Between Past and Future

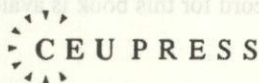## The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermath

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Between Idealism and Realism: Reflections on the Political Landscape of Postcommunism

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"He has two antagonists: the first presses him from behind, from the origin. The second blocks the road ahead. He gives battle to both. To be sure, the first supports him in his fight with the second, for he wants to push him forward, and in the same way the second supports him in his fight with the first, since he drives him back. But it is only theoretically so. For it is not only the two antagonists who are there, but he himself as well, and who really knows his intentions? His dream, though, is that some day in an unguarded moment—and this would require a night darker than any night has ever been yet—he will jump out of the fighting line and be promoted, on account of his experience in fighting, to the position of umpire over his antagonists in their fight with each other."[1]

I.

Almost ten years have passed since the revolutions of the late 1980s terminated totalitarian rule in Central Europe. Many things have changed radically in the meantime, but equally important as the shifts themselves is our perception of these changes and of their effects. The process of transition has been undoubtedly a great learning experience for all who have taken part in it. As far as the nature and scope of this process is concerned, however, in 1999 we seem to be less certain and less self-confident than we were at the beginning. We realize that maybe we are finding ourselves on the verge of, according to Samuel Huntington, a "clash of civilizations" but certainly not, according to Francis Fukuyama, at the "end of history". With the collapse of communism—the ideologues of which pretended to have discovered the universal laws governing the historical movement of human society and believed in their own

capability to plan its "radiant futures" accordingly—human history has become largely mysterious again, and it is once more perceived as a story with an open end. The stability and rigid constellations that characterized Europe in the long decades of the cold war are now irrevocably gone, and we indeed regained freedom ten years ago. There is a price, however, to be paid for our liberation: a long period (forty years?) of flux, destabilization, and uncertainty.

In my paper I would like to argue that this epistemic deficit—the fact that we know that we do not know exactly where we are and in which direction we are heading—represents an essential and perhaps the most dynamic aspect of the politics of transition. It is true that we still believe that ten years ago we started our return to Europe after decades of "Babylonian captivity" and that we hope to join the European Union within four or a few more years. At the same time it is evident that our return to Europe is much more—or even something entirely different— than a mere "homecoming", because the "home" itself would have to change profoundly in order to absorb all returnees. If Timothy Garton Ash could announce in 1990 that what we were witnessing was the great victory of "old, well-tested ideas", there is no doubt today that this victory brought us to an entirely new, unprecedented situation.

The remarkable coincidence is that at the moment of this conference, convened to examine the lessons of the past decade that started with the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, the actions of NATO against the Milosević regime in Yugoslavia demonstrate very clearly profound and radical change, the "innocent" beginnings of which were celebrated in the streets of Budapest, Prague, Warsaw, and elsewhere during the *annus mirabilis* 1989. But it also shows how difficult and even painful it can be to understand the weight and impact of actual historical events. It seems to me that when the bombs were dropped on Belgrade and other Yugoslav cities by NATO pilots, the process of transition reached a critical point, illuminating the whole postcommunist landscape and forcing us to rethink what is going on around us and what is really at stake. If the year 1999 was originally planned as the year of celebration of the European revolutions of 1989, when "truth and love triumphed over lie and hatred", we cannot fail to see under the given circumstances that the past decade had not only its "happy" beginning but also its "tragic" end.

What I would like to suggest is that the whole period between 1989 and 1999 can be divided into three different phases introduced and characterized by specific events. What is the place of these events in our understanding of the politics of transition? Is there any rationality behind them? Or were they entirely unpredictable and triggered by coincidence?

Can we interpret them as a chain of steps tied together by some inner logic? Did they just happen, come unexpectedly, or were they bigger than the intention that might have led to their ignition? Is it not exactly here in these questions, which we have to leave unanswered, that lies the root cause of our current uncertainty and "epistemic deficit?" Is it not the proper historical understanding of events irreversibly changing our world that is at stake if we want to reconcile ourselves with the reality that ten years after our "revolutions" we still seem to be on the historical cross-roads, in the Arendtian gap between the past of the twentieth and the future of the twenty-first centuries?

II.

The atmosphere that prevailed in Europe immediately after the revolutions of 1989 swept away the totalitarian communist governments seemed to favor political idealists. The former dissidents became revolutionary heroes overnight. Shouting and singing crowds marched in the streets of Central European cities tinkling with their keys, ready to enthusiastically support the cause of Charter 77 with its ideas of human rights and "nonpolitical politics" (hitherto observed by the majority of the population with a lack of understanding and from safe distances), sending a clear signal that times were changing. The new politics was born from that spirit and was greeted and admired—as all innocent newborn children usually are—by almost everybody. The message sent to Washington by the new president of Czechoslovakia, Václav Havel, in February 1990 when he addressed a joint session of the U.S. Congress (which applauded more than twenty times during his speech) could not have been clearer: "The specific experience I'm talking about has given me one great certainty. Consciousness precedes Being, and not the other way around, as Marxists claim. For this reason, the salvation of this world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human humbleness and in human responsibility."[2]

It is fair to admit, however, that not only the freshly liberated "post-totalitarians" but also the distinguished international community of the West were taken by the revolutionary idealistic spirit of renewal. The Paris Charter for the new Europe, signed in November 1990 by all heads of member-states of the Council on Security and Cooperation in Europe, solemnly declared that the cold war was over. The language of this document reflects very well the atmosphere of these "fair, well-spoken days". "Europe is liberating itself from the legacy of the past. The cour-

age of men and women, the strength of the will of the peoples and the power of the ideas of the Helsinki Final Act have opened a new era of democracy, peace and unity in Europe."[3]

What happened in 1989 was truly a historical breakthrough. It was as if the world had become young again, full of hope, good will, and great expectations. The message of the epochal event we were all part of was clear and simple, and everybody seemed to know well what was at stake. The societies that had been kept closed for decades started to open again, and in this situation they could ask for and expect the helping hand of the democratic West. Practically all postcommunist states were well aware of the fact that the window of opportunity was wide open, and for both their foreign and domestic policies they set the same, or at least very similar, goals: the return to Europe, transition to the market economy, and democratization.

The Havelian vision, emphasizing the key role of human consciousness in world politics today—a position based on the spirit of the "resistance movements" of the 1970s and 1980s, such as Charter 77—was certainly inspiring and motivating. As a political program, however, defining not only the goals but also the instruments and ways to achieve these goals, it was insufficient. In order to identify and formulate all elementary agendas of the politics of transition more "realistic" approaches were needed. The work that was used as a basic source of inspiration, as a manual of political ideas for those who were charged with the enormous task of restoring (or building from scratch) liberal democracy in the postcommunist region, was undoubtedly Ralf Dahrendorf's *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, written in the form of a letter dated April 1990, "intended to have been sent to a gentleman in Warsaw".[4] "What does it all mean, and where is it going to lead (you want to know)? Are we not witnessing a process of dissolution without anything taking the place of the old and admittedly dismal structures?"

Dahrendorf sees his predecessor in Edmund Burke, who, two hundred years before him, sent a similar letter to a fictitious gentleman in Paris and articulated similar opinions concerning the revolution that took place in France: "Though I do most heartily wish that France may be animated by a spirit of rational liberty, and that I think you are bound, in all honest policy, to provide a permanent body in which that spirit may reside, and an effectual organ by which it may act, it is my misfortune to entertain great doubts concerning several material points in your late transactions."[5]

According to Dahrendorf, as far as European revolutions are concerned, nothing much has changed between 1790 and 1990. The central problems of postcommunist countries, returning after decades of Baby-

Ionian captivity to Europe, were apparently the ones that have occupied the minds of all modern European revolutionaries: How to provide a permanent body in which a spirit of rational liberty may reside? How to create, after an outlived "ancient" regime was displaced or simply fell apart, a new body politic? How to transform a profoundly negative force of revolution into the architectonic power of law making and city building? How to follow the U.S. rather than the French example in this matter and found a new political order without violence and with the help of a constitution?[6]

Dahrendorf, a determined enemy of all utopian visions and of all versions of system thinking in political matters, foreseeing "the conflicts between advocates of systems and defenders of the open society" in postcommunist politics, states unequivocally: "Neither Central Europe, nor social democracy, nor any euphemism for the 'middle way' must be thought of as a system, or indeed a Utopia, if liberty is what we want. The choice between freedom and serfdom is stark and clear, and it offers no halfway house for those weaker souls who would like to avoid making up their minds."[7]

Only after this first step is made and the existence of open society secured can "normal politics" emerge, where "a hundred options may be on offer and three or four usually are".[8] The relation and proper ordering of very different agendas in the process of transition, the correct sequencing of "constitutional" and "normal" politics, and the right choice and use of "republican remedies" that would be capable of making the government stronger, in Dahrendorf's account, are the key problems. The envisaged ideal schedule of transition to democracy develops, according to Dahrendorf, as follows. First comes "the problem of constitutional reform" that "takes at least six months".[9] Then "normal" politics bursts in, and economic reform must be executable within this environment.[10] The key, however, the lengthiest process, is the third problem—the emergence of civil society. "The third condition of the road to freedom is to provide the social foundations which transform the constitution and the economy from fair-weather into all-weather institutions capable of withstanding the storms generated within and without, and sixty years are barely enough to lay these foundations."[11]

There is no doubt about what Dahrendorf suggests as "remedies" to be used to protect the security of people and at the same time to keep their society open under the given circumstances. It is certainly not any sort of utopian vision of a "just" society—which in the last instance can only end up in "reigns of terror and virtue"—but free republican institutions. It is not the "pure ethics of conviction" of former dissidents turned into politicians, but the standard western political process (characterized

by the rule of law, respect for unalienable rights, parliamentary democracy, and the market economy) animated by the "practical ethics of responsibility".[12]

It must be emphasized, however, that Havel's idealism and Dahrendorf's realism do not necessarily contradict each other. In fact, the disagreement between them only illustrates the elementary fact that an activist and an observer see the political processes from different, rather complementary, and not necessarily mutually exclusive perspectives. In his Burkean criticism of the "negativity" of the revolutionary spirit having the intrinsic tendency to transform its "pure ethics of conviction" into violence, Dahrendorf undoubtedly scores some points, but he is missing, in my view, the essential aspect of our recent revolutionary experience: the radical novelty and the lack of precedence of our current situation. The problem will become clearer when we deal with the role of civil society in the politics of transition. Here I will mention very briefly one reason why I prefer—with all due respect to political realism and the venerable tradition of liberal thought—Havel's revolutionary vision and not Dahrendorf's Burkeian conservatism.

The key question concerns civil society. For Havel civil society is not only a necessary condition for the functioning of democracy in the distant future but also something that must be recognized as already existent here and now; that, for instance, existed in the form of the "parallel polis" of Charter 77 for almost thirteen years before it was brought to the surface during the revolution; that has to play its crucial nonpolitical role within the context of the politics of transition. For Dahrendorf the emergence of civil society as a prerequisite for the successful "road to freedom" and as its necessary social foundation seems to be somewhat postponed and is presented as something that may only exist fully sixty years from now. The reason why Dahrendorf is somewhat reluctant to speak more positively about the ideas of civil society in the context of the revolutions themselves is obvious: It is his negative attitude toward what he calls "revolutionary utopianism". Civil society cannot be created by a revolutionary act; it must grow slowly. No proclamations, no political decisions, no legal acts or decrees, but only gradual uninterrupted development can bring its fundamental structures fully into existence. As the English know very well, maybe better than other nation, habits die hard and mentalities change slowly. That is why any impatience in this matter would lead posttotalitarians astray.

Nonetheless, what might be good advice and a healthy position during stable times that are favorable to evolutionary thinking and are backed by the idea of infinite progress do not necessarily work well in times of transition. Can we afford to think in such long-term historical

perspectives when finding ourselves in the "gap" between past and future, in the middle of great historical change? What makes us believe that we will be given a sufficient amount of time for a successful transition? What should we do if some unexpected events lead us to arrive at the opposite opinion? Would it mean that the project of rebuilding the liberal order is doomed to fail or is simply incompatible with the situation in Europe and in the world at the end of the twentieth century?

III.

If the events that determined the character of the first phase of the post-communist transitions were the revolutions connected with the collapse of the totalitarian regimes themselves, then the beginning of the second phase was marked by the collapse of the empire. In December 1991 the Soviet Union ceased to exist and Yugoslavia disintegrated, resulting in the emergence of the first new independent states. With these events, according to Dahrendorf, the period of unifications terminated and was followed by the period of fragmentations. The political weather in Europe, bright and sunny after 1989, suddenly deteriorated. In fact, not only were some states falling apart, but the idea of a united Europe open to accept all returning posttotalitarians also started to evaporate in the new "climate". The concept of "virtuous" and "vicious" circles appeared in the debate on the politics of transition: "The more successful and 'virtuous' a country is in its transition to democracy and market economy, the more favorable are relations with the European institutions which in turn enhance democracy and contribute to prosperity…the countries which are less successful in the post-communist transitions for all sorts of reasons—be it economic hardships, social or political tensions or adverse international development—find themselves in…a vicious circle, being increasingly marginalized and separated or even excluded from the process of European integration."[13]

A new question was introduced in European political discourse concerning the new divisions emerging in Europe, new walls that were built to isolate the stable zone of European integration (to which the Central European countries were heading, according to their own conviction, firmly rooted in the traditions of "western civilization") from the irradiation of instability in some postcommunist regions—namely, in the Balkans and in the East. The European body politic was infected in these vulnerable areas by new dangerous diseases, and political "idealists" and "realists" naturally came with different medical prescriptions and thera-

pies. The original consensus concerning the basic direction of the process of transition was broken, and the gap between the various "schools of transitology" grew wider and wider.

The second half of this chapter will deal with the test that international society has undergone while trying to resist the "Yugoslav virus", to use Adam Michnik's terminology. What must be mentioned first is the effect of the climatic change on the domestic postcommunist political scene, even in those "virtuous" countries. As an example I will take the Czech case because it offers a textbook example to illustrate traps and dilemmas of postcommunist democratization. Additionally, one also must take into consideration the fact that all discussions on the Czech political scene concerning the strategy of transformation—giving concrete "Czech" answers to the questions raised at the very beginning of the process by Dahrendorf—took place here against the background of the "velvet divorce": on 1 January 1993 Czechoslovakia was dismembered, and the Czech Republic and Slovakia came into existence.

The main and most influential opponent of Václav Havel on the Czech political scene, Václav Klaus, was the leader of the neoliberal Civic Democratic Party (ODS) which emerged as the strongest political unit from the revolutionary "Civic Forum". His aim from the very beginning was clear and simple: to formulate a "realistic" liberal alternative to the utopianism that, according to him, was the very essence of Havel's version of posttotalitarian politics. The arguments of Klaus—his criticism of the role of intellectuals in politics as promoters and disseminators of the "third way" thinking and his strong preference for "standard" western structures and strategies in addressing the problems of posttotalitarian politics—follow the lines of reasoning used by Ralf Dahrendorf. It was the Dahrendorfian version of western liberalism that made the Klausian political program both strong and weak at the same time; this model seemed to offer the best and shortest way from the dark communist past to the bright liberal-conservative future, yet it failed to do so in the end.

The Czech model of democratization, viewed at the time as a great success story and an outstanding example of "virtuous" transition, was characterized by several distinctive traits:[14]

1. neoliberal economics, rejecting the concept of the paternalistic welfare state and relying fully upon the omnipotence of market force;

2. transformation strategy as a practical application of the "turnpike theorem"; the main steps—the liberalization of domestic markets, the opening up of the Czechoslovak economy to world markets, and rapid privatization—were intended not to "build the capitalistic system" but to

unleash the spontaneous forces of the free market that were trusted to find the fastest way to an optimal situation;

3. spontaneous economic behavior as a first priority, unregulated and encouraged from the very beginning of the process of transition, and the belief that the speed of this process is more important than its legal purity—the difficulties of legal reform should not hinder the dynamic development of economics;

4. a strong and heavily centralized state administration (despite the rejection of state paternalism in economic matters), the existence of strong state institutions being the necessary conditions for successful passage through the uncertainties of transition;

5. belief in "standard" mechanisms of liberal democracy and in a technocratic or managerial concept of politics;

6. the articulation and representation of common positions and world views by political bodies (rather than the promotion of social dialogue and mediation of social communication);

7. contempt for all spontaneous activities of civil society, reborn from below, and mistrust of its intermediary bodies;

8. reliance that all political problems can be properly addressed and dealt with by political parties, that their structures and networks should serve as conduits to the decision-making mechanisms of a standard political system, that there is no room for the spontaneous activities of intermediary bodies of civil society, committed to the idea of "common good" in their not-for-profit oriented, yet (according to Klaus) "private" activities.

The consequences of the rejection of "the third way" by those who, with Václav Klaus, believed (or pretended to believe) "in [the] stark and clear choice between freedom and serfdom" and marked everybody who disagreed with them on this matter as "enemies" (or at least as "those weaker souls who would like to avoid making up their minds", to put the dilemma once more in the language of Dahrendorf) appeared only in the third phase of the process of transition. What already became clear in the second phase, however, was what made these postcommunist transitions essentially different from other, otherwise comparable processes of democratization (Latin America, Portugal, Spain, et cetera). Whereas previous transitions from autocratic regimes took place in the relatively stable international environment of the cold war, the recent reopening of closed societies after decades of communism was accompanied by profound destabilization of the international situation, when not only the postcommunist societies but almost everything was in flux. What we saw in Europe after communism, as Valerie Bunce clearly stated, was cer-

tainly not one transition, but rather a combination of domestic, regional, and international systems in transition.[15]

The collapse of regimes (state socialism, totalitarianism) in East Central Europe was accompanied, as I have already mentioned, by the collapse of an empire. What was at stake and what had to be taken into consideration was not only the possibility of successful transition from closed to open societies, but the fact that the events of 1989 seriously undermined the very foundations of some states and destabilized whole interstate systems in Europe. No doubt, the disintegrations of Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia in many respects are barely comparable. Their collapses were due to very different historical reasons, the catalysts and methods used were very different, and their dismemberments had very different outcomes and consequences.[16] What was, however, the common denominator of these events was the fact that in addition to the reopening of closed societies, another process was taking place as part of the transition, a process that implied an agenda counter to that of democratization: nation and state building.

The disintegration of three former socialist federations brought up one essential aspect of postcommunist politics. What came first under the test of the transition process was not so much a commitment to the ideals of open society or the market economy, but rather the firmness of constitutional foundations and the cohesion and viability of the political communities creating the state. Czechoslovakia, a state with a genuine democratic tradition, disappeared from the political map of Europe after more than seventy-four years of existence because its political representatives were unsuccessful in finding any other solution to the question of Czech-Slovak relations, which surprisingly emerged as the first problem of the Czechoslovak transition.

How can the differences among various examples of fragmentation be explained? Why was the Czechoslovak "divorce" so smooth and peaceful while the dismemberment of Yugoslavia resulted in a bloody war and ethnic conflict, the solution of which now seems to be extremely difficult if not impossible? Is it because of the different cultural legacies, the different histories, the different national mentalities and habits of Central European and Balkan nations? Has geopolitics played the decisive role here?

There is no doubt that it is nationalism, or ethnonationalism, that first should be discussed—and eventually blamed—for the horrors of the "low intensity wars", "ethnic cleansing" and "crimes against humanity" that occurred after the stable bipolar system in Europe collapsed and the newly liberated societies again began to address their statehood. Nevertheless, it must be clearly noted that there is much more here, and maybe

something else at stake, than the reemergence of ethnicity that was suppressed by communist ideology and kept in a "frozen" state during the four decades of the cold war. New nationalists do not operate in a vacuum, and the reason why they were able to begin implementing—and eventually to succeed with—their plans must also be sought in the external dimensions of the problems of state transition and state-building: in the European situation after the collapse of communism, in the context of dominant European political projects and endeavors, in the general habits and practices of the European "*realpolitik*".

Should we not admit that the "mismanaged" state transition of Yugoslavia proved also that there is something wrong and obsolete not only with Yugoslavs, but also with the very foundations of European liberal order? Has not the Yugoslav tragedy problematized the very principles of European international law and politics? Does Europe still believe the old and honorable maxims according to which the transition of statehood is an event outside the realm of legal regulation?

States, as European jurisprudence believed at the beginning of this century, can neither "set laws for their own origin, because they must come into existence first in order to be able to create the law",[17] nor can they legislate their own termination. And international law, when the matter at stake is state sovereignty, also leaves us without guiding rules; it can only confirm what already exists and thus cannot be used at the moment of "legal revolution".[18] Since the domestic legal order is, strictly speaking, momentarily nonexistent, the legal force of the international community comes only *post festum* (a new state must be recognized by the other members of international community).[19]

Why then are we so surprised when observing the behavior of new posttotalitarian states and pseudostates as they pursue their "national interests"? Is it not, after all, in full agreement with the leading and generally recognized paradigms of international relations and interstate systems theory that violence and the use of force are consistent with the nature of the modern nation-state? And that they are always present, at least as a threat, as long as the state exists, and that this state "power" must be clearly recognizable and already active at the moment of its origin? Whether they are being born into or are on their way out of history, states are always tempted to use violence against the individuals who cannot be anything but stateless at the moment of state transition. We have been told not only by current warmongers, but also by all European realists that states simply protect their basic or vital "national interests" such as their right to exist and survive. So is it not then obvious that, first and foremost, "national interest" includes control over "ethnically cleansed" state territory? And is it not exactly such control

that is considered by the international community to be the only condition *sine qua non* for international recognition?

Observing the horrors of the ongoing "low intensity wars" that erupted as a result of the collapse of the rigid, bipolar, cold war architecture in Europe, one has to conclude that there is something wrong not only with those posttotalitarian leaders who in their lust for power awakened the ghosts of nationalism, but also with European politics in general. The outbursts of transitional violence in the Balkans, Transcaucasus, and elsewhere are not only damaging these particular regions, but are undermining at the same time the very foundations of the European liberal political order. "The Yugoslav virus" not only caused the deaths of thousands of innocent people hit by the "epidemic" in these territories, but is also effective outside the killing zone. It demonstrates the inability of Europeans to act in concert towards these problems; it reveals not only how inefficient the existing institutions and mechanisms are when confronted with such crises, but also how precarious and uncertain the concepts and ideas are that are supposed to give us a clear and undistorted picture of such situations and make us capable of understanding them.

To sum up the task with which all those involved in European affairs have been charged vis-a-vis the Yugoslav experience, I can quote from an article published in 1996 by Zoran Pajič, the leading Bosnian expert in international law:

> "It is common knowledge today that the war in Yugoslavia, and in Bosnia Hercegovina in particular, has been a test of the credibility and future durability of the idea of 'European unity', as well as a test of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and of NATO. The two major world political organizations, the UN and the EU, have been exposed by and involved in the Yugoslav crisis from the very beginning, and their record has been controversial, to say the least. In order to be able to re-cover and re-habilitate itself after the Yugoslav experience, the world community will have to evaluate its policy and address a couple of very direct questions: 'why' and 'when' this case went so terribly wrong, and 'what' should be done in the future to 'save' the world from another 'ethnically cleansed peace process.'"[20]

The questions raised by Zoran Pajič in the middle of the enormous tragedy that befell Yugoslavia in the 1990s—a multiethnic state that had a "socialistic" government, but managed to do exceptionally well during the cold war period—and brought enormous suffering to all its nations seem to be of crucial importance indeed for our efforts to examine the lessons of the past decade, and I will return to them in the last part of this paper.

IV.

I take the starting point of the third phase of the transition process to be the Brussels summit of NATO in January 1994. I will focus on its European security debate as the dominant theme. What made this summit a particularly historic event is that the first decisive steps were taken leading to a profound change in NATO that brought us into a completely new, largely unexpected situation at the end of the 1990s. What was at stake is clear: the key defense organization of the West, created in spring 1949 (that is, in the initial stages of the cold war), which divided Europe for more than four decades, was to be transformed into an institution that under the new circumstances was capable not only of fulfilling the traditional tasks of collective defense, but also of meeting the new challenges connected with the possible need for "new missions". Of course, the London summit of NATO in June 1990 sent the first signal to its former enemies and offered them the possibility to "establish diplomatic liaisons" with the headquarters of the organization in Brussels. And since then, every NATO summit has advanced the security debate and approved the next step toward gradual rapprochement. One could say that practically all NATO's activities in the 1990s recognized the fact that the division of Europe was over and that one day NATO would have to go "out of area" if it did not want to end up going, as U.S. Senator Richard Luger once put it, "out of business".

Nevertheless, the January 1994 meeting in Brussels was a turning point: after difficult debate, which was initiated in fall 1993, it was decided that the postcommunist states of Europe would be invited to negotiate with NATO separately and to create a mutually acceptable program package called "Partnership for Peace". The result of the Brussels summit clearly shows how sensitive and even explosive this debated theme turned out to be and how much the security situation had changed since 1989. The lessons to be drawn from it can be summarized in two points:

1. The more the "post-totalitarians" returned to Europe, the more Europe itself returned to the tradition of *realpolitik*. The farther we were from the miraculous year of 1989, when the principles of open politics were rediscovered in Europe and solemnly restated as the firm foundations of any European political architecture of the future, the more often the word "interest" was heard in the domain of European international politics.

2. It is then not at all surprising that under these circumstances the most sensitive and the most important security question concerned the future

role of Russia. With Gorbachev's Soviet Union gone and with Yeltsin's Russia trying hard to gain recognition as one of the key players in the European political arena, an old problem reemerged in a new robe: Where does Europe end and where actually is the place of the largest country on the Eurasian continent in the present historical constellation? Gorbachev strongly believed in the idea of a "common European house". But times changed, and under Yeltsin's leadership Russian foreign policy experts elaborated an entirely new concept articulating basic Russian security (or national) interests, a concept that was unpleasantly reminiscent of the old Yalta language of "zones of influence", the "near abroad".

There is not enough space here to go into the details of the process that ended in spring 1999 with the first wave of NATO expansion or to follow step-by-step the evolution of all the clashes and interactions of that round of the security debate. What is remarkable, however, when one reads again various texts and documents that were prepared along the path leading to this decision, is the shift in European perception of the international situation and, as I have mentioned, the changes in language. On the one hand, the *Study on NATO Enlargement* published in September 1995[21] once more confirmed the basic creed of the political process after 1989: "With the end of the Cold War, there is a unique opportunity to build an improved security architecture in the whole of the Euro-Atlantic area. The aim of an improved security architecture is to provide increased stability and security for all in the Euro-Atlantic area without recreating dividing lines".[22]

To achieve this goal the principles of the Charter of the United Nations are recalled and a broad concept of security (embracing political and economic as well as defense components) is referred to again and again. What is to be erected is a new security architecture that must be built through a gradual process of integration and cooperation.[23] On the other hand, however, the text clearly reflects that the time of original unity is over and that the most important condition for the success of the principles preached in the post-cold war is due respect for "legitimate" security interests: "NATO-Russia relations should reflect Russia's significance in European security and be based on reciprocity, mutual respect and confidence, not 'surprise' decisions by either side which could affect the interests of the other. This relationship can only flourish if it is rooted in strict compliance with international commitments and obligations…and full respect for the sovereignty of other independent states. NATO decisions, however, cannot be subject to any veto or *droit de regard* by a non-member state, nor can the Alliance be subordinated to another European security institution".[24]

The security debate, which brought us first from Brussels to Madrid (where the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland were invited to join NATO) and then from Madrid to Washington (where a jubilee summit honoring the fiftieth birthday of NATO was supposed to accept the first wave of NATO expansion to the East, but then was overwhelmed unexpectedly by difficult agendas connected with the Kosovo crisis), is indeed illuminating. The "open door policy" of NATO and the scope and content of its "new missions", the new security architecture as an interplay of existing multilateral institutions, certainly will remain on the European political agenda for years to come. Nevertheless, one can say with certainty after Kosovo that the process of transition will continue in a radically new environment, because with the military action of NATO forces against Yugoslavia the world has changed again, and this change makes us aware—through all the difficult and often painful questions that the Kosovo crisis generated—that the game is not yet over and that we are confronted not only with the evil forces of the past (such as the ghosts of the Balkans, for instance), but also with other and possibly even more powerful demons—those which guard the gate to the yet unknown future.

There is one more aspect connected with the third phase of the process of transition that is worth mentioning. The experience of the populaces of the postcommunist countries with processes of democratization and economic reform has been silently accumulating for a couple of years. Originally, people were ready to discipline themselves, even to make sacrifices, to accept the fact that what followed after the collapse of communism would be a passage through the "valley of blood, sweat, and tears". At a certain moment, however—and I believe that this moment came around 1994—the atmosphere changed, and the posttotalitarian political experience itself became a more and more important factor in posttotalitarian politics. This experience obviously differs from country to country. Of course, there are some success stories, but there are also many failures. Those falling into the former category, as a rule, are benefiting from the positive effect of a "virtuous circle". Those falling into the latter, on the contrary, are finding themselves in a "vicious circle" and are trying hard to avoid their marginalization.

Stories from Russia are the most threatening in this context, and it is quite sad—but absurdly funny at the same time—to read what Stephen Holmes, a sarcastic American author who is one of the wittiest observers of the Russian transition, had to say about the mental disposition of ordinary people in order to understand what is going on in this time of transition.

"Finally, one of the most important but unappreciated shock absorbers has been Marxism itself. Luckily, the inhabitants of postcommunist countries were not mentally debilitated by Chicago economics, which does not have a single word to say about how capitalism begins. Instead they were blessed with schoolboy Marxism, which teaches, as a law of history, that capitalism begins with unjust seizures, slave-labor and brutal exploitation. The only people who are deeply shocked by (rather than merely angry or disgusted at) the profiteers and swindlers, conmen and shysters, robber-baron capitalists and ruthless pirates, are the American peace corps workers, who had never before heard wealth equated with theft. (The average Russian may not be able to define 'primitive accumulation', but he or she understands the general idea.) As everyone knows, Marx never explained in any detail how communist society was to be organized. But he did give a vivid and believable description of Manchester capitalism without rules. For the first time, therefore, the inhabitants of Russian and Eastern Europe can be actors in a Marxist play. For the first time they can be Marxists."[25]

Of course, not all cases of transition would lead us to these largely cynical, yet apt, observations, but it seems to me that both successes and failures, despite the different effects they obviously have on the populace, have something in common. In the third part of this paper, I mentioned the Czech Republic as an example of a postcommunist country that is doing reasonably well and is benefiting from the advantages connected with being a part of the "virtuous circle". It must be noted here that the third phase of transition also brought the moment of truth for this country and that its actual situation—both political and economic—is far from being satisfactory. What actually happened with us in the past decade requires very substantive reflection and genuine soul-searching.

Is it not true that the main problem all postcommunist countries have in common and are struggling with, regardless of their successes or failures, is openness, lack of precedent, and radical novelty of this situation? Is it not so that the most difficult aspect of transition is the fact that there are no models, no examples, no "old, well-tested ideas" to be used as credible guides to the "brave new world" of the twenty-first century? What should be done with the posttotalitarian political experience that has accumulated in the past ten years? What kind of "shock absorbers" consistent with the posttotalitarian perceptions of political reality ten years after—especially for those who for various reasons have become not winners, but rather victims and outsiders of the postcommunist transitions—can be recommended, if we still want to believe in Dahrendorfian liberalism and its ideals of the "open society"? In the last part of my paper, I would like to sum up my *tour d'horizon* through the political landscape of postcommunism and to answer at least some of the questions I have raised.

V.

I want to depart from the insight of Gabriel Andreescu, a Romanian scholar who already at the beginning of the 1990s drew attention to the problem of postcommunist "epistemological chaos",[26] to that peculiar state of mind that is in a way a decisive factor in the politics of transition. What at the beginning was perceived as a problem that should be solved by organizing education in western liberal democracy at all possible levels for the posttotalitarians, by teaching them how to behave in the Europe they were trying "to return to", turned out to be a more difficult and not easily resolvable question. As a matter of fact, the situation ten years later has not improved in many respects, but rather the opposite. "The epistemological chaos" is not contained any more in the postcommunist region, and in different forms it influences European and world politics in general.

In 1990 we were told repeatedly by prominent western observers of the events in East Central Europe that there was nothing particularly original in the revolutions of 1989: "With all the fuss and noise, not a single new idea has come out of Eastern Europe in 1989".[27] What happened here and what was greeted with great enthusiasm and joy was understood as a liberation, as a restoration of an already known and existing western liberal order. "The ideas whose time has come are old, familiar, well-tested ones. (It is the new ideas whose time has passed.)"[28]

In 1999, however, the overall picture of East Central Europe is definitely less rosy than it was ten years ago, and the role played by all these "old well-tested ideas" is not at all unequivocal and entirely unproblematic. Should we perceive the political processes in the postcommunist countries only as more or less successful "transitions to democracy?" Or is there much more at stake here; should not only the "westernization" of the East but also other transitions be taken into consideration? Should the collapse of communism be understood as the victory of the "old" western world over the hubris of utopias and the totalitarian deformation of "well-tested" European political traditions? Or should we see here at the same time the crucial moment in the historical process that started at the beginning of the twentieth century, the consequence of which is that both politically and spiritually, Europe lost its—until then—undisputed and indisputably dominant position in the world? Is the process going on in Europe after the collapse of communism a mere homecoming of "posttotalitarians" from their Babylonian captivity to the nice, prosperous, and safe haven of the West? Or is the current rapprochement of East and West in Europe taking place at a moment of profound crisis in Euro-

pean civilization, and Europeans cannot go, as they might like to, "back to the future" but find themselves in an entirely new, unprecedented, and thus unknown situation? Is it really "old, familiar, well-tested ideas" whose time has come? Is it not that, in the end, what is at the heart of our posttotalitarian problem is the lack of new ones?

What I am saying is simple: The collapse of communism could not lead to restoration and/or expansion of good old liberal European order, because this event has not only liberated East Central Europeans but also has changed irreversibly Europe's political identity. With all due respect for the venerable traditions of modern European liberalism, it is essential for our discussion to see the limitations of the liberal paradigm—to understand not only the similarities but also the differences between Europe before and after the ruinous attack on its identity by totalitarian ideologies.

The international system emerging after the disintegration of bipolar, cold war architecture is more open, more interdependent, and definitely less "Eurocentric". Multiculturalism, multiple identities, and antifoundationalism are not only fashionable themes in academic discourse today, but also create the context of current international politics. There is no doubt, however, that the "grand opening" of the postmodern market of ideas does not necessarily generate more political freedom and improved communication among nations. On the contrary, the result is the possibility of the emergence of new, culturally motivated conflicts, the possibility that humankind, after it got rid of totalitarian ideologies, may be heading into an era of the "clash of civilizations".[29]

The victory of old well-tested liberal ideas in the ideological conflict fueling the cold war cannot change the fact of the endemic "deficiency" of modern European civilization—the fact that modern liberalism, as one of its most important products, finds itself in deep crisis in the twentieth century. The ever more complex network of communication connecting nonstate actors across national boundaries makes it increasingly impossible for national governments to exert decisive control over the growing number of important political issues and curtails the possibilities of traditional liberal politics. The process by which vital decisions are made often remains entirely opaque to most ordinary citizens; it is not discussed, not understood, not present in the public domain. There is an increasing sense of insecurity and powerlessness among populaces. What can be observed practically everywhere in the West is an increasing democratic deficit. The whole game of politics becomes increasingly distant from the lives of ordinary citizens and has begun, as some commentators observe, to acquire a bogus air and a sense of a kind of "virtual reality".

Globalization and complex interdependence, the most important characteristics of the situation of humankind at the end of the twentieth century, not only have changed the very nature of world politics but also have introduced its negative, hidden agendas. International crime generating enormous amounts of money to be used to infiltrate and corrupt political elites; the growing vulnerability of populaces to extremist views, stressing nationalist and antiforeigner rhetoric of the most disreputable kind; the disintegration of basic social patterns and structures, that is, the "coming anarchy"[30]—these and other phenomena represent the dark side of our postmodern, increasingly globalized situation.

In his above-mentioned, seminal work on the recent wave of European revolutions, Dahrendorf advised postcommunist politicians "to go back to the 1780s, to the lessons of the great transformations of that time" and to use *The Federalist Papers* as an "unsurpassed manual of liberal democracy".[31] "The biggest threat to democracy in the times of transition and of disordered society, warned James Madison, is weak government. The key question is what 'republican remedies' can be used to make the government stronger; how the emerging open societies can be stabilized and protected not only against the forces of the 'ancient regime', but also against those new politicians who pretend to be the speakers of the people but in reality serve their own self-interest and seek to 'aggrandize themselves by the confusion of their country'."[32]

However, what kind of remedies can be recommended if we want to cope not only with the question of transforming a closed political regime and building a republican form of government but also with the problem of the newly emerging international system and new world order? There are two aspects in the dramatically changing realm of international relations that were underestimated in the *realpolitik* of the past and now should be taken into consideration much more seriously. First is the internationalization of human rights. The emergence of international mechanisms for their protection as a reaction to the unprecedented crimes committed by totalitarian regimes during World War II represents probably the most important change in world politics in the second half of the twentieth century. The demise of the bipolar system in Europe only accelerated and strengthened this development. The issue of human rights has now lost the dimension of ideological confrontation. The existence of international human rights law—which deals with the protection of individuals and groups against violations of their rights by state governments—has an ever increasing impact on the formation, self-perception, and practices of the international community. Respect for international legal norms, active participation in their creation, and involvement in the dialogue in which today's understanding of human

rights is formed and codified become essential conditions for participation and interaction of nation-states with supranational structures, for the creation of a truly transnational human community.

A second aspect which has been seriously underestimated and underrepresented in international politics of the past is the phenomenon of transnational civil society—the fact that international society ceased to be limited by the societies of nation-states over the course of the twentieth century but now is also populated, as I mentioned above, by many nonstate actors. All efforts to cope with the tasks that transcend the limited, closed space of the territorial nation state—be they the various problems that require "global governance" or questions regarding regional arrangements and "integrative" frameworks—cannot be successful without active participation of the civic element. What is now at stake and is urgently needed—and all the conflicts we have seen emerging in the postcommunist world demonstrate this more than clearly—is a profound "democratization" of international relations. The political architecture to be designed and created after the stable bipolar system of the cold war disappeared cannot be invented by some "wise" post-cold war architects and imposed "from above". The new world order can be formed only when all activities "from above" are complemented "from below", all international institutions, mechanisms, arrangements, regimes can be successful and effective only when they are democratic—when they are open to all information, instigation, impulses, and initiatives coming from the grass-roots level, when they permanently act and make decisions while communicating with their international constituency. The current situation in Europe, the discussions surrounding the future European political architecture, namely, the enlargement debate of NATO and the European Union, more than clearly prove this point. Maybe the threat that is bigger to the current Europe than any external enemy is the frustration and the feeling of helplessness generated by the fact that no matter how skillful "professional" Euro-politicians and Euro-bureaucrats are, the Euro-debate monopolized by them could easily result in a dead end. If this were the case, what kind of future could our "old" continent expect?

One does not need to be Cassandra to predict that some scenarios might be quite murky or even catastrophic. If Europeans still believe that "universalistic" European civilization is worthy of preservation in the age of multiculturalism and globalization, they themselves have to have the courage to overcome the shadows of the past, to enhance and actively promote politics based on transnational communication. Because nothing else but open dialogue can be recommended as the best—and maybe the only possible—"republican remedy" in the sense of the Federalists, can

make "global governance" stronger and keep that element of freedom, which is still the essence and real nature of our humanity, in emerging world politics.

Notes

1 The parable of Franz Kafka, used by Hannah Arendt in the preface to *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, Hannah Arendt (Penguin Books, 1996), 7.

2 Václav Havel (address to Joint Session of U.S. Congress, Washington, D.C., February 1990), 43.

3 *Charter of Paris for a New Europe: A New Era of Democracy, Peace and Unity* (adopted by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe on 21 November 1990), par. 2. Quoted in *Twenty-five Human Rights Documents* (New York: Center for the Study of Human Rights, Columbia University, 1994), 210.

4 Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe in a Letter Intended to Have Been Sent to A Gentleman in Warsaw* (Times Books, Random House, 1990), 4.

5 "Reflections on the French Revolution", *Selected Works of Edmund Burke* Vol. I (London: Methuen & Co.,1905), 14.

6 Hannah Arendt, "What is Authority", in *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: The Viking Press, 1961), 140.

7 Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, 62.

8 Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, 35.

9 "The formal process of constitutional reform takes at least six months" (Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, 99).

10 "A general sense that things are looking up as a result of economic reform is unlikely to spread before six years has passed" (Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, 99–100).

11 Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, 100.

12 Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, 10–11.

13 Zdeník Kavan and Martin Palouš, "Democracy in the Czech Republic", in *Democratization in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. Mary Kaldor and Ivan Vejvoda (London and New York: Pinter, 1999), 78.

14 Kavan and Palouš, "Democracy in the Czech Republic", 78–92.

15 Valerie Bunce, "Leaving Socialism: A 'Transition to Democracy'", *Contention*, 3:1 (Fall 1993): 35–42.

16 These processes might be puzzling in many ways and offer to political scientists a unique opportunity to rethink and reexamine their concepts and theories. The fact that Czechoslovakia, a state with a genuine democratic tradition, disappeared from the political map of Europe due to the collapse of communism is in a way paradoxical. The most important issue to be solved after the "dark ages" of totalitarianism turned out to be the question of relations between Czechs and Slovaks and not the agenda prescribed to the "post-totalitarians" by Ralf Dahrendorf. The cases of Yugoslavia

and the Soviet Union are, as I mentioned, different, but raise similar questions nevertheless.

17 J. Jellinek, *Všeobecná státoveda* (State Theory) (Praha: 1906), 208.

18 "Legal revolution" is a concept introduced by the "normative" school of Hans Kelsen. According to normativists, the legal order is equal to a set of legal norms derived from one "focal point", from one supreme norm that represents the genuine source of law. In the normativist paradigm one can clearly distinguish between the continuity of law—which persists as long as a certain focal norm (usually the constitution of a state) remains valid—and the discontinuity of law—which occurs when, due to the "legal revolution", it is replaced by the new one.

19 Strictly speaking, there is only one prerequisite generally accepted for international recognition: a state must exist—that is, have a certain territory with a certain population under the control of a government. Obviously there may be other requirements of the international community, but the principal question always remains—their practical enforcement. The European Union formulated these conditions for the recognition of new states in the context of the disintegration of Yugoslavia: the obligation to respect all provisions of the United Nations Charter, of the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference, of the Paris Charter; the obligation to respect human rights, including the rights of minorities and ethnic groups; the obligation to respect the inviolability of borders and the possibility of changing them only through peaceful negotiations; assuming all obligations in the sphere of disarmament and nonproliferation of nuclear weapons; assuming the obligation to resolve all questions of legal succession by the means of mutual agreement and arbitration.

20 Zoran Pajić, "Where Do We Go from Here?" in "Reflections on the State of Europe from the Perspective of Civil Society", *Quarterly* 17 (Summer 1996), 33.

21 *The Study on NATO Enlargement* (n.p.: September 1995).

22 *The Study on NATO Enlargement*.

23 *The Study on NATO Enlargement*.

24 *The Study on NATO Enlargement*.

25 Stephen Holmes, "Cultural Legacies or State Collapse", *Public Lectures* (Collegium Budapest, Institute for Advanced Study) 13 (November 1995), 25.

26 Gabriel Andreescu, "Violence and Transition Period" (paper submitted at the Prague Conference of the Helsinki Citizen Assembly, Spring 1992)

27 French historian Francois Furet, quoted by Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, 27.

28 English scholar Timothy Garton Ash, quoted by Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, 28.

29 Samuel P. Huntington *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

30 Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy", *Atlantic Monthly* (February 1994), 44–76.

31 Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, 30.

32 First letter of Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist Papers*.