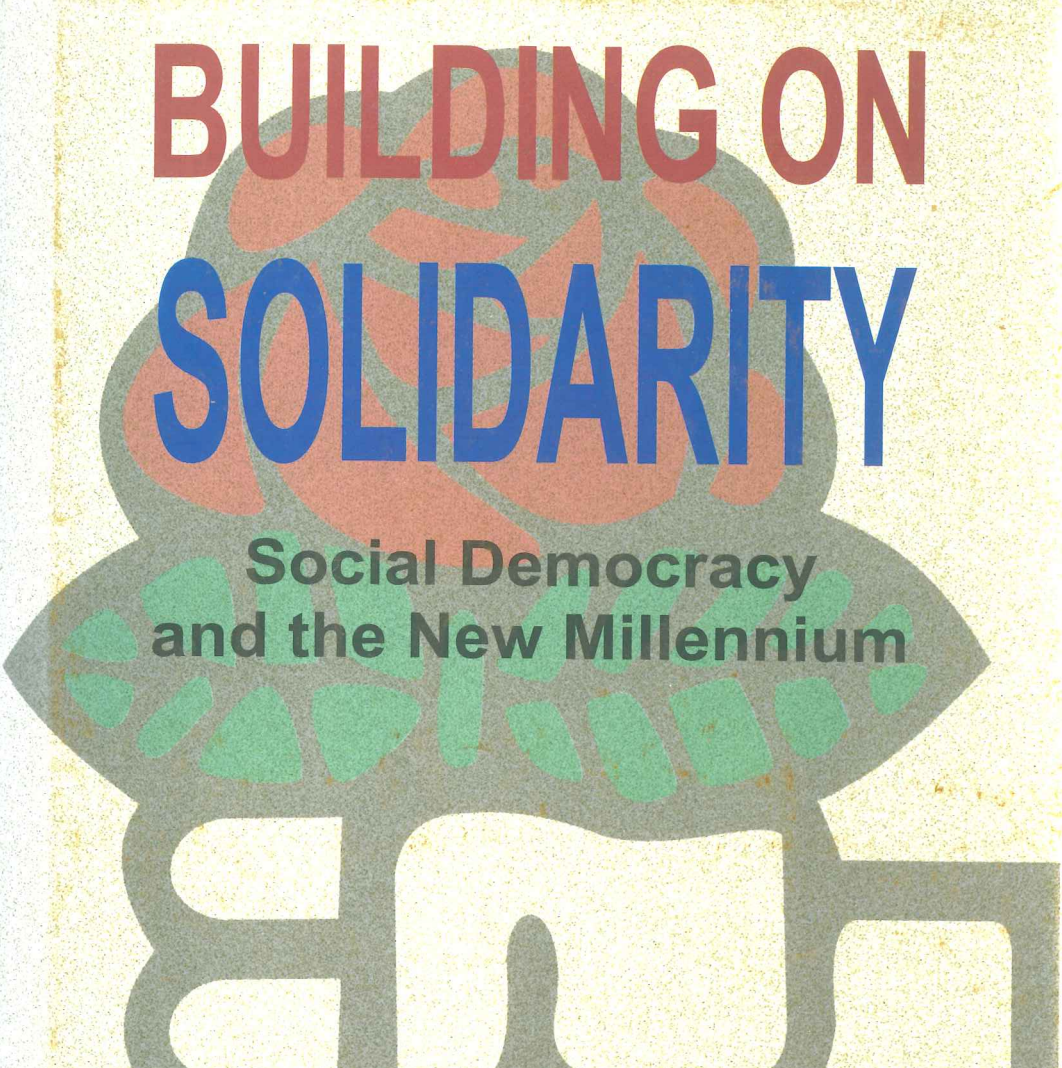
BUILDING ON SOLIDARITY

Social Democracy and the New Millennium



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SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND THE REVOLUTION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

The historic changes in central and eastern Europe (CEE) resulted from different forces: 1) the desire of people for democracy, rule of law and human rights; 2) the disappointment with the performance of centrally planned economies and, thus, the demand for market-oriented reforms; and 3) the yearning of nations and nationalities to be liberated from Soviet rule or the control of other federalist centres like Prague and Belgrade.

In most cases all three motivations were present though in varying degrees. The third motivation dominated in the former Soviet Union and, to a lesser extent, in Slovakia and the former Yugoslavia. As a rule, it led to the establishment of national(ist) regimes with weak democratic credentials and slow economic reforms. Where the first two motivations were more pronounced, the values guiding the respective movements, such as Solidarnosc in Poland or Civic Forum in Czechlands, were predominantly liberal.

Of course, these motivations could also be seen as social democratic, as modern Social Democracy implies democracy as well as a market economy, albeit one moderated by a strong welfare state. Actually, some of the communist front-runners of reform in CEE, such as Gorbachev or the Hungarian socialists, showed strong social democratic tendencies. For a certain time between 1985 and 1989, they probably hoped for a reformist change of the system from communism to a Swedish-type democratic welfare state, rather than the dramatic upheaval that actually occurred in 1989-91.

In the heat of the revolution of 1989, the victorious opposition was

almost exclusively concerned with the destruction of the party dictatorship, planning bureaucracy and the Soviet rule and hardly cared for the finer distinctions between different forms of capitalism. On the contrary, anything that limited the benefits of the free market or contained the element 'social', let alone 'socialist', was viewed with deep suspicion. A return to power of the communists had to be prevented by the fastest and most radical reforms possible, dismantling as many state controls of the economy, society and polity as possible. Rather than Sweden, their models were Reagan's America or Thatcher's Britain, with their strong free market and anti-Communist orientation.

Although most of the implemented policies were liberal, neither the results nor the actors were. Despite fast and wide-ranging reforms, many aspects of the society and the economy remained strongly influenced by the state, as they are in all market economies. Many of the members of the reform elites did not see themselves as free marketeers, but as a sort of social democrats who were forced by circumstances to carry out radical reforms of the old system in order to approximate to some form of capitalism. Without any capitalist structures in place, it hardly made any sense at that stage to advocate social democratic policies aimed at the social control of private capital.

These social democrats could be mainly found in one of three political groupings: 1) in the liberal reform movements (e.g. Solidarnosc, Civic Forum, SZDSZ in Hungary); 2) in small genuine social democratic parties, sometimes refounded in the tradition of social democratic parties which had existed before 1949 and which in some cases had continued to work from exile; and 3) in the reform wing of communist parties.

It was often difficult to characterize parties as social democratic in the blurred post-communist political spectrum. Formally, such a classification could result from membership in the Socialist International, as was the case for some exiled and newly founded parties. In the case of the latter the assessment was often based on party programmes and the relations of leading personalities rather than on the (often impossible) evaluation of actual policies.

The relationship between opposition movements and social democratic parties was ambiguous. On the one hand, social democrats supported the opposition; on the other, they felt a need to maintain

their autonomy, often at the cost of political influence. In many cases they entered parliaments or democratic bodies as candidates on the ticket of the reform movements (e.g. Lipski in Poland in 1989 or Battek in the CSFR in 1990).

In the first (or 'founding') elections in CEE, mostly held in 1990, the reform or opposition movements gained the majority and formed the government, while the social democrats remained very weak (under 5 percent and thus often without any seat in Parliament), and the communists were defeated but still influential. The defeat accelerated the internal reforms within the communist parties, strengthening their social democratic wings or factions and turning them into post-communist or reform communist parties.

Surprisingly soon, however, the accomplishment of the primary common goal (the destruction of the communist system) and the actual business of government broke the unity of the opposition movements and exposed the diversity of political currents within them.[1]

After two to four years of liberal reforms, the pendulum swung back in many countries. The electorate felt frustrated with the results of the reforms, notably the strong recession (in many cases deeper than the Great Depression of 1929-32), increasing unemployment, declining income, and growing insecurity (e.g. criminality). The disappointed voted the reform communists back into power while the forces which saw themselves as social democrats and were internationally recognized as such were not able to attract the support of the discontented and remained extremely weak. The often fragmented parties of the former anti-communist coalition were defeated.

The diversity of the political developments and the present situation in countries of central and eastern Europe demands, however, a more differentiated, country by country analysis.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC POLITICS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

The following table provides an overview of the party landscape. It shows the respective strength of national, liberal, social democratic and post-communist forces in central and eastern Europe. The entries under 'social democrats' include only 'genuine' social democrats;

TABLE: PERCENTAGE OF PARLIAMENTARY SEATS CONTROLLED BY VARIOUS POLITICAL CURRENTS[2]

Country	nationalists	liberals	social-democrats	post-communists
Albania		66	5	26
Belarus		5	6	(20 + 47)
Bulgaria		29 +7		52
Croatia	58	9	8	
Czech Republic	9	43 + 6	30	11
Estonia	7	(42)	6	(6)
Hungary	10	23		54
Latvia	30	35		6+5
Lithuania		20	6	52
Macedonia		24	50	6
Moldova	10			52 + 27
Poland	10	15	10	38
Romania	5	25		35 + 13
Russia	23	15		12
Slovakia	47	10	1	11+9
Slovenia	12	25	5	15

reformed communist parties which have been meanwhile internationally recognized as social democrats are nonetheless listed in the last column. Certain parties – such as peasant parties, Christian democrats, etc. – have not been represented; consequently, the percentages do not total 100.

CENTRAL EUROPE

The central European countries have had freer elections, and, after rapid economic reforms, exhibit more or less renewed growth. Privatization is by and large well advanced. They are already associated with the European Union and members of the Council of Europe. As a result, their problems are slowly approaching those of a democratic, capitalist society.

Nonetheless, in three of the four states (the exception being the Czech Republic), the social democratic parties are almost

inconsequential, and the post-communist parties meanwhile have won control of the governments (Poland, Hungary) or participated in them (Slovakia).

POLAND

The Polish Socialist Party (PPS) presently suffers under numerous tensions. With the death of well-respected party chairman Jan Josef Lipski (a long-time dissident under the Communist regime), the party not only lost its leader's close relations with *Solidarnosc,* but also its orientation. His successor, Piotr Ikonowicz, switched allegiance over to post-communist Social Democracy shortly before the 1993 elections. What remains of the PPS is without influence in the present political landscape.

Of the seven parties with representation in the parliament, three exhibit social democratic characteristics:

1. The 'Union of Labour' (UL) emerged from *Solidarnosc*, but has since also attracted former communists. Since the end of July 1994, it has supported the governing coalition of the post-communists (SLD) and the Farmers' Party, albeit with a stronger opposition role. It may be described as social democratic.
2. The 'Freedom Union' (UW) arose from the merging of Tadeusz Mazowiecki's Democratic Union (UD) and Donald Tusk's Liberal Democratic Congress (KLD). The new party has a more strongly liberal profile than the UD, which itself always possessed a social liberal wing (including such figures as Frasyniuk, Kuron, and Kuratowska).
3. The Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), led by Kwasniewski's Social Democracy of the Polish Republic, includes the old labour union OPPZZ, among others. At the same time, the SLD purports to represent the economic power of the *nomenklatura*-turned-entrepreneurs, such as Jerzy Urban. As the dominant coalition partner in the Government, the SLD is pursuing a course of western integration, although it has also recently exhibited contrary indications (including some recentralization and a more accommodating posture vis-à-vis Moscow).

CZECH REPUBLIC

The political landscape of the Czech Republic deviates strongly from the model presented by most central and east European countries. The communists are orthodox, the liberal-conservative government had been unchallenged for years, and the Czech Social Democrats (CSSD) remained the strongest opposition party. This picture changed somewhat in the 1996 spring election, when the CSSD increased its share of the votes from 6.5 percent in 1992 to 26.4 percent, thus robbing the conservative government of its majority. The new conservative minority government will depend on the CSSD's tolerance.

The Democratic Civic Party (ODS) of prime minister Vaclav Klaus espouses more moderate and welfare state-oriented policies than his rhetoric would suggest, but it is nonetheless firmly anchored in the conservative camp. After the ruling coalition's relative defeat, these policies should gain in strength - as should their principal proponents in the Klaus government, the Christian Democratic coalition partner.

Although the communists have disintegrated into numerous splinter-parties, the few who profess views even approximating Social Democracy represent no alternative to the CSSD. Of more relevance to Social Democracy in the Czech Republic, a number of well-known political personalities, arguably even president Vaclav Havel, hold social-liberal, if not fully social democratic, views. They represent a group of Czech intellectuals who traditionally support democracy and social values and who would likely find their political home among the social democrats of the West. Some are to be found among the more liberal wing of the Civic Movement (OH) of former foreign minister Dienstbier, a Liberal International member party, who in both Czech elections failed to clear the five percent hurdle necessary for parliamentary representation. Nonetheless, the CSSD has been unable to woo these figures and their substantial influence among the public. Instead it has mainly gathered electoral support from the former communist voters.

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Since the death of Alexander Dubcek, the Social Democratic Party of Slovakia (SDSS) has had few prospects – an assessment shared by the party itself, thus explaining its recent attempts to establish closer

co-operative relations with other political forces. These new efforts, however, have split the party between the wing that seeks to co-operate with Peter Weiss and his (post-communist) Party of the Democratic Left (SLD), and those who would prefer to work with the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) of prime minister Meciar.

After the HZDS, the Party of the Democratic Left (SLD) is the next strongest party in Slovakia and was formerly a member of the ruling minority coalition, along with Christian Democrats and liberal HZDS schismatic elements. The SLD has a solid co-operative agreement with the social democrats, and the two had united with the Greens to form an electoral alliance for the elections in 1994. This 'social-democratization' of the SLD finally caused a large group of hard-line communists to leave the party and form their own orthodox 'Union of Workers' (ZRS), which is now part of the governing coalition. The SLD also maintains increasingly close relations with western Social Democracy.

As a relatively broad umbrella movement, Meciar's HZDS has always included social democratic members and tendencies, although it has never been able unequivocally to decide on appropriating the designation 'social democratic'. The two parties that have split from the HZDS in 1993 have adopted a liberal orientation, although both also incorporate members who could be described as social democratic. After winning the October 1994 elections, the Meciar-dominated HZDS increasingly has demonstrated national proclivities and authoritarian tendencies, and it co-operates closely in the parliament with the nationalists and hard-line communists.

HUNGARY

In the first free elections in 1990, the Hungarian Social Democrats (MSZDP) under Anna Petrasovits failed to clear the 4 percent threshold, necessary to win seats in the parliament. Despite their 'rebirth' out of the confusion of the Petrasovits-phase and the leadership of a prominent chairman, they have had no electoral success. If the social democrats are to continue to exist as a party, they will have to collaborate with the Socialists.

The Socialists (MSZP) have striven for years to present a social democratic image, and have carefully cultivated relations with western

Social Democracy. Despite Premier Gyula Horn's dominance of the technocratic centre, the social democratic wing has succeeded in writing the party programme. Within Hungary, the party works closely with the former communist union MSZOSZ, although it also relies on the support of entrepreneurs who have emerged from the *nomenklatura*. Despite its seizure of an absolute majority of parliamentary seats in the last election, the MSZP has formed a coalition with the liberal League of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), helping to provide the parliamentary and popular strength to push through difficult reforms.

The League of Free Democrats itself has long held an equidistant position between the Liberal and Socialist Internationals. Although it recently has been leaning increasingly liberal, a social democratic current runs in the party, albeit one weakened by the loss of the influential social democrat Podkonitzki to MSZDP. The fact that the party formed a coalition with the post-communist MSZP indicates its openness towards the left and the strength of the social democratic current.

THE BALKANS

In the Balkan countries of Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania, reforms suffer from back-stabbing party politics that hinder any stable policy direction. While the communists remain in power only in Romania, it would be difficult to portray either Bulgaria or Albania as possessing a solidly democratic culture. The reform communists of Bulgaria, under the brilliant leadership of the young Zdenev, won an electoral victory in 1994 similar to that of the SLD in Poland. The social democrats, however, have only nominal influence throughout the region.

ALBANIA

Since winning a solid majority in the 1992 elections, the former opposition 'Democratic Party' has steered the Albanian government along a conservative-liberal course, while increasingly seeking to intimidate the present-day opposition and stifle western-style democracy.

The Social Democrats (SDPA), who only managed to seize seven of the 140 parliamentary seats, have criticized these tendencies as merely a continuation of the totalitarian policies of the *old regime*.

The former communists have changed little except in power and name – now the 'Socialists' – and their leader, Fatos Nano, has been imprisoned since 1993 for embezzling Italian aid funds.

BULGARIA

Although the Socialist Party (BSP) of Videnov originally could hardly be described as social democratic, since 1992 it has supported the democratic, reform-oriented policies of President Zhelev and his Premier Berov. A number of social democratic factions exist among the Socialists (notably those led by Lukanov, Prinski, and Propov), although one of the most important of these, Alexander Tomov's 'Civic Alliance for the Republic' (GOR), defected to the BSDP. During the last party conference in June 1994, a more strongly social democratic orientation emerged under pressure from Lukanow and – more recently – Videnov himself, thrusting the orthodox communist elements under Lilov partially into the background. The victory in the 1994 elections rewarded the reform wing. The party is now widely considered as social democratic.

In 1990 the Social Democrats (BSDP) joined the opposition alliance 'Union of Democratic Forces' (UDF), only to abandon it shortly before the October 1991 elections. As a consequence, the BSDP failed to achieve the four percent fraction of the popular vote necessary for parliamentary representation. A faction under Kurtev that remained in the UDF received ten seats. In the 1994 elections UDF won only 24 percent of the popular vote while GOR (including Derliev's BSDP) missed the necessary number of votes to enter parliament.

Under the leadership of Dimitrov and the national co-ordinating committee, the UDF Alliance has sought to support its founder, President Zhelev, but without success. Consequently, it has assumed conservative and even monarchist tendencies. Moderately social liberal factions also support Zhelev, but their strength is difficult to judge. The Podkrepa trade union and the reformed old trade union federation stand even more strongly behind the president.

ROMANIA

The overthrow of Ceausescu failed to bring to power the democratic opposition, but returned instead the oppressed Moscow-faction of the communists. In 1992, two years after forming a new government, the ruling communists split again, with one faction around President Ion Iliescu and party chairman Oliviu Gherman, and another, more reform-oriented, led by Petre Roman. Although Iliescu's party since 1993 has named itself the 'Party of Social Democracy' (PDSR), in fact it comprises reform communists and has perpetuated its grip on power since 1992 through a coalition with nationalist and irredentist parties. Despite claims of pursuing market and political reforms, since 1992 the PDSR has 'cushioned' the transformation to such an extent that its reformist credentials are seriously compromised.

The badly fragmented opposition included two parties with much more legitimate claim to the title 'Social Democracy' than Iliescu's self-styled Party of Social Democracy, although both are extremely weak. The first of these, Roman's 'Democratic Party' (DP-FNS), has long sought intensive contact with western social democrats. Nonetheless, tarnished by its former membership in the government, it has had difficulty in establishing credibility as an opposition party. The second, the social democrats (PSDR), received only 0.3 percent of the popular vote in the first elections, although it received ten parliamentary seats through its membership in the opposition alliance 'Democratic Convention'. Despite its weakness, the PSDR split from the Convention in early 1995 and now has an uncertain future.

THE FORMER YUGOLAVIA

Ethnic nationalism was the driving force of the fall of Yugoslavia. The victorious political forces, at least in the first elections, were either nationalistic parties or, though carrying other political labels, evoking national values. Slovenia, Macedonia and Croatia have, in that order, liberated themselves to some extent from that burdensome heritage while Serbia and Bosnia remain caught in the ethnic logic.

SLOVENIA

The Slovenian Social Democrats (SDSS) possess the smallest parliamentary representation (four seats) of all the Slovenian

parliamentary parties, although this in itself is notable in contrast to the many other CEE countries that lack any social democratic legislative presence. Until March 1994, the party stood in the governing coalition, with party chairman Janez Jansa serving as defence minister. Since 1995, however, the party has shown increasingly nationalist and extremist tendencies.

The reform communists in Slovenia have gravitated primarily to two parties, the Liberal Democrats and the United List. The Liberal Democrats arose from the former communist youth organization and is now the strongest Slovenian party, while the United List consists of the two main communist successor parties : the Party of Social Democratic Change (SDP) and the Yugoslav-federalist oriented Social Democratic Union (SDU). Together with the Christian Democrats, these parties constitute a strongly reformist ruling coalition.

CROATIA

Croatian politics are dominated by Tudjman's 'Croatian Democratic Union' (HDZ), while the social democrats are weak and fragmented. In May 1994 the 'true' social democrats of Vujic (SDSH) merged with the reformed communist group (SPH-SDP) and received 8.9 percent of the popular vote in the 1995 election. Some minor social democratic parties could not clear the 5 percent hurdle.

MACEDONIA

After a strong showing in the first election in 1990, the nationalists lost the 1994 elections. The former Communist Party, which has reformed itself into a credible social democratic force, won 48 percent of the seats in parliament in 1994. It now forms the government together with some liberal and ethnic Albanian coalition partners.

SERBIA AND BOSNIA

In Serbia, Milosevic's 'Socialists' rule, while the marginalized opposition is composed of democrats and extremists nationalist. In Bosnia, all the important parties are ethnic by definition.

THE BALTIC

In the Baltics the 'national question' of the countries' relations to Russia and their own Russian minorities overshadowed all other

political divides. While representing moderate positions in regard to the national question, the social democrats' significance ranges from the weak (in Estonia and Lithuania) to the meaningless (in Latvia). Outside of Lithuania, the post-communists have fared no better.

ESTONIA

As part of a 'moderate' election alliance, the Estonian social democrats entered the parliament in 1992 and, along with the dominant 'Fatherland' party, are presently members of the ruling centre-right coalition.

The opposition includes the 'reform communists' of the alliance 'Secure Home', who mostly seek to perpetuate the interests of the old *nomenklatura* and managers of the state industries, as well as the 'People's Front', which presses for equal rights for the strong Russian minority.

LATVIA

Since all of the parties support market and democratic reforms, the left-right spectrum is determined by the national question. On the centre-left are those elements that promote citizenship for all (including the Russians), in particular the post-communist 'Equal Rights' party and the electoral alliance 'Harmony for Latvia' (located in the moderate centre), which respectively received 5.7 percent and 12 percent of the popular vote. Having received less than one percent of the vote in the June 1993 elections, the Latvian Social Democracy Party (LSDSP) is largely insignificant. This situation did not change substantially after the 1995 elections. The coalition 'Work and Justice', formed by the LSDSP and other labour organizations, could not get enough votes to enter the parliament.

LITHUANIA

In the fall of 1992 Slezevicius Brazauskas' Lithuanian Democratic Worker's Party (LDAP) was the first post-communist party in CEE to return to power, having profited from the excessive nationalism of former President Landsbergis' Sajudis-People's Front. The LDAP

represents a moderate national position and supports a cushioned reform course. In April 1993 Brazauskas resigned as party chairman.

The opposition social democrats, under the leadership of Sakalas, have captured nine and eight parliamentary seats in the 1990 and 1992 elections respectively - hardly a commanding presence, but remarkable in the context of the Baltics.

THE WESTERN CIS[3]

The classic social democratic issues of democracy and the social tuning of the market economy have assumed a lesser priority in the politics of CIS countries, which are dominated by the national question and the need to define their relationships vis-à-vis Russia. In Russia itself these social democratic issues are less urgent, although nonetheless more important than foreign policy concerns and the problem of internal coherence of the federation. The political difficulties are further compounded by the polarising effect of the strong presidents to be found throughout the CIS.

RUSSIA

A large number of groups in Russia identify themselves with Social Democracy. The best known of these, the 'Social Democratic Party of Russia' (SDPR) under the leadership of Orlov, Rumjanzev, and Volkov, developed a certain amount of influence for a time – including participation in Gajdar's cabinet – thanks largely to its early support for Yeltsin. Following an internal rift, in which Rumjanzev founded his own 'Russian Social Democratic Centre' (RSDC), the SDPR under the chairmanship of Golov remained impotent. In the 1993 elections it supported the Javlinskij-Bloc, which received 7.9 percent of the popular vote to win 27 seats in the *Duma*. In October 1994 a dispute-ridden party Congress replaced Golov with Obolenski.

On the left side of the spectrum exist many forces with social democratic claims, distributed across a number of parties :1) a reform-communist wing which exists within the Communist Party (CPRF); 2) the small 'Labour Party' which stands in the ideological vicinity of the Communist Party (CP); 3) the 'Socialist Party of the Working Class' which is constituted by a social democratic leadership and a

more traditional communist base; 4) the 'Social Democratic National Party of Russia' which has both a social democratic wing under Lipickij and a social-patriotic branch under Ruckoj; 5) a number of reform politicians (including Jakovlev, Popov, Burbulis, and Schatalin) who are working on a 'social democratic project'; and 6) in October 1994 most of the above-mentioned groups collaborated to found the 'Social Democratic Union of Russia', which will be an association of parties rather than a party itself. Lipickij, Obolenski, and acting union chairman Jurgens became the chairmen of the Union.

It is difficult to identify social democratic positions in Russia's evolving political scene. Countless lines of conflict overlap one another: nationalism versus peaceful co-operation, federalism versus centralization, presidential democracy versus parliamentary democracy, reformers versus intractable incumbents, and so on. In a number of these conflicts there is no 'social democratic' position, while social democrats find themselves on two different sides of others. Among those parties with *Duma* representation, those with social democratic tendencies include the Yabloko-Bloc and 'Russia's Choice', and to a lesser extent, the 'Democrats' (under Travkin and Bogomolog), Sachraj's 'Party of Russian Unity and Harmony', and 'Women of Russia'.

In the 1995 elections the communists became the strongest party gaining 158 seats in the *Duma* and maintaining some social democratic rhetoric but still not accepted widely as true democrats. Social democrats or social democratic tendencies could be observed within the Yabloko-Bloc, which got 45 seats, and within the coalition of the ruling elite 'Our Home Russia' of prime minister Chernomyrdin, which got 54 seats.

BELARUS

With eleven of 346 total parliamentary seats after the first elections in 1991, the Belarussian social democrats ('Gramada') has formed a small, though not inconsequential, political party. Despite having left the National Front in 1992, Gramada continues to work closely with this somewhat stronger party. In the, strongly government manipulated, elections of 1995, Gramada won only two seats. Another social democratic force, the 'Party of Popular Unity', got eight. They form a

'Social Democratic Association' together with a third small party ('Party of Unity and Harmony'), which got another two representatives. To a large extent, their poor performance is due to the oppressive policies of the power elites.

As in the other CIS countries, however, the fight for democracy and market economy (the defining conflict between the National Front and the *nomenklatura*) is thrust into the background by the dominance of the national question. This was clearly demonstrated by the surprising and overwhelming victory of the pro-Russian candidate Lukaschenko in the June 1994 elections and by the strong showing of the parties representing the ruling elites in the 1995 elections.

UKRAINE

Politics in the Ukraine centre both on Russia and on which Ukrainian president happens to be in office. Questions of democracy and market economy have attracted less attention than the national schism between the heavily Russified east and the Ukrainian national west, a conflict that has periodically flared into crises around the Crimean agitation for autonomy.

The Ukrainian social democrats are weak and splintered among a plethora of scarcely distinguishable parties, including the 'Social Democratic Party', the 'United Social Democratic Party', the 'Party of the Democratic Rebirth', and the 'Democratic Party'. The post-communist 'Socialists' are only marginally reformed and since 1994 have lost considerable influence and membership to the orthodox Communist Party.

MOLDOVA

The social democrats of Moldova have fared no better, unable to break the *nomenklatura*'s hold on power. President Lukaschenko's increasingly authoritarian measures have prevented any opposition party from becoming a threat to his rule, and the social democrats have suffered accordingly. Both Nantoi's social democrats and Arseni's 'Democratic Party of Labour' failed to clear the four percent popular vote hurdle necessary for parliamentary representation. Meanwhile, the unreformed post-communists have dominated, with

the Moldovan-national Agrarian Democratic claiming 45 percent of the vote and the pro-Russian Socialists 25 percent.

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: MORE A VISION THAN A MOVEMENT

The present position of the social democratic parties in central and eastern Europe is precarious, in most cases claiming less than five percent of the popular vote. The potential popular appeal of these parties is certainly much greater, but they have been unable to present programmes and policies that could mobilize voters and gather widespread support. In view of the history of the region, this should not come as a surprise.

Particularly in central Europe, forty years of communist party dictatorship have discredited a wealth of ideas and concepts that have historically and ideologically shaped Social Democracy : for example, the tendency to seek holistic solutions for social problems, the assumption that these solutions are in the direct interest of the workers, the formulation and organization of these interests through a political party, a trust in the (democratic) state as the central executive agent for these solutions, and a preference for redistributional policies over supply side economics.

After the overthrow of the communist system, those political forces dominated supported more liberal principles and maintained that the complete restructuring of the existing 'socialism' was necessary. Consequently, they sought to sacrifice security in favour of freedom, without regard for what constituted a post-communist society's optimal mixture of social security and individual freedom to choose risks and opportunities. The path, therefore, was necessarily liberal, although the destination was preferably social democratic - that is democratic welfare with a market economy.

In eastern Europe in general, but particularly in the former Soviet Union, nationalism was a crucial catalyst for transformation. The opposition movements were motivated primarily by the desire for national independence and freedom from Soviet rule, and only secondarily by the goals of democracy and market economics that had driven the central European revolutions. The goal of national independence cut across the priorities of Social Democracy and has

assumed a position beyond the left-right orientation of the parties to define the politics of the CIS. Traditionally, Social Democracy has defined itself as internationalist, arguing for the peaceful co-operation of nations, and has fought against the displacement of the social question by the national. In the West social democrats have placed national independence issues behind those of minority rights, regional autonomy, the construction of federal states, and greater competence for territories and communities (for instance, in Spain). Although these other social democratic principles have been forced into the background by the prioritization of national independence in CEE, they could potentially play a considerable role in the solution of internal tensions within multi-ethnic states.

PARTIES AND PRIORITIES

The parties of CEE distinguish themselves along different cleavages; In central Europe the struggles predominantly and increasingly centre on the cushioning of the economic reforms and the delineation of public and private competence. In the CIS they largely focus on the national question and relations with Russia and Russian minorities, although this trend is waning in some of the CIS states.

EASTERN CENTRAL EUROPE

The political context of eastern central Europe necessarily defines parties largely in terms of the conflict between the liberal model of reconstruction, in which the former communist system is comprehensively dismantled, and the social democratic model, with its goal of a welfare state grounded in a market economy. Whoever undertakes a long journey expects the driver to have the foot on the gas and not on the brakes. Nonetheless, after six years of a more or less rapid trip, a growing percentage of the travellers of eastern Europe desire a rest or at least a change of tempo.

The voters, however, have articulated this desire not through support for Social Democracy but rather for the post-communists. The reasons lie in that : The socialists of Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, and Slovenia have largely adopted social democratic policies and cannot be distinguished form social democrats by the average voter;

during the past six years, the presuppositions that the post-communists would seek to reinstate dictatorship, planned economies, and the dominance of Russia have proven largely unfounded; and the post-communists possess extensive organizations with strong membership, good access to the media, and a pool of experienced experts whom the voters trust as professionals. Consequently, the reform communists (specifically excluding the orthodox Czech KSCM) of eastern central Europe have good prospects of moving towards the social democratic vision.

The social liberals, born out of the upheavals and subsequent reforms, are also competing for this political space, parties such as the 'Union of Freedom' in Poland, the Free Democrats and Young Democrats in Hungary, the fragments of the DEMOS-Coalition in Slovenia, the democratic opposition alliances in Bulgaria and Romania, parts of the old HZDS in Slovakia and reformers in the Czech Republic, located partially within Klaus' ODS, partially in Dienstbier's OH, and partially outside of any party. Nonetheless, these social liberals have difficulties in identifying themselves with the social democratic project because: a) they reject the title 'social democratic; along with all other ideas and terms that they consider to be 'contaminated' by communism; and b) Liberal and Conservative-Christian politics in practice, particularly in western Europe, are hardly distinguishable from Social Democracy

The exact positioning of a society in the tensions between market and state, security and freedom, or equality and efficiency remains a tightrope walk in which distinct phases follow one another in a strenuous search process of a dynamic environment (the 'shifting involvements' described by A.O. Hirschman[4]). Different parties often, although not inevitably, correspond to these phases. Particularly successful parties forge a shifting balance between their basic ideology and the unfamiliar politics necessitated by the political environment (for instance, the Spanish Socialists).

THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

The national question is the central issue of the political conflicts in the non-Russian CIS countries, although even in Russia questions of federation structure and relations with the 'near abroad' assume roles

of crucial importance. These national lines of conflict polarize the political spectrum more strongly than issues of economic reform and democratization. In this setting the social democrats were never in the vanguard of the independence movements, which were led largely by the conservative forces with liberal nuances.

Post-communist groupings position themselves differently on the national question. In many states the communist party successors build on the local *nomenklatura* for their power bases, a constituency that desires to enlarge its economic and political power by minimising Moscow's influence. Consequently, a number of the post-communist parties have succeeded in freeing themselves from the image of being Moscow's 'henchmen', especially those who broke from the Soviet communist party at an early stage - for example, in Lithuania. In other states the voters have clearly preferred the post-communists over the national conservatives as the most likely agents to ease relations with Russia, a dètente necessitated by the decisive importance of Russia to its smaller neighbours' economies. Wherever the desire for socially cushioned reforms is bound with the need for a relaxation of ethnic-national conflicts, the post-communists are particularly well placed in such countries as Moldova, Belarus, Lithuania, and eastern Ukraine.

NATIONAL VERSUS SOCIAL QUESTIONS

The actual counter-point to the social democratic vision in CEE is not the liberal reformers, but the extreme orthodox communists and authoritarian nationalists. The communists of the Czech KSCM, for example, expressed sympathy for the anti-German acts of the SRP-RSC (Sladek) thugs in Theresienstadt, condemned by all democrats. In Romania the post-communist President Iliescu has formed a coalition with the nationalist, chauvinist Funar.

Five political fields demarcate the lines of conflict between the liberals and social democratic post-communists on one hand and the nationalists and hard-line communists on the other: 1) downsizing the state versus strengthening centralization; 2) market economics and private ownership versus the maintenance of state regulation and resistance to privatization; 3) receptivity to foreign inputs and ideas versus isolationism; 4) recognition of individual and minority rights versus the dominance of the state; and 5) western political integration versus nationalism

Nationalism and orthodox communism until now have had little success, although they represent an increasing potential for danger, insofar as the ruling post-communists cannot deliver on promises in a socially cushioned modernization.

A PROGNOSIS

The first phase of transition to democracy and transformation into a market economy is completed in most countries of the region with the possible exception of some CIS countries. The cleavage[5] characterizing that period, the conflict between communist elites and democratic opposition, has lost most of its relevance. But it will continue to overshadow the political life for some time.

The issues dominating the political debate in the second phase are different and more similar to the ones typical for modern industrial societies as described by Hirschman. But the conflicts between market and state, private and public sectors are complicated by specific problems, such as the distribution of assets during the privatization. Social Democracy in the form of reformed post-communist parties has benefited from the backlash in favour of redistribution and government intervention after years of pro-market reform.

Nonetheless, the development of a genuine Social Democracy still faces some major obstacles. The traditional class basis of industrial workers is declining rapidly – as it has in many west European countries. Their organizations, the trade unions, have lost most of their influence while reforming themselves from instruments of state and party control into democratic representative bodies of workers' interests. The post-communist parties, in particular, do not exclusively represent the interests of workers and people depending on welfare payments such as the unemployed or pensioners. They have also a strong clientele among the new and often rich entrepreneurs who emerged quite often from the ranks of the old *nomenklatura* and who are more interested in continuing free market reforms. These conflicting loyalties could split these parties in the long run. Moreover, the social democratic values are not yet ingrained in the societies of central and eastern Europe. As opinion polls show there are still majorities in many countries which prefer the former non-market system to the new, albeit still hybrid, one. As for the political regime,

the figures are more favourable, but on average (in 10 major countries, excluding Russia) 44 percent still approve of the communist regime, in comparison to 53 percent approving of the new regime.[6] These averages, however, hide substantial regional differences; unsurprisingly, the countries of central Europe tend to show better results than the CIS republics.

If (and that is a big if) central and eastern Europe can grow rapidly, regaining the living standards of 1988 and then slowly approaching western levels of prosperity, the new regimes will surely gain widespread acceptance among the population. Which parties will be able to articulate the social democratic vision? In many countries the most probable answer is the reformed communist parties (a notable exception being the Czech Republic, where a genuine social democratic Party is better placed). But in these prospering democracies the social democratic vision will play a minor role anyway, as its great objectives will already be fulfilled. Social Democracy's position there will resemble its position in the West, where it has accomplished most of its historic mission. The achievement of Social Democracy is at the same time its defeat, as Dahrendorf explained.[7] Modern successful social democrats win elections less by their ideology or programme than by their professional competence in managing modern societies.

If central and eastern Europe does not prosper, or prospers only with growing disparities and social conflict, then democracy and free markets may be at bay again as they still are in the CIS republics and some Balkan states. For this group of countries, Social Democracy is just one, if perhaps the most viable, way to fight the threat of authoritarian nationalism. Unfortunately, its organizational focus, a convincing social democratic party, is not yet in sight in these countries.

NOTES

* The analysis takes political developments in Central and Eastern Europe until May 1996 into account.

1. Jan Vermeersch states, therefore, that in many parties both left and right were present.See Jan Vermeersch, 'The left in Eastern Europe: A Report on the Post-Communist Landscape', SIES (Brussels, 1991).

2. Figures in parenthesis denote problematic designations; two figures for a particular designation represent two different parties sharing the same position on the political landscape.
3. Commonwealth of Independent States.
4. See, A.O. Hirschman, *Shifting Involvements: Private Interest and Public Action* (Princeton, 1982).
5. This part draws to some extent on an article by Gyorgy Markus 'Party System and Cleavage Translation in Hungary', unpublished manuscript, (Budapest, 1995).
6. See, Richard Rose and Christisan Haerpfer, 'New Democratic Barometer III: Learning from What is Happening', *Studies in Public Policy* (Glasgow), 230, University of Strathclyde, 1994.
7. See, Ralf Dahrendorf, *Betrachtungen uber die Revolution in Europa* (Stuttgart, 1990), p.54 ff.