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**MOBILIZING DEMOBILIZED VOTERS
IN POST COMMUNIST SOCIETIES**

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Abstract

A stable party system requires people to trust institutions, including parties, but in post-Communist countries people have lived nearly all their lives in a political system that created distrust in reaction to aggressive attempts to mobilize support for the party-state. Comparative survey data from 10 post-Communist countries show that the majority of electors are demobilized, that is, they distrust parties, do not identify with a party, the modal group is a don't know when asked to express a party preference, and committed partisans form only a quarter of the electorate. The result is that electoral support for parties is extremely volatile by comparison with election results in earlier waves of democratization. This does not immediately threaten the regime, however, for even though most people do not believe they can influence government, even more importantly, they feel greater freedom from the state, which can not influence them as in the days of the Communist party-state.

INTRODUCTION*

Representative government assumes that individuals trust the parties they vote for to reflect their views in the national capital. In a civic culture, not only are voters free to choose between parties, but they also believe that the party they identify with can be trusted to represent their views in government (Almond and Verba 1963: 123ff). Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) classic formulation of the emergence of a modern party system similarly presupposed a high degree of individual trust in unions, farmers' groups, business associations, churches and masonic lodges mobilizing their members to support parties.

But what happens if voters have a generalized distrust of parties? In France there has been *incivisme*, as many electors were socialized into an uncivil, anti-party mentality (see Converse and Dupeux 1966). In such circumstances an election may be democratic in Joseph Schumpeter's (1952) sense of offering voters a choice between competing elites. However, when the choice offered is between more or less distrusted parties, then voters can only be 'negatively represented', voting to turn the rascals out or keep the less unsatisfactory alternative in office.

Communist regimes had the perverse effect of demobilizing voters because of their incessant insistence on support for the party-state. Many reacted to Communist efforts at mobilization by becoming 'negatively integrated' in the political system. Party propaganda made people apathetic or anti-party. The legacy of that is that in post-Communist societies people now appreciate the

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freedom not to participate in party politics. Free elections remain valid, even if there is a "missing middle" of trusted parties, but the outcome is not representative government as it is understood in established democracies.

Post-Communist societies are half-way to the creation of a representative party system, for the pre-conditions are met. Two rounds of fair and free elections have been held since 1990, and parties have multiplied (White 1990; Wightman 1995). The first free election produced many surprises to the losers, and sometimes to winners too. Many parties that fought the first post-Communist elections of 1990 won few votes and have since merged, split or disappeared.

In post-Communist societies the starting point for the electorate is the experience of socialization into distrust of The Party. The starting point for politicians is the prospect of freely creating parties--but not being sure where to start. Political entrepreneurs can appeal for support on democratic or undemocratic grounds, and they may address real problems of the economy and real economic divisions within the population or offer populist solutions that ignore economic constraints. The second section of this paper shows the great variety of parties that have been created. The response of the mass of the electorate has been sceptical at best, and often negative. People socialized in a party-state are unlikely to trust parties or identify with parties, and their votes will not be an expression of positive commitment. The evidence for this is presented in section three. The consequence is a 'floating party system', in which there is a great deal of instability in the names of parties and uncertainty about how those elected can and do represent the views of those who have voted for them.

SOCIALIZATION INTO DISTRUST: THE COMMUNIST LEGACY

For two generations after 1945 politics in Central and Eastern Europe was the politics of the Communist Party. The party used its organizational network to control major institutions of government *and* major institutions of civil society. The party articulated the 'objective' truth of Marxism-Leninism. While Marxist-Leninist doctrines were subject to frequent re-interpretation, they were not subject to a popular referendum or free elections. Critical decisions about government were made by the elite of the Communist Party. Since the ideology of Communism was internationalist, national parties were also expected to follow the vanguard party of the working class, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Communist practice of 'democratic centralism' was far more centralist than democratic.

The ruthless elimination of organizations that might challenge Communist authority was given a high priority. In the 1940s political parties and trade unions were dissolved or turned into Communist satellites. Professors who did not follow the party line were dismissed. Private enterprises were taken over by the party-state. The press, book publishers and broadcasting became mouthpieces for the party line. Churches were subject to subtle and not so subtle pressures. Controlling these institutions gave the party great patronage powers. It was also consistent with the party's totalitarian ideology. As the inquisitor proclaimed in Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, "There is no salvation outside the party".

Socialization by the party was carried on in school and in party youth organizations. Having a party card was often necessary to get a good job, enter a profession or gain promotion. It also brought material benefits. Party membership, attendance at meetings, and making references to the scientific principles of Marxism-Leninism were rituals in which many people participated as an outward show of party loyalty. This did not mean that people making such statements believed what they said. For many "it was mere lip service and a source of personal embarrassment" (Berglund and Dellenbrant 1991: 4). Instead of producing Marxist-Leninist ideologues, the party's efforts produced cynicism.

Unfree elections, apathy and distrust. Whereas in Spain, Franco's authoritarian regime dispensed with national elections, Communist regimes periodically held elections that had some but not all the attributes of elections in established democracies. Elections were of two types, endorsement of a single candidate by acclamation, and ballots offering a limited choice between candidates approved by the party (Furtak 1990). Where choices between two candidates were possible, both could be members of the Communist Party or one a party member and another nominated by a satellite organization within the Communist network. Even when the result was a foregone conclusion, individuals were expected to vote. The choice was between casting a pre-printed ballot endorsing the party's candidate and conspicuously crossing out the party's choice in front of party officials conducting the election. Communist officials took elections by acclamation seriously. In the Soviet Union, for example, between 1946 and 1984 they reported average turnout of 99.97 per cent, with 99.74 per cent of all ballots cast in favor of Communist candidates (Furtak 1990: 37).

Why have elections when the result is a foregone conclusion? The official doctrine was that elections were 'hard' evidence of popular support for the regime. Dissidents viewed elections as demoralizing critics by forcing them to run the risks of public opposition or making a hypocritical show of compliance. "Elections buttress the regime--not by legitimising it but by prompting the population to show that the *illegitimacy* of its 'democratic practice' has been accepted and that no action to undermine it will be forthcoming" (Zaslavsky and Brym 1978: 371).

Communist efforts to mobilize support for an unpopular regime produced more mass apathy than commitment. Intellectuals could become 'internal emigres', concentrating upon abstruse questions of no concern to party commissars, such as the musicology of the Italian Renaissance. Retreat into the study of pure mathematics was popular, for unlike history and philosophy, there was no party line on mathematics.

On occasion, alienation erupted into overt demonstrations of dissent, such

as strikes and mass demonstrations. Only in Poland were demonstrations organized by nationwide institutions independent of the Party, the Solidarity trade union movement and the Catholic Church. Attempts at reforming the regime by politicians were crushed by Soviet troops in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and by martial law in Poland in 1981. Harshness in the repression of protests discouraged frequent repetition.

Dissident groups could discuss ideas contrary to party doctrines--provided that the group was small and intimate enough to prevent infiltration by the state security police. Even if the police knew, such activities could be tolerated as long as they did not constitute a public challenge to authority. Attending church or listening to rock music were minor forms of dissent, involving identification with values that the party scorned. Even when dissidents exercised pressure on the Communist Party to alter course, as was increasingly possible in the 1980s, they could not organize an independent party. The totalitarian outreach of the Communist Party was such that many pressures for change initially came from reform groups within the party. Notwithstanding this, the Communist party was not seen as legitimate but as a representative of Soviet forces (see Berglund and Dellenbrant 1994: 28ff; Waller 1994).

Table 1. *Trust in parties low*

	Positive	Neutral	Low	Difference High Low
Bulgaria	11%	16%	73%	-62%
Czech Republic	24	38	38	-14
Slovakia	16	25	58	-42
Hungary	11	23	65	-54
Poland	7	22	71	-64
Romania	19	17	63	-44
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Mean	15	24	61	-46
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Source: Paul Lazarsfeld Society, Vienna, *New Democracies Barometer III* (1994). (Respondents asked to indicate trust in political parties on a seven-point scale; positive, 5-7; neutral, 4; low, 1-3.)

Distrust of political parties is a significant part of the legacy of Communism. When the New Democracies Barometer asked people to say whether they trusted or distrusted parties, less than one in six expressed trust (Table 1). In Poland the percentage trusting parties was down to seven percent. Countries differ only in the degree to which parties are distrusted. Overall, three-fifths actively distrust parties, and another quarter are neutral. Only one in six electors positively trusts political parties. Distrust in parties is much greater than in other institutions of government and civil society, such as the courts, the police and churches (see Rose and Haerpfer 1994: Q. 48-62).

CREATING PARTIES IN UNCERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES

Free elections in post-Communist societies have created a quandary for politicians and for voters. The choice is no longer between the Communist Party and dissidents, a conflict that could be framed in "a language of philosophic and moral absolutes, of right against wrong, love against hate, truth against falsehood" (Garton Ash 1990: 51f). Instead, elections offer the opportunity to choose between a wide range of non-Communist, anti-Communist and ex-Communist groups.

To create a party requires organization by political entrepreneurs. Former Communist activists are the biggest pool of experienced political entrepreneurs. With the collapse of the Communist regime, such individuals must create new

institutions to mobilize popular support or leave party politics. Dissidents are a second source of leadership. But dissidents normally could not organize mass organizations under the Communist regime; they were "more like tribes than parties, being held together by friendship ties" and opposition to the Communist regime. They often did not share a common positive set of beliefs (see Lomax 1995: 185f). Political amateurs outside politics during the Communist regime have been a third source of party leadership. While free of the past, they are often ignorant of many everyday features of party politics.

Given discontinuity between regimes, politicians have two alternatives, to create parties based on historic cleavages that existed prior to the Communist takeover in the 1940s, or try to mobilize support afresh. The Lipset-Rokkan (1967) model of the creation of parties emphasizes the durability of cultural and economic cleavages. In Germany and Austria, which achieved democracy with interruptions, parties often persisted from one regime to the next. However, the legacy of four decades of Communist rule left much greater discontinuities in Central and Eastern European countries because the Communists were strongly committed to eliminating or controlling institutions of civil society that could be used as a basis for independent party organization. The intensity and duration of Communist repression of institutions of civil society has resulted in great uncertainty about the interests and values that voters would like to see represented.

Free elections have demonstrated the truth of the old political adage: 'There is only one way to say no, but there are many ways to go forward'. The dozens of parties fighting elections include parties of ex-Communists and dissidents; parties that hark back to pre-1945 cultural traditions, emphasizing religion and national identities, or radical right or fascist appeals; parties that emphasize current economic interests of the market, social democracy or farmers; and new parties proclaiming green values or new personalities. While many different appeals are tried, they have not met with equal success (Table 2).

1. *Dissident movements fail as electoral parties*

The absolutes of life under Communism discouraged debate about what government ought to do; the central thesis of dissidents was that the Communist regime was illegitimate and should be rejected. Nor was there much opportunity for organization. As long as a dissident group was small, members could know (and trust) each other. Expansion risked infiltration by agents of the state police and disbandment, loss of jobs, and jail. Since movements could not contest elections, they held street demonstrations and strikes in which masses of people responded more or less spontaneously to a call for protest. Olson (1993: 642) describes the groups as "above parties and politics". In Czechoslovakia the Civic Forum movement had the slogan, "Parties are for Party (that is, Communist) members; the Civic Forum is for all".

The collapse of Communist parties represented victory for dissidents--and the fulfilment of their original mission. Critics of the regime were now to be found everywhere, including reform-minded Communists who had not publicly protested under the old regime but sometimes tried to alter the party from within. Dissidents who had not compromised with the party differed about whether or not to welcome converts to their cause. When civic movements sought to develop a party for post-Communist politics, they failed. This was spectacularly demonstrated in Poland. Solidarity's leader, Lech Walesa, could not win half the national vote in the country's first presidential election and by 1993 Solidarity was an also-ran party. In Czechoslovakia the linked Czech and Slovak protest movements, Civic Forum and Public Against Violence, successfully contested the 1990 election, but the two parties both disappeared before the 1992 election that led to the break up of the state. Only in Bulgaria and Romania do civic movements still poll a substantial amount of votes, but this is as coalitions opposed to strong parties of ex-Communists.

2. *From Communist to ex-Communist parties*

For Communists, old party ties are both an asset and a liability. It is an asset because Communists have skills in organizing and manipulating political organizations, and a network of contacts in every institution in which the party had a presence under the old regime. But identification with the old regime is a liability, since only a small fraction of the electorate wants to return to the past. In these circumstances, many Communists who were fulltime party workers in the old regime have left party politics to seek profits in the market place. Their capital includes the network of contacts they have with ministries and major industries, and sometimes state assets they bought cheap through a process described as *nomenklatura* privatization. Others have remained in party politics, but they have abandoned the Communist Party name and many of its doctrines.

Insofar as people joined the Communist Party for ideological reasons, then the key word in describing the new party remains 'Communist' rather than 'ex'. But insofar as people joined the Communist Party for opportunistic reasons, they should respond opportunistically to the introduction of competitive elections, following Joseph Schumpeter's (1952: 282f) dictum that in the electoral market place politicians behave like garment manufacturers, changing policies in response to changes in consumer taste. Ex-Communists thus need to lean over backwards to pay tribute to freedom in order to reassure voters that they truly have changed their practices. Concurrently, they can emphasize continuing priority for social welfare rather than market values (cf. Kitschelt 1995). In Hungary, the leader of the Socialist (that is, ex-Communist) Party, Gyula Horn, campaigned successfully against an ineffectual conservative government with the slogan, "Let the experts govern". In Bulgaria the Socialist (that is, ex-Communist) Party has flourished by dispensing patronage in the countryside.

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The electoral success of ex-Communist parties varies by election and by country. In the first free elections of 1990, ex-Communists were usually unsuccessful (cf. White 1990). In the second round of free elections, parties of ex-Communists have capitalized on the swing against the government of the day to increase their vote. In Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland parties of ex-Communists have gained government office, although sometimes with as little as 20 per cent of the popular vote. In Romania ex-Communists are prominent in both governing and opposition parties. The passage of time has reduced fears of voters that ex-Communists would bring back a Soviet-style regime--and in any event the Soviet Union has ceased to exist.

Table 3. *Values of ex-communists and non-communists compared*

	Ex-Comm. (16%)	Comm. (18%)	Non-Comm. (66%)	Difference in family (%)
<u>Approve</u>				
Communist political regime	48	38	36	12
Current political regime	60	61	63	3
Future political regime	77	81	78	1
Past economic system	68	59	54	14
Current economic system	34	39	44	10
Future economic system	69	73	72	3
More freedom now to speak	82	85	85	3
Return to Communist rule	18	14	14	4

Source: Paul Lazarsfeld Society, Vienna, *New Democracies Barometer III* (1994). Respondents were asked if they or any member of their family had belonged to the Communist Party or an associated organization. Answers pooled from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

At the mass level the critical question is: How Communist are voters for ex-Communist parties? The 1994 New Democracies Barometer asked people about their own and their family's ties to the old Communist Party. We can thus compare the political values of the 16 percent who said they had been members of the party or an affiliated organization, the 18 percent reporting someone in the family in the party, and the 64 percent without a family affiliation to the party.

Ex-Communists are not ideologues; they are similar to non-Communists in their basic political views (Table 3). A majority of non-Communists and ex-Communists agree in endorsing the present regime, in optimism about the political future, and disapproving the old regime. A majority of both groups also agree in giving a higher rating to the old economic regime, a negative rating to the economic system in transition and in optimism about the future of the economy. An overwhelming majority in both groups appreciate the greater freedom to speak out that they enjoy today. Four-fifths agree that they do not want a return to Communist rule. The differences are marginal, and greater about evaluations of the past. Differences between party members and non-members are usually insignificant when evaluations are made about the present and future.

The responses of ex-Communists to the incentives of electoral competition have enabled their parties to be successful in competition with parties having stronger claims to social democratic origins. A latterday Schumpeter might argue that ex-Communists have not changed: 'Once an opportunist, always an opportunist'. However, when in office ex-Communists must learn to govern in a world in which they can no longer depend upon Moscow to help, or know that an election is won before the ballots are printed. Like governments elsewhere in the world, ex-Communists face the constraints placed upon small countries by their bigger and richer neighbors. To get foreign money to deal with economic problems, ex-Communist governments must seek loans from such agencies as the

International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Such institutions are prepared to offer some assistance--but only if satisfied that the recipients are promoting the market economy and not a return to the command economy.

For *cultural cleavages* identified by Lipset and Rokkan to persist from pre-Communist to post-Communist regimes, a number of conditions must be met (Cotta 1994). Prior to the Communist takeover there should have been: a lengthy period of democracy; the majority of adults having the right to vote; parties having been well organized nationwide; and the gap between pre- and post-Communist regimes less than the lifespan of the average voter. In Central and Eastern Europe, none of these conditions is met. In Czechoslovakia, democratic government existed prior to World War II, but there was a gap of more than half a century between free elections--and national divisions have disrupted the old federal state.

It could be hypothesized that even though Communist regimes systematically sought to subordinate or eliminate loyalties to religion and ethnic or national identities, these nonetheless remain as potential sources for mobilizing voters today. However, when one looks at the percentage of people in post-Communist societies who go to church or who identify with ethnic minorities, the potential appears limited (Table 4).

Table 4. *Potential for ethnic and religious cleavages*

	Churchgoers*	Ethnic minorities	Gypsies
Bulgaria	10%	10%	3%
Czech Republic	18	5	na**
Slovakia	49	13	1
Hungary	21	11	1

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Poland	78	3	na**
Romania	36	10	2

* Attend church once a month or more often

** Data not available; numbers small.

Source: Paul Lazarsfeld Society, *New Democracies Barometer III* (1994).
Ethnic minorities, gypsies: *Statesman's Year-Book 1994-95*
(London: Macmillan, 1994).

3. *Religion and religious parties weak*

Today, religion is unimportant in the lives of most people in Central and Eastern Europe, and so too are church-related parties. A majority profess a nominal identification with the state religion, but less than a third report attending church at least once a month. Where parties seek votes with a Christian label they win a tenth of the vote or less (Table 2). The Hungarian Democratic Forum has done slightly better because it appeals not only to churchgoers but to conservative voters generally. In Poland, the one country where there was mass commitment to Catholicism, the inclusiveness of the church's membership has made it unable to create a single party representing the diverse non-religious interests of Catholics in Polish society. The Polish Catholic Church remains significant as a pressure group lobbying on issues of particular church concern, such as abortion, an issue that divides the Polish people.

4. *Nationalist and minority ethnic identity insufficient to win lots of votes*

As long as Czechoslovakia was a single country, Slovak nationalists could

use nationalism as an appeal against the 'Czech-dominated' government in Prague. But since Slovakia has become an independent country, Slovak politicians have had to find new grounds for appealing for votes. In a country in which nine-tenths or more of the population is of the same nationality, as is the case in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland, it is not possible for a party to make a distinctive appeal for votes by claiming to be the party for all Poles or for all Hungarians. People who share a common nationality can disagree about much else.

In pre-Communist days political entrepreneurs could appeal for support from the dominant nationality by offering a defense against real or imagined threats from neighboring countries or minorities within the country, such as Jews. The Holocaust and the movement of state boundaries and peoples at the end of World War II has greatly reduced the potential for friction between nationalities. It has also warned politicians of the dangers of whipping up extreme nationalist sentiments. Only in Romania do racist parties win votes by claiming to be 'more nationalist' than other parties and promise to restore Romania's greatness at the expense of minorities. The combined vote of racist parties there is similar to that of the racist French National Front.

Ethnic parties appealing to a minority identity within a country can be found in nearly every post-Communist country, but such parties face a dilemma. In order to have a distinctive appeal, ethnic parties must stress the problems of a minority, such as Hungarians in Slovakia or Romania. In Bulgaria the constitution bans the formation of ethnic parties; hence, Turks have organized as the Movement of Rights and Freedom. But when ethnic groups constitute less than a tenth of the country's population, ethnic parties are limited in the votes they can hope to win. Gypsies are fewer in number and exceptionally difficult to organize politically. Because ethnic parties are small, they also do not stimulate a reaction by the national majority (for details of minorities, see Bugajski 1994). The problems of ethnic division that have erupted into violence in parts of the former

Yugoslavia are atypical of the majority of countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

5. *Personal parties*

The term 'charismatic leader' is often misused as a description of any party leader who wins an election. Strictly speaking, the term describes a leader with a following so strong that it can overturn established institutions of a regime. Lenin was such a leader, and so too was Charles de Gaulle. In post-Communist societies, only Vladimir Meciar of Slovakia could claim this accomplishment. This ex-boxer was initially a major figure in the Slovak movement, Public Against Violence; he broke with it in 1991 to found his own party, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia. Initially Meciar campaigned for greater Slovak autonomy from Prague and greater subsidies from federal funds to support its ailing industries. The result was the break up of Czechoslovakia and Meciar became the first Prime Minister of an independent Republic of Slovakia (see Butorova and Butora 1995: 122ff).

An alternative form of personalistic leadership is based on patronage distributed to clients who are loyal to individuals rather than impersonal parties or laws of the regime. Romania had a tradition of personalistic politics prior to the advent of Nicolai Ceausescu, who combined it with Communist ideology to exercise personal rule in a totalitarian manner. Ceausescu's death meant the end of one-party politics, but not of personalistic politics. The initial move to overthrow Ceausescu came from Communists and ex-Communists. The movement then split, leading to the formation of parties clustered around different leaders. Romania has a directly elected President, thus offering a major opportunity for personal voting. In 1992 Ion Iliescu, an ex-Communist, was elected President with the backing of the Democratic National Salvation Front created to support his candidacy after he was unable to gain control of a party to which both he and his rival, the Prime

Minister, Petre Roman, both belonged (cf. Nelson 1990; Eyal 1993).

Post-Communist countries differ in whether the head of state, the President, is popularly elected (cf. McGregor 1994: Table 2). Where this occurs, as in Bulgaria, Poland and Romania, a two-ballot system enables a large number of individuals to run in the first ballot with or without a party endorsement. The run-off second ballot reduces the choice to two, thus forcing different parties to coalesce for or against one choice. In Poland, the Solidarity leader, Lech Walesa, has won election as President but notwithstanding his national reputation, this did not occur easily. In 1990 he took only 40 per cent of the vote in the first ballot, before winning the run-off second ballot against a complete unknown. Furthermore, Walesa does not have "coat tails", for he could not secure the election of a Polish Parliament favorable to his views or create a party winning a substantial vote.

Every party contesting an election must have some sort of *economic policy*, but it is misleading to label differences in post-Communist countries as class differences along West European lines, for the social, economic and political context is very different. In post-Communist systems a party that espouses policies deemed left in the West, such as maintaining state ownership of enterprises to keep people in work, is conservative, that is, seeking to keep in place practices from the command economy. Nor is debate about economic policies a matter of marginal adjustments in taxing and spending. Amidst the wreckage of a Communist economy, economic issues raise fundamental issues with the urgency conveyed by the Leninist question: What is to be done?

6. *Liberalization stronger than liberal parties*

Because the command economy was a political creation, imposed by the party-state, dismantling the command economy is a political act too (cf. Kornai

1992). The term 'liberalization' is used to describe an increase in the market's role in determining supply and demand for goods and labor through the price system. It reflects the links in post-Communist societies between classic political values of liberalism, such as freedom of speech and representative government, and a reduction of the role of the state in the market place.

Liberal parties are found in almost every post-Communist country; they are liberal in the style of Margaret Thatcher or University of Chicago neo-classical economists, that is, market-oriented. The most electorally successful market-oriented liberal party is the Civic Democratic Party in the Czech Republic, led by Vaclav Klaus. In Poland liberal parties promoting the market claimed that its measures subsequently produced economic success (see Sachs 1993), but in the 1993 election only one such party, the Democratic Union, was able to retain any seats in Parliament, and it took only a tenth of the vote.

7. *Social democratic parties squeezed by ex-Communists*

In Western Europe social democrats and Communists have often been enemies because they compete for votes from the same people. Everywhere except Italy, social democrats have been far more successful in winning votes. In Communist systems, such competition could not exist. Insofar as social democratic ideas were expressed, this was done by reform Communists speaking out within the party. In post-Communist countries, social democrats have had little electoral success, winning less than a tenth of the vote and sometimes failing to win seats in Parliament. Insofar as they are anti-Communist, pro-market parties can claim to be even more anti-Communist in rejecting an active role for the state in the economy. Insofar as social democrats promote welfare through the state, they compete with ex-Communist parties claiming that they created a welfare system when in power (cf. Waller 1995). To note that social democratic values are

promoted by other parties, for example personal freedom by liberal parties and welfare benefits by ex-Communists, spotlights the difficulties that social democrats are having in establishing a distinctive appeal.

8. *Little salience in urban /rural differences*

The proportion of Central and East Europeans living in small towns and rural areas is higher than in most Western European countries, but this does not create a politically salient cleavage between rural and urban dwellers. Except in Poland, Communist regimes collectivized agriculture, treating farming as if it were a factory enterprise and turning peasants into workers guaranteed a low but steady wage on a collective farm. The system was notoriously inefficient, creating chronic shortages of food and leading urban-dwellers to cultivate vegetable gardens in order to have a secure source of food outside the state system (cf. Pryor 1992; Rose and Tikhomirov 1993).

Agrarian parties are found in most post-Communist countries, and their share of the vote is similar to that of Scandinavian agrarian parties. But this represents a low level of success, for in Central and Eastern Europe the potential agricultural vote is much greater than in Scandinavia. Only in Poland, which retained a large peasant sector under Communism, do agrarian parties take most of the rural vote-albeit divided among three different parties-and following the 1993 election, the Polish Peasant Party took the Prime Ministership in a coalition government with ex-Communists.

There remain big differences in standards of living between households in Central and Eastern Europe. In part these reflect influences also found in Western Europe, such as education; in part they reflect the pathologies of a party-state and its aftermath, offering some people opportunities to get rich quick in the transition

to the market economy (cf. Rose and McAllister forthcoming). Differences between those who are better off and worse off can be expected to go along with differences in political priorities between those who favor the collective provision of welfare and those preferring individual responsibility.

When the New Democracies Barometer asked a battery of questions about economic issues in 1993, the people of every country divided, as might be expected in West European countries too. A majority favored the state taking responsibility for welfare and favored a secure job rather than making money; a majority also endorsed private ownership of major enterprises and people being paid according to their achievements rather than income equality. Factor analysis showed that answers to these questions were sufficiently consistent to justify combining them into a scale measuring collectivist as against individualist attitudes toward social welfare (for details, see Rose and Makkai 1995).

(a) *Individualists* (44 percent of total). In this group people react against their experience of Communism policies; they reject three or four collectivist alternatives. Individualists are the largest group in Central and Eastern Europe. In the Czech Republic 64 per cent are classified as individualists. However, they are not an absolute majority overall.

(b) *Collectivists* (26 percent). Democracy does not preclude collective action to promote individual welfare, and social democratic parties give it priority. In post-Communist societies one-quarter are clearly in favor of collective welfare, endorsing three of the four propositions. The proportion is as high as 44 percent in Bulgaria.

(c) *Ambivalent* (29 percent). Because individuals do not reason with ideological rigor, the second largest group is ambivalent about collective action, tending to favor a secure job and state responsibility for welfare, and private enterprise and differential incomes. In Poland the largest group of the population is ambivalent.

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There appears to be *a party system in the heads of voters*, for the great majority have clear and conflicting economic preferences. But in political terms, parties have yet to gain sufficient trust from voters to stabilize party support.

All parties in Central and Eastern Europe today are new. Even those derived from Communist organizations have been re-founded and renamed. Yet new parties in the West European sense are relatively few. Green parties have appeared but won few votes. Idiosyncratic parties have also emerged, for example, the Beer Lovers' Party in Poland. It won seats in Parliament in 1991, but by 1993 the froth was off the party and it lost its seats. The striking feature of the first two elections in post-Communist countries is not the emergence of new parties, democratic or undemocratic, but the appearance on the ballot paper of dozens of parties with labels that combine terms familiar in Western Europe.

A DEMOBILIZED ELECTORATE

A stable party system requires stable partisans, that is, people who not only vote for a party but also identify with it and trust it. However, the experience of four decades of Communist party indoctrination has produced a demobilized electorate, in which most people do not do this. In such circumstances, free elections register the negative and transient preferences of anti-party voters.

Uncommitted and anti-party voters. When election day comes, people who had not previously had a chance to express their views freely are ready to cast a

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ballot. The turnout at the first free elections was as high as 95 per cent in Czechoslovakia and has remained high since. Only in Poland has turnout dropped as low as it is in the United States. But the meaning of these votes is very different than in a society with an established party system.

Party identification is the anchor that holds people to a particular party through thick and thin. When party identification does not exist, then the vote of an individual is cast by default for whatever group happens to appear the lesser evil, or is temporarily preferable. It will help a party gain seats in Parliament--but voters will feel no obligation to support the party thereafter. The party can thus suffer a dramatic loss of votes at the next election.

A lifetime of being told that 'the party knows best' has led the majority of Central and East Europeans *not* to identify with any political party: four-fifths or more in Poland and Hungary do not identify with any political party. By contrast, in an established party system such as Britain, four-fifths do have a party identification (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Few Identify with parties in post-communist countries*

Source: Paul Lazarsfeld Society, Vienna, *New Democracies Barometer III* (1994). Britain: *Gallup Political and Economic Index* (London: Gallup Poll No. 396, August, 1993), p.7. Bulgaria and Romania omitted because question not asked in a fully comparable way.

Negative party identification is often stronger than positive party identification. When the New Democracies Barometer asks people whether there is any party they will never vote for, more people are likely to name a party that they are permanently opposed to than a party with which they now identify. In the extreme case of Romania, twice as many people can name a party they would never vote for as a party that they would support. In Bulgaria, where party ties are relatively strong, so too is hostility against parties. More Bulgarians can identify a party that they would never vote for than one they support. Rejection is divided almost equally between the Socialist Party, the coalition Union of

Democratic Forces, and the Movement for Rights and Freedom, the party of the Turkish minority.

Because the vote of every individual is equal, an election cannot register the degree of commitment or distrust of individual electors. The views of those who do not turn out to vote are completely ignored. Individuals who are alienated and cast a negative vote or apathetic electors who register a transitory choice have their votes count just the same as the ballots of those positively committed to the party for which they vote.

When public opinion surveys ask people in post-Communist societies how they would vote if an election were held that week, the largest group is usually the don't knows. In the 1994 New Democracies Barometer, across six countries of Central and Eastern Europe an average of 26 per cent say they did not know how they would vote. In Hungary the don't knows were 43 per cent only six months before its general election. There is substantial evidence that people who say don't know are not trying to keep an established party preference secret but are those who have difficulty in identifying a party they would like to support (cf. Carnaghan 1994). Don't knows result in the 'largest' party in a post-Communist society having little support.

Among those naming a party when asked how they would vote, preferences are scattered among more than a dozen different parties. The typical party contesting elections in post-Communist countries today is supported by less than four per cent of the total electorate (cf. Table 2). Across six countries, the most frequently named party claims the support of only 22 per cent of electors. The fragmentation of the vote persists on election day. In Poland the 'biggest' party in the 1993 election, the ex-Communist, took only 20 per cent of votes actually cast. Even if this leads such a party to be described as the 'winner', it remains the case that three-quarters of those who vote cast ballots against the party coming first, and an even larger proportion of the electorate is uncommitted to the 'winning' party.

Table 5. *Demobilized electors predominate*

	CZ	Svk	Hun	Pol	Mean
<u>Committed partisans</u>					
Votes, has ID, trusts parties	13	9	2	2	7
Votes, has ID, no trust parties	23	20	12	12	17
Total partisan	36	29	14	15	23
<u>Uncommitted voters</u>					
Votes, no ID, distrusts parties	36	41	39	64	45
Votes, no ID, trusts parties	9	5	5	4	6
Total uncommitted	45	46	44	68	51
<u>Anti-party non-voters</u>					
No ID, no trust, no vote	14	22	33	17	21
No ID, trusts, no vote	2	2	3	1	2
ID, no trust, no vote	3	1	6	-	3
Total Anti-party	19	25	42	18	26

Source: Paul Lazarsfeld Society, Vienna, *New Democracies Barometer III* (1994).

If a mobilized voter has a party identification and trusts parties, then three-quarters of post-Communist electors are *demobilized* (Table 5). The largest bloc in the electorate are uncommitted voters, who have no party identification and distrust parties--yet nonetheless prepared to name a party they would vote for if an election were held. The second largest group consists of actively anti-party

electors, lacking even a transitory preference for a party, and usually without any trust in parties. The backbone of a stable party system, committed partisans, are the smallest category, accounting for less than a sixth of the electorate in Hungary and in Poland, and dividing their votes among many parties.

CONSEQUENCES OF A DEMOBILIZED ELECTORATE

The object of free elections is to give people a choice between political elites competing for control of government. In every post-Communist country this condition has been met: people now have a very large choice between parties. In Romania 74 parties contested the first free election, and in Poland 67 different parties did so, with 29 parties winning seats in the Polish Parliament. President Walesa described the result as "excessively democratic" (quoted in Webb 1992: 166). Elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe the number of parties contesting elections ranged from 45 in Hungary to a 'low' of 21 and 22 in the Czech Republic and Slovakia respectively (McGregor 1993: Table 2).

But free elections "can delegitimize just as easily as they legitimate" (White 1990: 285); they only support the consolidation of democracy if the great majority of the electorate votes for parties that are committed to maintaining a democratic regime. Given the history of Central and Eastern Europe in the first half of this century, such an outcome could not be taken for granted when the first elections were held in 1990. An election offering a free choice between many parties measures the weakness or strength of popular support for undemocratic parties.

A striking feature of elections in post-Communist countries is that the vote for undemocratic or anti-regime parties is low. As Table 3 shows, people who vote for parties of ex-Communists are not voting for a return to the Communist regime. Ex-Communists now have a personal interest in defending political freedoms, for

they are obvious targets for the restriction of rights under an illiberal regime. Nor is there anywhere a Fascist or National Socialist Nazi party securing support on the scale that such parties could claim before World War II. Parties of the radical right receive few votes. For example, at the 1994 election in Hungary, the Justice and Life Party, founded as a breakaway from the governing party by an anti-semitic rightwing leader, Istvan Csurka, failed to win any seats in Parliament. In Romania, virulent nationalist and radical right parties win upwards of one-eighth of the vote. In no Central or East European country has an anti-democratic party won the quarter of the vote that Vladimir Zhirinovsky's extreme nationalist party took in the December, 1993 Russian parliamentary election.

A second condition of consolidating democracy is that parties alternate in office as the result of elections and votes in Parliament. Conservative and ex-Communist parties full of suspicions and rancour toward each other have exchanged positions as government and opposition in Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland and in Slovakia Vladimir Meciar, the most successful of the personalistic politicians, has not used his personal authority to ignore the rules of the game when the rules dictate that he leave office.

Free elections voting parties in and out of office are evidence that the transition to democracy has started in post-Communist countries. But the absence of committed partisans shows that party systems have yet to become stable. A stable party system requires a large proportion of the electorate to identify positively with parties; the absence of stable parties is an obstacle to representative government.

A floating party system. In a stable party system some electors will be floating voters, moving between established parties as their preferences and the performance of parties changes. For the moment, post-Communist countries have a "floating party system", for parties lack mass membership, established organizations and commitment from voters and many of their Members of Parliament (Lomax 1995: 185).

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At the time of the first post-Communist election, neither politicians nor voters were sure about what parties stood for, how much or how little support they had nationally or what they would do if elected. In Poland, 29 parties won seats in Parliament; in the Czechoslovak Federation 22 parties; and in Hungary, 14 parties did so. In Bulgaria the first election results registered only five parties winning seats, but that was because the Union of Democratic Forces, one of the two largest parties, was actually a coalition of 15 different groups.

Once in Parliament, individual MPs have shown a weak sense of party identification. This creates difficulties in committee assignments, organizing party whips for voting on contentious bills, forming coalition governments and developing a party's program for the next election. MPs of the same party are often on opposing sides of an issue. Party discipline is not always a virtue for individuals socialized in reaction to a Communist regime. Inexperience in parliamentary procedure creates difficulties in conducting debates and deliberating about policies (see for example Agh 1994; Olson 1993: 646ff). Negotiating about the rewards of office creates conflicts between ambitious people in the same party, and taking difficult decisions in office creates additional tensions.

The unsettled state of parties during the first Parliament results in the parties contesting the second election to change due to failures in the first election, splits in Parliament and the governing coalition, and the emergence of new parties and alliances. In Poland, 22 of the parties that had held seats in their own name in the first Parliament did not win any seats in their own right in the second election. Most of the survivors did so through merger or forming tactical alliances. In Hungary, four parties disappeared during the first Parliament and six new parties emerged at the second election.

A demobilized electorate and a floating system of parties results in very large inter-election shifts in votes. This is shown by an Index of Volatility, which sums the changes in each party's share of the vote in two successive elections on a scale ranging from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 200. In Czechoslovakia the

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Index approached this maximum, for the party structure was transformed by the collapse of Czechoslovakia and the emergence of new parties in the two successor states (Figure 2). In Romania the Index is 126 because the National Salvation Front, an anti-Ceausescu coalition of ex-Communists and non-Communists, won 66 per cent at the first parliamentary election. It subsequently split; the remnant of that coalition took only 10 per cent of the vote at the second election. Elsewhere, volatility has primarily been due to big rises and falls in support for parties fighting both elections.

Figure 2. *Volatility in party support between elections*

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Source: Calculated by the author from official results.

At the initial stage of transition, volatility in post-Communist countries is much higher than in other European countries that have abruptly moved from authoritarian regimes to democratic elections. Even though Spain had been almost forty years without free elections, volatility in Hungary or Poland has been more than twice as high as in Spain's first democratic elections. It is also more than twice as high as in Portugal, where parties were absent for an even longer period. Volatility in post-Communist countries is also higher than in the early days of the Federal Republic of Germany or Austria.

Elections in established democracies show a much lower degree of volatility than in post-Communist countries. In a normal election in an established democracy, the Index of Volatility can be as low as 10. In Germany the Index fell from 52 points at the start of the Federal Republic to 16 points for the 1994 election, which included disturbances arising from re-unification with East Germany. East German volatility has been much lower than in other post-

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Communist countries because of the presence of "ready made" parties with which East Germans could vicariously identify through West German television.

Trusted representatives--the missing middle. In a country of tens of millions of people, democratic government must be representative government. This requires politicians who understand how to advance the interests of their supporters, and parties that can organize individual MPs to give direction to government. But if MPs are amateurs in the world of government and parties are undisciplined and floating, there is a missing middle. Individuals can vote and governors can govern, but it is difficult for voters to know how to hold the government of the day accountable from one election to the next.

Volatility in parties and in popular votes has created a big turnover among Members of Parliament. In Poland, 69 per cent of the members of the Parliament elected in 1993 were new MPs. In Hungary, 64 per cent of the members of the Parliament elected in 1994 were new to the task of representing voters. When the majority of Members of Parliament are inexperienced in representing voters, committee work, parliamentary debate and influencing government, the connection between how people vote and how the country is governed is reduced.

Political amateurs who have entered Parliament by accident through the collapse of Communism may do little more than occupy an elective office without contributing. Experienced politicians from the old regime or those who learn quickly on the job can seek the fruits of being an MP, increased influence, income and status, or the even greater benefits of being a minister. Patronage can be dispensed to create a network of clients within a party and in the economy. . The confusion caused by the transition to the market creates many opportunities for politicians to award themselves material benefits. Such behavior creates suspicion of dishonesty and increases the distrust of voters.

Table 6. *Post-communist voters doubt their influence on government*

	Better	Same	Worse
Czech Republic	29%	52	18
Slovakia	15	59	26
Hungary	27	59	14
Poland	29	55	15
Romania	36	49	14
Mean	27	56	17

Source: Paul Lazarsfeld Society, *New Democracies Barometer III* (1994). The question was, *Do you think our present political system, by comparison with the Communist, is better, the same or worse in enabling ordinary people to influence what government does?* Bulgaria omitted as question not asked in directly comparable way.

In a civic culture, people are prepared to participate in politics because they believe that they can influence government by voting, contacting their elected representatives, joining a political party and other forms of political participation undertaken by activists in established democracies (see Parry et al. 1992). However, people socialized into a Communist party-state are unlikely to have the same confidence in their ability to influence government and to distrust politicians. Shortcomings of elected representatives in post-Communist regimes will tend to reinforce popular suspicions. A distrustful and demobilized post-Communist electorate is likely to see government as alien and not subject to influence by ordinary people.

When the New Democracies Barometer asked if ordinary people are better able to influence government today than under the former Communist regime, the answers are very different than the replies given about changes in the state's

ability to influence individuals. Whereas a big majority see themselves as gaining many negative freedoms from the change of regimes, an absolute majority of Central and East Europeans see no change in their inability to influence what government does (cf. Table 6). This is even true in the Czech Republic where a freely elected government replaced a regime resting on Soviet bayonets. Romanians are most likely to see regime change as increasing their influence on government; that is a reflection of conditions under the Ceausescu regime rather than a positive endorsement of the new regime. A quarter of Slovaks feel that they have had their influence on government reduced, a reminder that creating a nationalist government does not of itself make government in Bratislava responsive.

Competition between parties at free elections is evidence that democracy exists in post-Communist countries, but until there are stronger links between voters and party leaders representative government has yet to be institutionalized. The missing middle in post-Communist political regimes has not produced a South American-style plebiscitarian system in which a President is popularly elected once every four years to exercise power over ministries and bureaucrats. In post-Communist countries the President is often distrusted too, especially if he seeks to act independently of elected representatives. This has happened to Lech Walesa, leader of Solidarity, after he became President of Poland (cf. O'Donnell 1994). The result of such friction is a reduction in the representativeness and responsiveness of government.

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Table 2. *Parties in post-communist systems*

	Bulgaria	Czech Republic*	Slovakia
	1994	1992	1994
1. <u>Dissident movement</u>	Un dem forces (ceased) 24 Popular Union 7	Civic forum (cesed) Two others 9	Public Against Violence
2. <u>Ex-Communist</u>	Socialist 43	Left 14	Common Choice 10
<u>Historic culture</u>			
3. <u>Religion</u>	-	Chris.People 6	Christian Democrats. 10
4a. Nationalist	-	-	Slovak Nationalists 5
4b. Ethnic	Turk.Rights Freedom 5	Moravians 4	Hungarian Coalition 10
5. <u>Radical right</u>	-	Republican 6	-
6. <u>Personalist</u>	Business: Grechev 5	-	Meciar: HZDS 35 Workers 5
<u>Economic interests</u>			
7. Liberal market	Civic Dem	Dem Union 34	8
8. Social democrat	-	Soc Dem 8	-
9. Agrarian	Agrarian Un c2	Lib Social Un 6	-

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10. Small, other

Monarchist 2
Others: 12

Pensioners 3
Others: 10

Others
13

Hungary

Poland

Romania

(Parties and % share of vote at latest election)

1994

1993

1992

1. Civic movement

-

Solidarity
5

Dem Convention
20

2. Ex-Comm

Socialist
33
Workers
3

Democratic Left
20

Social Labour
3
Plus**

3. Religion

Dem. Forum
12
Christ. Peoples
7

Fatherland
6

4a. Nationalist

-

-

Rom.Natl Unity
8

b. Ethnic min.

-

Germans
1

Hungarian Union
7

5. Radical right

Justice (Csurka)
2

Indepen.Poland KPN
6

Greater Romania PRM
4

6. Personalist

Entrepreneur (Zwack)
1

BBWR: Walesa
5

Dem.Natl.Salvation-Iliescu
28**

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		X: Tyminski 3	Natl.Salvation Front-Roman 10**
7. Liberal market	Free Democrats 20 FIDESZ: Young Dem. 7	Dem. Union 11 Liberal Dem. 4 Un. Real Politics 2	-
8. Social dem.	Social Dem. 1	Union of Labor 7	-
9. Agrarian	Smallholders 9 Two others 3	Peasant 15 Two others 3	Agrarian 3
10. Small, other	Others: 2	Others: 12	Others: 17

* 1992 Czech result: election to House of the People. 1994 Bulgarian result: Preliminary.

** Both Iliescu and Roman were formerly in the Communist Party

Source: Classified by the author. For more detailed discussions see Bulgaria (Karasimeonov 1995); Czech Republic (Olson 1993; Kosteletzky 1995); Slovak Republic (Olsen 1993); Hungary (Rady 1994); Poland (Vinton 1993; Jasiewicz 1994); Romania (Shafir 1992).