki Watch Group, Committee for Human Rights, the Russian Social Fund for Aid to Political Prisoners and Their Families, and the Working Group for the Defense of Labor and of Social and Economic Rights.<sup>35</sup>

As the authorities increased their repression of dissident groups in the 1970s, larger numbers of their members were incarcerated, banished from their places of residence, or forced to emigrate. Demoralized, some of the remaining activists advocated disbanding the groups, given their lack of effectiveness in encouraging or initiating reforms. A core of individuals, however, argued that policy change itself was not the main goal and emphasized the need to defend society from state penetration at least on a moral, if not on a policymaking level. Nelidov, for example, stressed that the increasing inability of the Democratic Movement to induce political, social, or economic reforms did not negate the impact of the group in "the struggle for the liberation of the spirit." It is this emphasis on moral autonomy and the recognition of independent values and free association in the face of state domination which leads us to compare the defense of a civil society in the USSR with that in Central Europe.

Active dissent, however, does not adequately explain the societal foundation for civil society development, especially in the Soviet case. While in Central Europe much of the population chose to retreat from public life, the complacency resulted largely from the futility of trying to change a Moscow-backed regime. There was a reserve of shared values, including a nationalist resentment of Soviet-dominated regimes, between the active dissenters and the inactive citizenry which would form the basis of concerted organizational opposition in later periods. In the USSR, the shared antiregime sentiment was not so focused. The indigenous development of Marxism-Leninism, the confluence of Soviet and Great Russian national interests, and the accomplishments of the Stalin era (industrialization and superpower status) had afforded the Soviet Communist regime more legitimacy than its counterparts in Central Europe.<sup>36</sup> This, along with the absence of a tradition of open opposition, meant that the gap between active dissenters and the general population was wider in the USSR than in Central Europe.

Indicative of this is the fact that the dissent movement encompassed a limited proportion

of the Soviet population. Most citizens, in fact, did not identify with its values.<sup>37</sup> Not only did it fail to bridge the social gap in terms of membership or sympathizers,<sup>38</sup> but there appeared to be no sense of shared values between the intelligentsia members of the dissent movement and the general population.<sup>39</sup> Given this gap, we would be remiss in identifying the Soviet dissent movement as the sole source of an embryonic civil society in the USSR. How can we bridge the gap between the relatively small number of active dissenters and the pool of social actors who would form the basis for a civil society? The answer is to be found in patterns of participation that developed during the Brezhnev period.

Since the 1917 revolution, Soviet leaders attempted to channel social participation through party sponsored and dominated organizations. Most observers of this “mobilized participation” agree that it served the purpose of regime legitimation, ritual confirmation of party rule, and control over social activity. There is less agreement as to the effectiveness of this strategy, either from the regime’s or the active citizen’s point of view. Whatever the case, it became clear that these organizations (local soviets, professional organizations, youth groups) had failed to adequately respond to the changing interests of a modernizing Soviet society. Soviet scholars describe these forms of participation as stultified, overly bureaucratic, and geared more toward the perpetuation of narrow bureaucratic and corrupt interests than to responding to the self-articulated needs of society.<sup>40</sup> The more ineffective party-sponsored channels of participation became, the more social actors turned to forms of informal association and self-organization.

In the 1970s Soviet scholars noted the emergence of social interests which diverged from those articulated by the Communist Party and began to undermine the coherence of the party-sponsored socialization process. Young people shunned official youth groups and formed or joined “informal” associations,<sup>41</sup> the “scientific and technological revolution” fostered interests among technically skilled worker and management groups that were not adequately represented by official economic and trade organizations,<sup>42</sup> and an increasingly urbanized and educated population turned to informal contacts and associations for satisfaction of their personal and professional interests.<sup>43</sup> Empirical studies conducted by western scholars confirm that significant numbers of Soviet citizens turned away from official channels of interest articulation and participation and engaged in some form of “unofficial,” unsponsored, or even illegal activity.<sup>44</sup> The active defense of autonomy on the part of the dissenters in the 1960s and 1970s coincided with a less confrontational defense sparked by changing personal and professional interests on the part of the general population. While the latter did not seek to oppose the system or the regime, the combination formed a pool of social actors ready to respond to Gorbachev’s challenge for increased social activism in the mid 1980s.

The foundation of a civil society thus developed through independent activity outside of the formal channels of the political and social structure. This defense of autonomy, movement toward self-defined interests, and self-organization, whether perpetuated actively by dissenters or passively by individuals who simply wanted a better life within the system, constitute the “defensive” stage of civil society development in the USSR.

## **Systemic Crisis: II**

The increasing turn away from official values and channels of participation by the citizens of Central Europe and the USSR made clear the failure of the party-states' claims to hegemonic value and interest representation. These failures emerged during what we call the "defensive" stage of civil society development and eradicated any hope of legitimacy on the basis of loyalty to the regime (a process hastened in Central Europe by the association of the national regimes with Soviet domination).

The regimes turned, therefore, to the "functional prerequisites" of the system, or what might more simply be called economic and political performance. As it became clear that legitimacy could not be perpetuated on the bases of shared values or common interests, the regime devised "social contracts" that would give citizens a stake in the system dependent upon party rule and the maintenance of social order. This was the conscious strategy of Kadar in Hungary<sup>45</sup> and was echoed in Brezhnev's USSR<sup>46</sup> and Husak's Czechoslovakia in the late 1960s and 1970s and by the Gierek leadership in Poland throughout the 1970s.<sup>47</sup> According to the terms of the social contract, the regime guaranteed increases in the standard of living and greater availability of consumer goods, provision of welfare benefits to the general population, and wage hikes and other incentives to blue collar workers. In return, individuals were to accept the terms of regime rule over society, including effective withdrawal from active politics and unsanctioned public association.

The economic facet of the contract, however, was not sufficient to explain the relative equilibrium in Central Europe, for, as Stephen White has shown, periods of economic decline in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia did not witness any serious threat to regime control.<sup>48</sup> There was, in fact, a political corollary to the contract whereby a relative relaxation of political controls, especially over trusted members of the nonparty intelligentsia, the cultural and professional elite, and natural scientists, gave these individuals more professional freedom in return for acceptance of party rule.<sup>49</sup> While variations developed in the type and conditions of the social contract in each of the Central European countries and the USSR, the general terms provided relative stability and precluded mass independent activity throughout the 1970s.

By the end of the decade, however, the foundations upon which the regime-formulated social contracts had been designed began to crumble. Not only were the centrally managed economies suffering persistent setbacks, but the costs of subsidizing the system's losses made it impossible for the regimes to keep up their end of the economic bargain. With the need to impose austerity measures, the regimes could no longer count on the support of their traditional constituencies, especially the workers. On the political side, leaders found that it was difficult to dole out partial freedoms to select privileged members of society without risking criticisms of their own policies and pressures for increased liberalization.<sup>50</sup> Regime-sponsored political liberalization had created its own pressures by fostering a limited plurality of interests within society while maintaining the strictures of an increasingly ineffective single-party rule.

The disintegration of the social contracts called into question the regimes' legitimacy as based upon economic and political performance. These potential crises of legitimacy prompted a regime strategy which, while based upon different sets of circumstances, became common to the countries of Central Europe and the USSR. The strategy, whether predicated

on social pressure or introduced by a reform-minded leadership, was to stave off impending crises by widening the allowable sphere of independent public activity. In recognizing an increased scope for independent activity, whether as a proactive or reactive policy, the regimes unwittingly provided the space within which civil societies could develop. Where economic crises were the catalyst of this policy, the purpose of the regime's policy was to partially transfer the burden of what would be unpopular economic reforms upon the shoulders of independent social actors. In cases of political crises, the regime found it necessary to undercut potential mass movements by recognizing the legitimacy of independent groups. In both cases, the regimes hoped to diffuse social tension by recognizing limited forms of independent activity while broadening their own base of support and keeping the system and the power of the Communist Party intact.<sup>51</sup>

This policy afforded the opportunity for social actors and groups to enter the public sphere and articulate their own interests and agendas for reform. It was at this point that the defense of individual and group autonomy turned into an emergent civil society, thrust into the open with a semilegitimacy conceded to independent actors by a reformist party-state.

**The Emergence of Civil Society: Central Europe** The first evidence of a self-organized, independent civil society in the Communist bloc appeared with the emergence of Poland's Solidarity in 1980. The movement developed as a federation of strike committees organized and supported by workers and intellectuals and presenting itself as a *fait accompli* to the party leadership. By the beginning of 1981 over eight million Poles had joined Solidarity, including a third of Communist Party members.<sup>52</sup> Solidarity's program included economic goals of enterprise self-management and decentralization of economic processes as well as political goals of restrictions on censorship and expansion of civil liberties, including free association.<sup>53</sup> The guiding framework for this self-organized activity within the context of hegemonic party rule had been developed some years earlier by Adam Michnik, a prominent figure in both KOR and Solidarity. His "new evolutionism" was a strategy of increased self-organized social activity that would empower society while accepting the leading role of the party over state functions and long-range economic planning.<sup>54</sup>

This strategy encouraged "reform and revolution that seeks an expansion of civil liberties and human rights," emanating not from reformist party circles but from social action "addressed to an independent public. . . ." <sup>55</sup> State and party-centered reform, relying both on change from within the party and the intelligentsia's appeals to the party-state for expanded civil rights, had proven ineffective in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. "New evolutionism" differed from past reformist attempts by assuming the essential "unreformability" of the party itself and holding "faith in the power of the working class" as the only way to press for increased democracy in the face of a resistant state. The new strategy of the opposition was to concede the power of the Soviet-supported Polish United Workers' Party over state functions while encouraging society to push back the boundaries of party-state control by actively pursuing increased civil liberties, freedom of expression, and autonomy of action.

The organizational development of Solidarity as an actor capable of entering the public sphere to try to influence (and perhaps make) policy raised the question of an emergent civil society coexisting with the party-state. New evolutionism assumed that an independent

social movement could attain its goals of worker self-management and citizen self-government while recognizing the party's control over national politics (including, initially, the state *nomenklatura*), economic planning, and the instruments of coercion. This neo-Gramscian approach emerged in conditions where a contractual agreement between an independent society and a responsive state was impossible. Such a contract would have involved institutional guarantees for independent social activity and independent forums for adjudication of breaches of the contract, both of which would have encroached upon traditional party prerogatives in maintaining its rule. Given the party's monopoly on coercion and the ever present Soviet threat, a self-organized independent society which recognized the hegemony of the Communist Party was the most that could be hoped for in the "realm of the possible."<sup>56</sup>

While redirecting the target of reforms and redefining, to a certain extent, the meaning of "power," Solidarity's initial impact would have been far less significant without official recognition on the part of the state of its legal existence. Stanislaw Kania, who replaced Gierek five days after the Gdansk accords were signed in August 1980, was compelled to offer such recognition given the importance of the workers to social stability and regime legitimacy. The Kania leadership intended to coopt Solidarity into the existing party-state structure, to force it to share the burden of unpopular austerity measures without allowing it to accrue any power in the process.<sup>57</sup> In Poland, the economic crisis of the late 1970s forced the party to concede a widened arena for independent (but controlled) public participation in order to avert economic disaster and social disintegration.<sup>58</sup>

In Hungary and Czechoslovakia, where regimes installed after the uprisings of 1956 and 1968 had effectively curtailed mass independent activity, the precipitating factor of an emergent civil society was as much a crisis of political as economic legitimacy.<sup>59</sup> Gorbachev's encouragement of the "creative activity of [his own] masses" as well as the Soviet Union's new restraint in its support of the Central European Communist regimes undermined the authority of Kadar's paternalist regime in Hungary and Husak's repressive strategies in Czechoslovakia, giving new impetus to independent social actors.

"New evolutionism" influenced the activities not only of Solidarity both before and after Jaruzelski's martial law of 1981 but also those of FIDESZ (the League of Young Democrats) and the HDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum) in Hungary, the Movement for Civil Liberties in Czechoslovakia, and peace groups in the German Democratic Republic in the late 1980s.<sup>60</sup> In each case there was a more conscious attempt by increased numbers of social actors to participate in independent public forums. Swiftly forming oppositional groups served either to express those nonparty values and interests hesitatingly articulated during the defensive stage or to act upon them. Groups which had narrowly defined claims during the defensive period widened their scope and formed organizational links with one another to act as vehicles for widespread social participation.<sup>61</sup> At the same time, their claims became more stridently political in demanding increased scope for independent activity and input into policymaking processes previously dominated by the ineffective Communist regime.

In Hungary, for example, the group Danube Circle had been formed in 1984 to oppose the construction of a Danubian dam, working on the assumption that its environmental goals were apolitical. By 1988, factions of the group came to the conclusion that social change could not come about without an open political struggle against the party.<sup>62</sup> In the same

period, independent groups in Hungary initiated strategies which recognized the leading role of the party while directing their appeals to an independent society. In 1987 the Hungarian opposition journal *Beszelo* published a program for “political renewal” that “accepted one party rule as given” but would move toward a “pluralism enshrined in law.”<sup>63</sup> Within a year, more radical appeals by Hungarian independent groups were made to an independent public on the basis of “society’s responsibility to participate in forming its own destiny,” given that “the ultimate guarantee and repository of democracy is a democratic, politically aware society, not the state.”<sup>64</sup> In Czechoslovakia the Movement for Civil Liberties (HOS) directed its appeals, not to the state, but to society, arguing that the latter must enter the political arena since the “totalitarian authorities” were incapable of introducing the political and economic changes necessary for the revitalization or, for that matter, the survival of the country.<sup>65</sup>

As society increasingly responded to the challenge, independent social actors become more visible and more vigorous in their activities, whether through social groups or in mass demonstrations, and the issues that defined their goals became politicized. While the ruling Communist parties were forced to concede increased participation, they tried to sabotage independent activity at every turn, through delays in legal registration, denial of access to resources (Poland and Hungary), or oppression and arrest of the most visible activists (Czechoslovakia). This Janus-faced policy of dialogue and repression backfired on the parties as splits developed over disagreements concerning the most effective strategy, coercion or increased liberalization. This fractionalization led to mass resignations from the ranks of the party (Poland in 1980) and the strengthening of reformist factions in the Communist parties which agreed to negotiate with the opposition against the wishes of the hardliners (Hungary and Czechoslovakia).<sup>66</sup> The split in the ruling parties proved an advantage to the opposition, which pressured the regimes through the vehicles of Solidarity in Poland, organized groups in Hungary, and mass demonstrations in Czechoslovakia to increase the pace of reforms. This eventually facilitated the process of the regimes’ demise.

In Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, the foundations of an independent civil society were built on the basis of social initiative from below designed to empower society in the face of Communist domination over state policies. The strategy of social actors was to accept party hegemony while carving out a realm of autonomy recognized as legitimate and legal by a state still dominated by the single party. The implication was that independent activity could be self-limiting in seeking to pursue goals that did not threaten the party’s claim to national power.

History tells us that the strategy of new evolutionism could not be sustained in the long term. Independent movements, no matter how curtailed their encroachment upon party-state functions, failed to remain self-limiting in the context of the party’s criteria for legitimacy. Reformist and fragmented Communist parties could not tolerate the implications of truly independent activity. The balance of power was thus necessarily temporary. To whose side victory fell depended, in large part, upon international circumstances and domestic politics in the USSR.

In 1981, the Jaruzelski leadership in Poland crushed a Solidarity movement that had begun to mobilize, not only its members, but the population at large. After Gorbachev elucidated new conditions for the authority of the ruling parties and Soviet intervention became less and less likely, Poland in 1988, Hungary in 1988–1989, and Czechoslovakia in

1989 experienced an emergent civil society that would quickly mobilize to overthrow the debilitated Communist regimes. Without Soviet backing, the weakened regimes faced an independent society whose members now had a choice in directing their allegiance. The first tenuous attempts to fashion an independent, self-organized civil society seeking a *modus vivendi* with the entrenched regime had resulted in a mobilization of social actors that toppled those regimes one by one. We turn now to the case of the USSR to compare patterns of civil society development in its formative stages.

**The Soviet Union** The impetus for independent participation in the USSR emanated from reformist party leaders rather than from concerted pressure of independent social actors, as was the case in Central Europe. It was Gorbachev and his supporters who publicly acknowledged the “precrisis” elements of the Soviet system. The crisis was at first defined in economic and social terms.<sup>67</sup> Eventually, the general crisis was acknowledged to have important political overtones, insofar as the CPSU had failed to gain the confidence of the Soviet public. The resolution of the crisis depended upon active social support, not only to revitalize economic and social processes, but also to counteract inevitable opposition from entrenched bureaucrats.

Beginning in 1985, reformers from the party and intelligentsia encouraged the independent activity of the masses, who would collectively participate to solve the economic and social problems which had been ignored or exacerbated by the party-state. First conceived as a public airing of discontent and opinion (*glasnost*), eventually independent participation was sanctioned within the boundaries of “socialist pluralism.” Gorbachev’s socialist pluralism, in terms of its vision of a reconstituted state-society relationship, was a state-inspired form of “new evolutionism.” While acknowledging the autonomy of individuals and groups, the reformers assumed that independent activity would be self-limited and confined within the boundaries of a party-defined socialism. Cooperation between the party-state and self-limited independent activity would result in a more vibrant economy, healthier social conditions, and a more effective political process.

In this “emergent” stage of civil society development, most reformers in the party and intelligentsia assumed that independent social activism would remain within the confines of goals articulated by the Communist Party, but one now influenced by freely expressed public input. The orientation of activity in a semi-independent civil society would necessarily be determined by a newly democratized Communist Party. Soviet social analyst Andranik Migranian noted in 1987 that:

the only real possibility for effective control by society over bodies of power is to activate civil society and to institutionalize its principle link. The efforts being exerted at present by the Party to free the activity of work collectives from the tutelage and regulation of bodies of state power (ministries and departments), and the granting to them of greater independence in dealing with the economic and social problems in their enterprises, and in society as a whole, is one of the key steps on the path toward changing the balance of forces between the bureaucracy and civil society in favor of society. . . . The CPSU, as the true leader of the working class and the Soviet people, has been the initiator and guide of this revolutionary restructuring.<sup>68</sup>

While other reformers anticipated more antagonism between social groups (representing

an emergent civil society) and the party, thus recognizing some degree of conflict as an inherent element of civil society, they also envisioned its emergence within the context of “socialist goals,” “humanistic principles,” and the basic tenets of “socialism, humanism, and democracy.” Rarely did official reformers offer any mechanism for defining those terms beyond the status quo. The tasks of defining both the goals of social development and the corresponding relationship between state and society would lie within the jurisdiction of the one-party state. Gorbachev’s vision of “socialist pluralism,” initially accepted by highly placed reformers, was based on the premise that social pluralism could coexist with the one-party state.

The language of Soviet reformers during the initial years of Gorbachev’s rule was similar to that of the Central European intelligentsia during the 1970s and early 1980s in calling for the emancipation of society from an oppressive and stultifying state. Arbatov and Batolov, for example, write that the “logical continuation of the course toward the emancipation of mass social organizations is the wide development of political and social self-activity of the national masses.”<sup>69</sup> Like observers of the emergence of civil society in Central Europe, they noted that the process of social emancipation must take place within the context of a reformist state, one willing to push back the boundaries of its own jurisdiction.

[The process can develop] . . . coming simultaneously from above, from the direction of the state, and from below, from the direction of enterprises, associations of citizens, mass organizations which do not simply applaud the party and state, but put forward alternatives stemming from the initiative of the masses, embodying their particular experience and in that, possibly, even diverging from the recommendations of the state mechanisms for the regulation of social process.<sup>70</sup>

Soviet theorists recognized the effect of the over-powerful state on the suffocation of the individual and society and called for the development of a civil society based on independent organizations and public activity free of the bureaucratic and administrative constraints of the state. They called for reconfiguring the state-society relationship to create and protect the confines of an autonomous civil society in the USSR, which would include independent mass organizations, equality of citizens before the law, a professional state apparatus, a neutral bureaucracy, and freedom of expression and communication. The state apparatus should be streamlined to make it effective in performing its duties of administration and policy implementation.<sup>71</sup> This would afford the Communist Party a legitimacy in dominating the state apparatus as long as it accepted criticism from social groups, engaged in a dialogue about policies, and reoriented its bureaucratic apparatus away from its policymaking tendencies toward more limited functions of administration.<sup>72</sup>

Gorbachev’s call for social input was met with surprising response. Between 1986 and 1988 there was an explosion of independent group activity, with approximately 30,000 “informal groups” (those not registered with the state or sponsored by the Communist Party) going public or forming anew. The goals of the groups were wideranging and diverse, including environmental, cultural, historical, nationalist, political, and social concerns. While a majority of the groups focused on problems of “everyday life,”<sup>73</sup> not fundamental political change, it was the phenomenon of independent organization itself that carried so much significance in undermining the legitimacy and authority of the Communist Party.



As in Central Europe, the Soviet Communist Party attempted to coopt informal groups into party-sponsored organizations or, when that failed, under the umbrella of party-supported popular front organizations.<sup>74</sup> While most of the groups initially supported Gorbachev's policy of *perestroika*, eventually it became obvious that the party's bureaucracy (with the support of conservative CPSU leaders) was not only sabotaging independent activity but undermining *perestroika* itself. As groups attempted to organize, local party committees and soviets refused permission for public meetings and demonstrations, delayed registration procedures that would have legalized public activity, and hindered groups' access to resources.<sup>75</sup> At the all-union level, ministry officials tried to prevent independent group activity which threatened the ministry's jurisdiction in sponsoring social projects. As party and state functionaries became more recalcitrant and aggressive in responding to social initiatives, independent activists turned away from party-sponsored change and became derisive of Gorbachev's *perestroika*.<sup>76</sup> As in Central Europe, the attempt by independent groups to work within the uncertain boundaries of Gorbachev's reforms and to pursue independent goals within changing legal frameworks was met with duplicity on the part of party and state officials. A case in point is the group Memorial, composed largely of Moscow intellectuals who organized to build a memorial complex to the victims of the Stalin terror. The group's charter stipulates its adherence to constitutional standards in its formation and activities.<sup>77</sup> When the All-Union Ministry of Culture attempted to coopt Memorial's goal by sponsoring its own memorial complex and expropriating the funds it had already collected, it was clear that the existing constitution was no guarantee of the autonomy of self-organized, independent group activity.

Even in the face of such resistance and long delays in promised legal guarantees for independent public associations,<sup>78</sup> independent activists persisted in organizing groups to articulate and attain independent goals. As the groups became more adept at publicizing their activities and reaching a wider audience, their goals became increasingly politicized, just as they had in Central Europe.<sup>79</sup> Groups began to associate their goals with changes in the entire system, including a reformulation of state-society relations. Social actors increasingly found that the aims of their activity could not be attained within the confines of the existing political system. In describing the attempts of Moscow residents to prevent the construction of a major freeway through a historical and residential district, a Soviet analyst notes that "[t]he residents do not yet see in the deputies of the local councils real protectors of their interests."<sup>80</sup> In a development that bears resemblance to Central European processes of organization, self-financed councils of local self-government and voters clubs emerged in the Soviet Union to pursue local projects that were ineffectively handled by the soviets.<sup>81</sup>

**The Impact of Nationalism.** In Poland and Hungary and to a lesser extent in Czechoslovakia, nationalism acted as a cohesive element in independent group formation and mass activity by promulgating a set of shared values as a civil society emerged in the context of one-party rule. The difference in the cohesiveness of emergent civil societies in the Russian and non-Russian republics of the former Soviet Union highlights the unifying role of a shared sense of nationalism among a territory's population. In the non-Russian republics, nationalism acted as a cohesive force in independent group activity, as groups with divergent goals united in "people's front" organizations to press for republic

independence. These popular movements, seeking to emphasize the temporarily unifying goal of independent statehood over political and social conflicts, developed a working relationship with republic Communist Party organizations, eventually absorbing the Communist parties in a common effort to gain the allegiance of independence-minded voters. For the Russians, unlike the non-Russians, there was no common focal point around which shared values of nationalism could crystallize. With no common antagonist, and with competition among competing brands of nationalism, including national Bolshevik, western liberal, and Slavophile variants, as well as various brands of national chauvinism,<sup>82</sup> it proved impossible to generate a set of shared values or a common position toward regime dominance. This lack of a cohesive nationalism has contributed to the more diffuse tendencies of an "emergent" civil society in the Russian republic.

While the absence of a unifying nationalism impeded attempts to form popular fronts or unite a mass movement to challenge party rule, the scope and intensity of independent activity was sufficient to perpetuate the disintegration of the Communist regime. As in the case of Central Europe, the Soviet Communist Party began to fragment as independent social activism propelled reforms forward at a dizzying pace.<sup>83</sup> By mid 1991, a year after the legalization of competing political parties, four million CPSU members had resigned from the party, and the most active faction, the Democratic Platform, split off to form the Republican party. A dismantling of the Communist regime was not attained until after the failed August 1991 coup. The failure resulted from a number of factors that emanated directly from the emergent civil society, including alternative sources of power (Yeltsin), fragmentation of the state, and social protest directed against the illegitimate use of state power.

**The Emergence of Civil Societies: Summation** The logic of emergence of civil society in Soviet-type regimes can be summarized as follows. In this stage the formal channels of interest articulation are closed to independent social actors. Instead groups utilize extrasystemic means of articulation, such as demonstrations, rallies, and *samizdat*. The impact of such tactics on policy is sporadic and uneven. Such impact depends in part on the leadership's perception of its own vulnerability; while leaders may determine that occasional concessions are politically expedient, they are still loathe to give up their monopoly on power and confer legitimacy on independent group participation by granting major concessions. Influence on policymaking is further obviated by the party and state bureaucracies, which seek to influence the terms of state-society relations (and therefore the character and goals of society), rather than simply administer policy directives developed in the public arena with the participation of independent social actors. But as crisis deepens, the party-state becomes more vulnerable to pressure from independent activists and more willing to make concessions. At this point group claims take on a new character. Claims for change continue, but, in addition, claims for formal participation in the political process are voiced.

This stage is inherently unstable. The new boundaries between state and society are still amorphous insofar as they lack institutional guarantees. Groups which initially devise "self-limiting" goals so as to not threaten party control, increasingly find self-limitation impossible given the party's perception of its own legitimacy and the mobilization of some

independent groups as they begin to pursue goals antithetical to Communist Party hegemony, including representation in local and national bodies of power. Both “new evolutionism” and “socialist pluralism” were misguided in their assumption that a reformed single party could coexist with independent social activity. Either a threatened regime reneged on its promises to independent actors, hindering self-organized public activity or, to use Arato’s phrase, independent groups mobilized to “seek a state adequate” to them.<sup>84</sup> Those party and state leaders who recognized the implications of unfettered pluralism (either for the erosion of their own power base or that of a party-sponsored social order) tried to repress independent activity and retreat to the *status quo ante*. If independent actors succeeded in not only articulating alternative interests but satisfying them through social action, there ensued a natural progression from the “low politics” initially represented in independent activity to the “high politics” of demanding representation in official structures of power and eliminating the party *nomenklatura*.

### **Synopsis and Implications**

The foregoing comparison of the “defensive” and “emergent” stages of civil society development in Central Europe and the USSR is based on the impact of regime type on forms of independent activism and a refashioning of the state-society relationship in reforming Communist countries. Communist regimes of the posttotalitarian type, in balancing the needs of control and liberalization, failed both in inculcating a set of shared social values and in representing a set of universal interests. In the first case, liberal ideas of individual and social autonomy combined with various manifestations of nationalism to undermine the regime’s domination of social values. In the second case, modernization processes in society, including the dynamics of increased urbanization, widespread higher education, and an increasingly technical work force, generated autonomous social interests and the need for changes in social and economic organization that were ignored or resisted by the Communist regimes. The failure of the regimes to respond to the needs of a complex society and modern economy led to increasing dissatisfaction with the regime’s political and economic performance. As both Soviet and western scholars have noted, social actors had developed agendas to which the Communist regimes either would not or could not respond.<sup>85</sup> By the 1980s the lack of regime response to the exigencies of social change had created a pool of resentment against party and state leaders and engendered a crisis of legitimacy. Independent social actors had not only articulated self-formulated interests but had begun to act upon them before the crisis was acknowledged by reformist Communist Party leaders.

Ideals of autonomy, nationalism, and modernization, however, are not sufficient to explain the emergence of civil societies in reforming Communist regimes. In each case, the ability of independent activists and groups to press their claims in the public arena depended upon what political sociologists refer to as “political opportunity structures.”<sup>86</sup> Reformers in the Communist Party leadership, prompted by a variety of motivations, provided the opportunity for independent activists to publicly voice their claims by widening the sphere of acceptable social self-organization and activism. This strategy was promulgated either at the initiative of reformist leaders who intended to use independent activism in an instrumental

fashion to maintain the integrity of the system or by reluctant regimes responding to the impact of Gorbachev's domestic reforms and restraint in Soviet foreign policy toward its client states. While independent values and social processes laid the groundwork for the emergence of civil societies, the regimes' part in recognizing the need for independent social activism, restricted and instrumental as it was, can not be overlooked. The opportunity presented by weakened regimes, though tenuous and uncertain, was seized upon by frustrated independent activists who simply refused to stay within the prescribed boundaries of regime-sanctioned independent activity.

## Conclusion

The result, in each case, was the demise of the Communist regime at the hands of mobilized, or in the case of the former Soviet Union partially mobilized, independent social actors. In Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, where independent political parties and movements offered alternative forms of rule through free or partially free elections, the problems of the postcommunist governments in the face of the inevitable breakdown of social unity are alleviated somewhat by the underlying recognition that independence from the Soviet empire comes at a high price. In Russia, unity was achieved only on the recognition of Boris Yeltsin's legitimacy as heir to Gorbachev. Among the oppositionists to the former regime, there is no semblance of unity on either the form or substance of the postcoup state. Acerbic criticisms by opposition democrats of Yeltsin's perceived turn to authoritarian rule are matched by the president's retorts that the interference of divided democrats into the policy process impedes necessary reforms. The lack of any unifying factors will make an institutionalization of the gains of civil society all the more tenuous.

Our task has been to demonstrate the logic of emergence of civil societies in the unique context of the posttotalitarian state in Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. Further observation will be required to illuminate the divergence of the postemergent civil societies. Such analyses must orient their focus to the rich complexity of factors that will shape future development, including the orientation of independent activity, forms of collective action, the political party system, the impact of nationalist tendencies on state formation, and political culture. The point is that the actors who are the building blocks of civil society are now in a position to participate in the processes that may eventually lead to its institutionalization.

## NOTES

1. Andrew Arato, "Civil Society against the State: Poland 1980-1981," *Telos*, 47 (1981), 23-47; Andrew Arato and Jean Cohen, "Social Movements, Civil Society, and the Problem of Sovereignty," *Praxis International*, 4 (1984), 266-283; Z. A. Pelczynski, "Solidarity and the Rebirth of 'Civil Society,'" in John Keane, ed., *Civil Society and the State* (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 361-380; Zbigniew Rau, "Some Thoughts on Civil Society in Eastern Europe and the Lockean Contractarian Approach," *Political Studies*, 35 (1987), 573-592.

2. See, for example, Moshe Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon: A Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Gail W. Lapidus, "State and Society: Toward the Emergence of Civil Society in the Soviet

Union," in Seweryn Bialer, ed., *Politics, Society, and Nationality inside Gorbachev's Russia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 121–147; S. Frederick Starr, "Soviet Union: A Civil Society," *Foreign Policy*, 70 (Spring 1988), 26–43.

3. H. Gordon Skilling, *Samizdat and an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989).

4. Sidney Tarrow, "Aiming at a Moving Target: Social Science and the Recent Rebellions in Eastern Europe," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 24 (March 1991), 12–20.

5. Juan Linz, "Totalitarianism and Authoritarianism," in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., *The Handbook of Political Science, 3: Macropolitical Theory* (Reading: Addison Wesley, 1975), pp. 336–350.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 340.

7. See Gordon Skilling, "Interest Groups and Communist Politics," *World Politics*, 18 (April 1966), 435–451; Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths, eds., *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); Jerry Hough, "Petrification or Pluralism?," *Problems of Communism*, 21 (March–April 1972), 25–45. Criticism of this approach was based on the contention that any pluralist model was inapplicable in the context of Soviet-type regimes given the absence of independent social participation. See Andrew Janos, "Group Politics in Communist Society: A Second Look at the Pluralist Model," in Samuel P. Huntington and Clement H. Moore, eds., *Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), pp. 437–450, and William Odom, "A Dissenting View on the Group Approach to Soviet Politics," *World Politics*, 28 (July 1976), 542–567.

8. Valerie Bunce and John Echols, "Soviet Politics in the Brezhnev Era: 'Pluralism' or 'Corporatism'?" in Donald Kelley, ed., *Soviet Politics in the Brezhnev Era* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980).

9. Maria Markus discusses this as the "framework" and "content" of private activities in "Overt and Covert Modes of Legitimation in East European Societies," in T. H. Rigby and Ferenc Feher, eds., *Political Legitimation in Communist States* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), p. 86.

10. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 395. See also Rau, pp. 582–583.

11. Norberto Robbio, "Gramsci and the Conception of Civil Society," in Chantal Mouffe, ed., *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 22.

12. David Forgacs, ed., *An Antonio Gramsci Reader* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988).

13. Rau, p. 584, argues that "the independent groups arose as the effect of Lockean social contracts; and . . . are, as moral communities, Lockean civil societies." While this may true of the groups as moral communities, it overlooks the fact that independent groups had no recourse to institutional adjudication in conflicts between the groups and the state or among independent social actors; nor were there any institutional guarantees of individual or group autonomy.

14. In Seweryn Bialer's classification, "high politics" refers to "the principle political issues of society, the abstract ideas and language of politics, the decisions and actions of the societal leadership," while "low politics" include "decisions that directly touch the citizen's daily life, the communal matters, and the conditions of the work place." See Seweryn Bialer, *Stalin's Successors: Leadership, Stability, and Change in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 166.

15. For an examination of the very early years of civil society development in Poland, see Jacques Rupnik, "Dissent in Poland, 1968–1978: The End of Revisionism and the Rebirth of Civil Society," in Rudolf L. Tokes, ed., *Opposition in Eastern Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 60–112. For a distinction between civil and political society, see Pelczynski.

16. Andrew Arato, "Civil Society, History and Socialism: Reply to John Keane," *Praxis International*, 9 (April–July 1989), 133–151, esp. 141 and 146.

17. Alain Touraine, *Solidarity: The Analysis of a Social Movement, Poland 1980–1981* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 15.

18. See Kasimierz Wojcicki, "The Reconstruction of Society," *Telos*, 47 (1981), 102–103, and Vaclav Benda, et al., "Parallel Polis or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe: An Inquiry," *Social Research*, 55 (Spring–Summer 1988), 211–246; Ivan Volges, "Political Socialization in Eastern Europe," *Problems of Communism*, 23 (January–February 1974), 55.

19. See Stephen White, "Propagating Communist Values in the USSR," *Problems of Communism*, 34 (November–December 1985), 1–17; Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Public and Private Life of the Soviet People: Changing Values in Post-Stalin Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

20. Alexander Yanov, *The Russian Challenge and the Year 2000* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

21. David Mason, *Public Opinion and Political Change in Poland, 1980–1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 47.
22. Vaclav Havel, *Living in Truth* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), pp. 36–122.
23. Vladimir Tismaneanu, “Nascent Civil Society in the German Democratic Republic.” *Problems of Communism*, 38 (March-June 1989), 102.
24. Benda et al. The Hungarian sociologist Elemer Hankiss developed the concept of a “second society.”
25. See Janina Frentzel-Zagorska, “Civil Society in Poland and Hungary,” *Soviet Studies*, 42 (1990), 763, for statistics on confidence in and support of the leadership in Poland and Hungary.
26. See Ferenc Miszlivetz, “Civil Society in Eastern Europe? The Case of Hungary,” *World Futures*, 29 (1990), 91, for explanations as to why the process was more difficult in Hungary. One of the most important reasons was the wider gap between the Hungarian intelligentsia and the general public, especially the workers. See also Timothy Garton Ash, “The Hungarian Lesson,” *New York Review of Books*, Dec. 5, 1985, pp. 5–9.
27. Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, “Nationalism and Integration in Eastern Europe: The Dynamics of Change,” in Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone and Andrew Gyorgy, eds., *Communism in Eastern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), pp. 320–321.
28. Reddaway notes that one reason for this failure was the impossibility of perpetuating Stalin’s atomized society. Peter Reddaway, ed., *Uncensored Russia: Protest and Dissent in the Soviet Union* (New York: American Heritage Press, 1972), p. 39.
29. See, for example, the Sakharov-Solzhenitsyn debate in Vladimir E. Maximov, ed., *Kontinent* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1976), pp. 1–23.
30. Reddaway, p. 18.
31. Dmitrii Nelidov, “Ideocratic Consciousness and Personality,” in Michael G. Meerson-Aksenov and Boris I. Shragin, eds., *The Political, Social and Religious Thought of Russian ‘Samizdat’* (Belmont: Nordland Publishing Co., 1977), p. 290.
32. Meerson-Aksenov and Shragin, p. 228.
33. K. Zhitnikov, “The Decline of the Democratic Movement,” in Meerson-Aksenov and Shragin, eds., pp. 237–238.
34. This was Andrei Amalrik’s line of defense, for example, in *Involuntary Journey to Siberia* (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970).
35. Killing, *Samizdat and an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe*, p. 203.
36. Ferenc Feher, Agnes Heller, and Gyorgy Markus, eds., *Dictatorship over Needs* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1983), pp. 137–155.
37. Roy A. Medvedev, *On Soviet Dissent* (London: Constable, 1980), cited in David Lane, *State and Politics in the USSR* (New York: New York University Press, 1985), p. 271.
38. Peter Reddaway, “Soviet Dissent,” *Problems of Communism*, 32 (November-December 1983), 14; Jeffrey W. Hahn, *Soviet Grassroots: Citizen Participation in Local Soviet Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 285–287.
39. Walter D. Connor, *Socialism’s Dilemma: State and Society in the Soviet Bloc* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 45.
40. I. Zhukova et al., “Samodeiatel’nyie initsiativy: Neformal’nyi vzglad” (“Independent Initiatives: Informal View”), *Kommunist*, 9 (1988), 98.
41. V. G. Alekseeva, “Neformal’nye grupy podrostkov v usloviakh goroda” (“Informal Youth Groups in Urban Conditions”), *Soziologicheskie issledovania*, 3 (1977), 60–70, examines youth groups in urban settings and calls on educators to be more diligent in socializing students.
42. Tatiana I. Zaslavskaiia, “Creative Activity of the Masses: Social Reserves of Growth,” *Problems of Economics*, 29 (March 1987), 11.
43. O. N. Ianitskii, *Grazhdanskie initsiativy i samodeiatel’nost’ mass* (*Citizen Initiatives and the Spontaneous Activity of the Masses*) (Moscow: Znanie, 1988).
44. Philip G. Roeder, “Modernization and Participation in the Leninist Developmental Strategy,” *American Political Science Review*, 83 (September 1989), 859–884; Donna Bahry and Brian D. Silver, “Soviet Citizen Participation on the Eve of Democratization,” *American Political Science Review*, 84 (September 1990), 821–847.
45. Bennett Kovrig, *Communism in Hungary from Kun to Kadar* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1979), p. 361.
46. Peter Hauslohner, “Gorbachev’s Social Contract,” *Soviet Economy*, 3 (1987), 56–60.

47. Jack Bielasia, "The Party: Permanent Crisis," in Abraham Brumberg, ed., *Poland: Genesis of a Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1983), p. 19.
48. Stephen White, "Economic Performance and Communist Legitimacy," *World Politics*, 38 (April 1986), 462-482.
49. *Ibid.*
50. Kovrig, p. 362, and Erik P. Hoffmann and Robbin F. Laird, *Technocratic Socialism: The Soviet Union in the Advanced Industrial Era* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), pp. 163-164.
51. See, for example, Gabor Demeszky, "Initiatives for Hungary," *East European Reporter*, 3 (Autumn 1988), 49-54, and *East European Newsletter*, 3 (March 22, 1989), 2.
52. Mason, p. 94.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 112-115.
54. For example, in the August 1980 Gdansk agreement, Solidarity willingly recognized the leading role of the PUWP in the state, implying that the party's power should be limited to state and administrative functions. See Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity* (New York: Scribner, 1984), p. 69. In similar fashion, the Hungarian opposition in 1987 accepted party rule only as a "constitutionally regulated part of the state's legal framework." See "A Social Contract: Conditions for Political Renewal," *Beszelo* (June 1987), in *East European Reporter*, 3 (October 1987), 57.
55. Adam Michnik, *Letters from Prison and Other Essays*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 142.
56. For the impact of private enterprise on fostering an independent social sphere, see Timothy Garton Ash, "Reform or Revolution?," *New York Review of Books*, Oct. 27, 1988, pp. 47-48.
57. Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, p. 72.
58. The myriad of causes was much more complex in the Polish case, ranging from the deep rift caused between state and society when Polish police shot Polish workers in 1970, the visit of the Pope in June 1979, and the fact that the Catholic church had developed a social philosophy which gave it the duty (one which the state refused to assume) of protecting inalienable rights of all Polish citizens. *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 30-1.
59. Economic motivations are explained in Janos Kris, "Why Be Afraid?," *East European Reporter*, 3 (Autumn 1988), 51, and R. W. Apple, Jr., "Prague's Shaky Bargain: The Government Seeks to Stop the Decline in Industry before It Leads to a Rebellion," *New York Times*, Nov. 16, 1989, p. 1.
60. Tismaneanu, p. 102.
61. The emergence of a civil society is thus characterized by an increased sense of social solidarity, resulting from increased communication of shared values, as Timothy Garton Ash puts it, "from autonomous values to the articulation of shared values." Increased sphere of public action allows society to develop a "new consciousness of its shared values." Ash, *The Polish Revolution*, p. 30.
62. Miszlevitz, p. 89.
63. "A Social Contract: Conditions for a Political Renewal," *Beszelo* (June 1987), in *East European Reporter*, 3 (October 1987), 56-57.
64. The first statement was made by the "Network of Free Initiative" in its March 1988 "Call to Action," the second by FIDESZ. Both cited in Miszlevitz, pp. 90 and 94.
65. " 'Democracy for All': The Manifesto of the Movement for Civil Liberties," *East European Reporter*, 3 (Spring-Summer 1989), special section, after p. 38.
66. In a Hungarian Communist Party rent by factions since the ouster of Janos Kadar in May 1988, reformer Imre Pozsgay fought for dialogue with the opposition against conservative groups initially led by Karoly Grosz. In Czechoslovakia in March 1989, Communist Premier Ladislev Adamec advocated talks with the opposition against the wishes of the more hardline Jakes faction of the party. See *Eastern European Newsletter*, 3 (March 22, 1989), 2.
67. In Marxist terms, the relations of production had not kept pace with the instruments and methods of production. Not only did this result in an inefficient economy, but it alienated workers and led to social problems such as alcoholism and crime. See Mikhail S. Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), pp. 18-25, and Tatyana Zaslavskaya, *The Second Socialist Revolution: An Alternative Soviet Strategy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 47-86.
68. Andranik Migranian, "Interrelations of the Individual, Society, and the State in the Political Theory of Marxism," *The Soviet Review* (January-February 1989), 55-56.
69. In general, by the 1970s and 1980s most of the Central European intelligentsia wrote about emancipation from the state and party, while the trend in the USSR was to discuss emancipation only from the state. G. Arbatov and E.

Batolov, "Politicheskaiia reforma i evoliuziia sovetskogo gosudarstva" ("Political Reform and the Evolution of the Soviet State"), *Kommunist*, 4 (March 1989), 45.

70. *Ibid.*, pp. 43–44.

71. Migranian, p. 55.

72. See Ivan Szelenyi, "Socialist Opposition in Eastern Europe: Dilemmas and Prospects," in Tokes, ed., pp. 202–203, for a discussion of "formal rationality" versus "substantive rationality" as forms of bureaucratic activity in Communist regimes.

73. According to one estimate, 90 percent of grass-roots organizations were directed toward nonpolitical activities. See Ianitsky, *Independent Initiatives*, p. 8.

74. Vera Tolz, "Informal Groups in the USSR in 1988," *Radio Liberty Research*, Oct. 30, 1988, pp. 1–12.

75. For examples of the difficulties faced by cooperatives in this respect, see Elisabeth Schillinger and Joel Jenswold, "Cooperative Business Ventures in the Soviet Union: The Impact of Social Forces on Private Enterprise," *Sociology and Social Research*, 73 (October 1988), 26–27. For an account by a Soviet social activist of bureaucratic roadblocks to independent activism, see Olga Medvedkov, "The Moscow Trust Group: An Uncontrolled Grass-Roots Movement in the Soviet Union," *The Mershon Quarterly Report*, 12 (Spring 1988), 1–27.

76. For an interesting account of this process, see Igor Chubais, "The Democratic Opposition: An Insider's View," *Report on the USSR*, 3 (May 3, 1991), 4–15.

77. "Ustav: Vsesoiuznogo dobrovol'nogo istoriko-prosvetitel'skogo obshchestva 'Memorial' (proekt)," (Charter: All-Union Voluntary Historical-Enlightenment Society 'Memorial' [Draft]), *Ogonek*, 4 (January 1989), 29.

78. After almost three years of debate within party circles and between the party leadership and independent deputies, a Law on Public Associations was passed in October 1990. See "Zakon ob obshchestvennykh ob'edineniakh" (Law on Public Associations), *Pravda*, Oct. 16, 1990, p. 3. For an assessment of the law as well as draft and alternative versions, see Vera Tolz, "The Law on Public Associations: Legalization of the Multi-party System," *Report on the USSR*, 2 (November 16, 1990), 1–3.

79. This happened, for example, in the environmental movement when "participants . . . realized that their bitter enemy is neither pesticides, nor technology, but the system which uses them." Oleg N. Ianitskii, "Environmental Movements in the Soviet Union," *The Soviet Review*, 32 (January-February 1991), 29.

80. Oleg Ianitskii, "Lefortovo: Solving the Conflict between Designers and the Residents," Moscow, unpublished paper, 1989, p. 27.

81. See Dawn Mann, "The Trends towards Public Initiative in Local Government," *Report on the USSR*, 2 (April 13, 1990), 7–8.

82. Alexander J. Motyl, *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality: Coming to Grips with Nationalism in the USSR* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 167–168.

83. See Peter Reddaway, "Resisting Gorbachev," *New York Review of Books*, Aug. 18, 1988, p. 38, for a discussion of the split between the Gorbachev and Ligachev factions of the CPSU over the liberalization of policies toward independent activism.

84. Andrew Arato, "Empire vs. Civil Society: Poland 1981–1982," *Telos*, 50 (1981–1982), 26.

85. Migranian; Zhukova et al.; Starr; Lapidus; and Lewin, among others.

86. Sidney Tarrow, "Struggling to Reform: Social Movements and Policy Change during Cycles of Protest," Cornell University Center for International Studies Occasional Paper, 15 (1984). For his application of the concept to events in Central Europe, see Sidney Tarrow, "'Aiming at a Moving Target': Social Science and the Recent Rebellions in Eastern Europe," *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 24 (March 1991), 12–20. The view that modernization as an explanatory tool must be complemented by an assessment of political strategies in order to explain other aspects of Soviet politics can be found in Connor, *Socialism's Dilemma*, and Thomas Remington, "Regime Transformation in Communist Systems: The Soviet Case," *Soviet Economy*, 6 (1990), 160–190.