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## MISSING IN DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION: INTELLECTUALS

It should be remembered that the departure from socialism and the initiation of a democratic transition in this part of the world was most probably – with rare exceptions – the monumental work of intellectuals. By saying this, we do not by any means intend to diminish the credit of other social groups in ending single-party rule. The pronounced role of intellectuals in the „great transformation” could well be one of the crucial defining characteristics valid for most – not all – of the transitions of this sort in Eastern and Central Europe. To paraphrase Adam Michnik (2011) who introduced the notion of the „banality of good” (inspired by Hannah Arendt’s notion of „banality of evil”), intellectuals at those critical times served on the „good” side of social struggles. The link between intellectuals and democracy was not, however, a matter of mere contingency. In general, one can argue that intellectuals can help the public to discuss social problems openly and systematically. Another important dimension is that they can facilitate the development of a more civilized political argument (Goldfarb, 1998, 1). Politically active intellectuals in the socialist states of Eastern and Central Europe thus substantially contributed to the opening of public spaces and the eventual demise of essentially undemocratic regimes. Where this was not the case, the collapse of the authoritarian regime accompanied the use of sheer violence that led to bloodshed. All of this is certainly not surprising to many, nor should it concern scholars. The latter were, no doubt, astonished to see the sudden and unanticipated domino-style collapse of almost all the socialist states.

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Moreover, this knowledge was not after all a privilege of scholars, but was at the disposal of the former authoritarian rulers themselves, who, despite the fact that they were demonstrating paranoia against „foreign enemies” in the first place, feared, besides each other (therefore the routine „purges” within the party!), nonconformist intellectuals. Even when intellectuals claimed that they were powerless – for example, Václav Havel and Jacek Kurón (the latter by his famous saying: „What is to be done, when nothing can be done?”) – this carried a strong moral message about the humanly unacceptable reality in the societies in which these intellectuals lived, which by itself mobilized concerned intellectuals and also influenced other strata as to the root causes of grave social conditions. Thus even in the darkest, almost unbearable social conditions, at least some intellectuals did not shirk their role, asking in what way they could contribute to the cause of democracy. Notwithstanding the sociological fact that intellectuals very often express uncertainty about their identity – something that is not a very common behavioral characteristic of other social groups – one cannot ignore that even by so doing, they in some specific manner perform their role as indispensable players in the pursuit of democracy.

Neither were the rulers convinced that intellectual lamentations about powerlessness could bring them peaceful slumber. When in the late 1960 s, for example, public opinion surveys in Slovenia showed that the educated stratum (intellectuals) enjoyed the highest average prestige, and not the holders of positions of authority, as should have been expected from the established „political correctness,” the Central Committee demanded that the person responsible for the research be punished and replaced. This was one of the main reasons that the Communist leaders tried hard to „solve” this problem by co-opting intellectuals into the Communist Party, where they could function as neither more nor less than as part of the amorphous working class in which they could be recognized merely as „intellectual workers.” Not all of the intellectuals, though, were nonconformists and it would be wrong to idealize them in a moral sense, that is, to use any value-laden denominator for their typical stands in this regard. Some were easily corrupted by the former regime, and not so rarely some well-known intellectuals even helped (notwithstanding their either „good” or „bad” intentions) with the establishment of the essentially undemocratic political system. From a short-term perspective, it was, of course, rewarding –

and many intellectuals were not at all ashamed of that – exchange their autonomous critical thinking for certain material and non-material rewards (privileges, leading functions, awards, medals, and the like). In the long run, however, this was counter-productive for the regime itself: it only further generated a general feeling among intellectuals as well as among other groups of the corruption and moral perversity of the old regime. This is, to cite Jerzy Jedlicki, one of the reasons that the intelligentsia these days so often „cultivates the art of forgetting rather than the art of remembering.” If the „carrot” did not end up working – and we should warn that this choice was not often available at all – then the „stick” was eventually applied: take, for example, the long prison terms of Milovan Djilas, Václav Havel, and Adam Michnik. In this regard the political oligarchs of the day, for „preventive” reasons, erred more on the side of excess than not.

In fact, nonconformist intellectuals represented a relatively small minority, one rather easily monitored by the regime’s security apparatus, whereas most of the educated stratum seemed content with the role of the so-called „silent majority,” one which nevertheless intimately felt that an intellectual „vanguard” was in truth also defending their own interests by claiming that professional autonomy should be guarded against the paternalistic attempts of a party-state to reduce and eventually abolish what was left at all in this regard (Bernik, 1994). The „silent majority” was not as passive as the name would imply: from the regime’s point of view, it also involved risks, because it was not always clear how far and deep the ideas of individual nonconformist intellectuals penetrated within the larger intellectual group, and what networks within this group were providing „logistics” and sanctuary for their activities. The party ideologues reproached intellectuals for not having to do manual work for their daily survival, which seemed quite a „convincing argument” for many in a socialist society. Even the intellectuals themselves found it difficult to reject this idea outright and, of course, without fearing the consequences. In a way, the cunning party demagogues succeeded in their aim: on one hand, they „got” the working class on their side, and on the other, they succeeded in inoculating a feeling of „guilt” even among the intellectuals themselves. Quite a number of them well understood the „message” and were willing to extol Communist ideology to the skies to pay the ransom for the fact that their hands did not get dirty. Later on Communist ideology sof-

tened such stands, although their more sophisticated language in this respect still included the understanding that „intellectuals” were privileged by all means and should be grateful to „society,” usually meaning the Party, for that.

It is important to note, however, that socialist regimes treated non-conformist intellectuals differently: I am referring to the fact that regimes within one single country either „softened” or „hardened” their views toward intellectuals, as well as to major differences between various socialist establishments in this respect. Thus we have, on one hand, the cases of Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania, where any intellectual heresy was more or less unimaginable and efficiently crushed upon its initial emergence, and on the other hand countries like Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia (Slovenia), where the socialist regimes tolerated some limited autonomy of intellectual thinking and acting, and eventually through direct or indirect dialogue with them even either appropriated or implemented some of their ideas (or both). Differing practices in this matter later greatly influenced the modes of transition towards democracy (Bernik, 1994, 133–134). Where all nonconformist intellectual activities were nonexistent due to immediate suppression, the accumulated tensions culminated in an outburst of mass protests which mercilessly swept away the old elite and replaced it with a completely new one. In the second case, one could see the gradual emergence of democratic political institutions alongside the parallel emergence of a new political elite.

The ultimate stand of intellectuals towards a regime – for or against it – is not or at least should not, though, be the only criterion for measuring their social role. Their options are many (strictly sociologically speaking, they surpass that of any other social group, including that of the ruling elite) and vary within different social and cultural contexts, not to mention the historically embedded opportunities. Tismaneanu (1998, 155) cautioned against too hastily drawing the lines in this regard. He is correct that intellectuals remain politically important in both respects: that is, when they identify the values which support civic visions of the public good, advocate individualism, rationalism, and modernity in general, as well as in those cases when they articulate the ideals of an organic community, and overemphasize national symbols or idolatry of blood, soil and ancestry. It can be easily seen that intellectuals have influenced their social milieu in either a positive or nega-

tive manner, both during the most repressive times as well as in times of democratic transition, and that therefore the implications of their manifest or only latent functioning in a society require critical investigation.

Having said all this, I nevertheless agree with Timothy Garton Ash, a qualified witness and analyst of these turning-point events, when he dubbed the demise of Communism and the introduction of democratic transitions a „revolution of intellectuals” (Garton Ash, 1990). He was, of course, speaking in the plural, because the modes of intellectual involvement and their share in the revolutionary process differed from one country to another. Garton Ash was, of course, aware that intellectuals were not the only determining factor in these processes, and that, moreover, they were themselves surprised in most cases that the great change, although desired, came about sooner than expected. If this could be interpreted as something unexpected, it should be kept in mind that intellectuals and intelligentsia in Eastern and Central Europe often played such roles of „agents of great transformations,” that is, as a „class” of distinguished people who were never at ease with the existing state of affairs in a given society.

The „revolutionary” role of intellectuals in the pre- and post- 1989 era is, however, not such a unique and unprecedented sociological case in history as is too often assumed. Seymour Martin Lipset, in *The First New Nation* (1963), exposed the following two characteristics among several that distinguished the United States from the old polities: the forging of a new national identity and the role of intellectuals in politics. In his view, intellectuals in the USA played an indispensable role in fashioning the Constitution, the structures of federalism, and the separation of powers. Lipset was referring to intellectuals and political theorists like Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton and (John) Adams. Although the author did not intend to suggest that the new nations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century would necessarily recapitulate the American experience, he nevertheless suggested that intellectuals in the most recently established new states had played the roles of innovators and agents of social change. The ideas Lipset had in mind in this respect were those of nationhood, democracy and equality. This established sociological pattern was, no doubt, also evident in a number of the new states that emerged after the break-up of Communist multinational empires, not the least among them being Slovenia.

Comparisons, on the other hand, also offer an opportunity to acknowledge deviations from the pattern. Here we will mention only two relevant examples. The first example may be considered a disadvantage, while the second tells something about the positive novelty of democratic achievements in the world. The intellectuals struggling within Communist and post-Communist frameworks, roughly speaking, more or less formally matched some of the sociological attributes of the above mentioned American historical figures, except in one important detail: while they were all intellectuals and later pragmatic politicians as well, they had never been „businessmen” and „landlords.” This structural characteristic did not appertain only to intellectuals, but to all the strata in a socialist society that excluded the notion of private property as a substantial and real social category. This fact among others helps to explain why politically engaged intellectuals in the post-Communist aftermath often have difficulties in connecting their (often splendid) ideas with transparent and socio-economically rooted interests. The second example refers to the fact that nonconformist intellectuals both in the old regime and after its demise did not have to discover „great” and genuinely „new” ideas. Such were already around, such as human rights and modern notions about the (pre)requisites of democracy and its constituent characteristics. Although quite a few analysts of the events of 1989 blamed intellectual „revolutionaries” for deficits as far as „new ideas” were concerned, I choose to agree with Garton Ash (2000, 397–398) who drew attention to a probably more important fact, namely, that they nevertheless had produced a „new reality.” Moreover, continues Garton Ash, their important contribution to the most recent history is their „discovery” of a „non-revolutionary revolution, the evolutionary revolution,” a revolution of thinking and acting that was not so much, if at all, about „what,” but about „how.”

At this point we need to clarify the concepts of intelligentsia and intellectuals, respectively, which we have used thus far. The concept of intelligentsia was originally imported from Germany at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and developed its specific social and political contents first in Russia and Poland, and later in other parts of Eastern and Central Europe. The concept is related to the educated class and was defined in a positive value-charged sense as a cohesive group which by its nature resists any unjust power. Most of the definitions of intellectuals go beyond an all too common and reduced understanding of this

group as one merely possessing some high educational credentials, but necessarily link their knowledge complex to a critical attitude towards the existing social and political order. The group as a whole and its individual members were thus characterized by a proclivity to see political and social issues as moral ones, which included potential sacrifices for what they believed in. Moreover, their „chosen mission” and moral authority led them to a sense of guilt and personal responsibility, if matters in society or at the national level did not go as they should. All these attributes secured for intellectuals unusual attention in this part of the world in whatever they did or did not do; in most cases they are treated with deep reverence and people invest in them, in particular at critical times, their high hopes and expectations. If there exists anything like „collective charisma,” then this epithet should, no doubt, be given to them. Such a sense of belonging to a group called „intelligentsia” was particularly evident in Russia and Poland, while, for example, in the former Czechoslovakia, and, I would add, Slovenia, such understanding more often refers to intellectuals than to an „intelligentsia” as such (Björling, 1995, 8–9).

Of course, one cannot leave aside the obvious question: why intellectuals and not someone else? First, because no society, even the most totalitarian, can function without some reliance upon the knowledge complex and its more or less continuous production and diffusion in a society. Pol Pot’s Cambodia tried hard to prove the opposite, but, as we know, this inhuman „experiment” did not survive its authors. The second, and for our purpose more relevant answer, relates to the fact that where organized opposition political activity is suppressed, the intellectuals remain as the only social group that disposes of the means and knowledge to articulate the ideas of a free society and let it move forward. In this sense, we can speak of a long tradition of political engagement of „men of letters” in Eastern and Central Europe, as well as, of course, beyond this region.

In „liberal” Communist regimes we should also take note of a third answer, namely the growing aspirations of intellectuals, who were, regardless of the preceding state of affairs, encouraged by the relative improvement in economic, political and social conditions in the former regime and asked for further major changes in the government which, due to its internal or external circumstances, it was not willing to undertake. Prior to this, we should add, intellectuals were often confront-

ed with the dilemma of whether they should work with (in) the system or whether they should, both for their own sake and that of society, look for alternatives; if they chose the latter, they in most cases knew, or could sometimes only guess, what the price would be for their „anti-regime” engagement. The intellectuals were, however, far from a compact and homogeneous group. The former regime knew well how to exploit the fact that not all intellectuals and the disciplines with which they were associated had the same critical attitude towards it.

Thus, for example, the „technical” intelligentsia did not represent such a threat to the regime, and there were indeed not that many in their ranks who would dare to criticize this or that contentious aspect of political power. The rulers also did not care that much about their ideological profiles, if they were not expressed in public. It was completely another matter with the intellectuals coming from the humanistic and social sciences. The so-called „humanistic intellectuals” usually consisted of philosophers, writers, sociologists (political scientists among them were rather rare), journalists and artists. It is understandable that these are or were people who were members of the educated stratum, who had more chances and were better qualified to articulate and express their dissatisfaction with existing social conditions than, for example, those from other intellectual professions, not to mention „common” people. In order to construct an elementary autonomy and rid themselves of political control over their professional activities, they had to discover new ways within the given constraints of single-party rule to convey their problems to a wider public audience.

One of the most precious results of this search was, no doubt, the discovery and utilization of the concept of a civil society. It is significant that rebellious activists did not embrace any of the ideological „isms” that were available at the time, but rather chose a concept which by its very nature avoided dividing people on the basis of this or that bit of sectarian ideological language. Besides the mobilization potential of the concept of a civil society, we must also add that the ideologies then on offer did not have much to say anymore, their unpopularity and „exhaustion” in this regard being quite evident. Of course, the notions of human rights and political pluralism, which the political opposition to the Communist regimes passionately identified with and defended, are historically anchored in the liberal *Weltanschauung*, but it is correct to say that the succeeding development of these notions later



acquired a universalist character and thus superseded any specific ideological sectarianism.

Along with other words, civil society had been the democratic password since the mid-1970s, which gradually led the ideologically multifaceted opposition along the way towards establishing a still-undeveloped but nonetheless democratic political system. In this regard, the concept of a civil society in some way replaced the captivity of intellectuals to the old revolutionary pattern, which presupposed a centrally organized and immediate seizure of political power, offering instead a self-organized, rather spontaneous, and diffused shredding of the omnipotent political hegemony. If one can detect any ideological ingredients in a civil society, then they can be found in the evolutionary nature of change. It is obvious that the credit for non-violent transition to democracy in Central Europe belongs to the choice of the civil society, and its inherent drive to reach democratic political objectives through gradual change. Any discussion concerning the question of whether „1989” represented revolution, or something qualitatively new, must build its answer around the centrality of the role of civil society movements in these processes.

All these involved, of course, latent and manifest conflicts between intellectuals from various branches as well as within them, which represented yet another opportunity for the regimes to exploit them for their own benefit. Although in its official rhetoric the socialist regime still treated the manual workers in the most favorable terms, it was nevertheless aware of the urgency of facilitating the development of the „knowledge complex,” and thus also indirectly practiced more favorable treatment of intellectuals at times. In the literature on intellectuals and intelligentsia in the socialist countries, it has been convincingly demonstrated that intelligentsia in more advanced and liberally-inclined socialist states in due time strengthened not only their social position but even, to some extent, political position. Initially, intellectuals in a „liberalized” regime did not consider the regime to be *a priori* hostile to intellectuals and „friendly” towards manual workers, but when intellectuals on one hand perceived new opportunities, and the vulnerable rulers, on the other, started to roll back reforms, intellectuals had to redefine the new situation and its carriers as hostile both to their interests and to those of society in general.

In the formal sense, there is not that much of a discrepancy between the roles of intellectuals under Communist and democratic rule. In the former, due to the „highly intellectual character of Communism” (Schöpfli, 1990, 260), they were expected to provide convincing and consistent evidence concerning the highest possible legitimacy and ultimate superiority of the existing regime. The intellectuals were, in other words, the „substitute” for democracy (Bozoki: 1998, 12) and as such, took up the roles of those who identified themselves with the oppressive regime; notwithstanding the fact that some intellectuals rebelled and were persecuted, this has not been easily forgotten after the collapse of Communism, and, especially on the right of the political spectrum, many distrusted and still distrust any intellectual activism. Whether some intellectuals were advising former Communist despots or Communist reformers, who were looking for rational „escape routes” out of Communism, often does not matter at all. Thus, due to such co-opting experiences of intellectuals in Eastern and Central Europe, a number of post-Communist politicians showed distrust towards intellectuals as such and preferred to arrive at political decisions without consulting qualified experts. Not to listen to experts is, of course, the mirror image of the previous rulers’ attitudes toward intellectuals: they did indeed at times ask them for advice, but it was known in advance what sort of advice they wanted to hear.

As another source of distrust in intellectuals, in some cases (among the radical right or right-of-center politicians), we can speak of the manifest expressions of anti-intellectualism in these countries, which is rather paradoxical. That is, intellectuals can, no doubt, be credited for establishing democratic order based on popular sovereignty, which now undermines their formerly distinguished and in some sense privileged role in society. Standing before the voting boxes, the electorate quickly forgot the past services rendered by prominent and courageous intellectuals during repressive times, and instead followed the voices of new leaders, ones who were making more concrete promises and who, besides, quickly learned how to use the language of the common people. In Slovenia, for example, a number of such intellectuals whose party or themselves lost the elections either withdrew from politics altogether or joined more successful parties. But even if they were not voted out, they voluntarily left party politics after discovering that they were unable to reconcile two obviously conflicting roles. Namely, while acting as intellectuals they were able to speak for the „whole”; but now, the party of their choice

was asking them to speak for the „part.” In addition, some intellectuals found it difficult to cope with the routine of everyday politics (organizational skills, mastering the art of public relations, working out compromises, etc.), which did not require fresh ideas so much as it did loyalty to the chosen party or moreover, to the party leader. Most of them found it difficult, if not impossible, to listen to Bauman (1992, 128), who ruthlessly offered them the following advice: „Authors who once learned how to dupe the censors must yet learn how to deal with market-wise managers.”

Some of the intellectual „veterans” from the previous Communist era also found it also repulsive to work with intellectual „latecomers,” mostly of the younger generation, but also among these some who became „awakened” only when the Communist „dragon” had already been definitely slain. It was particularly difficult to find a common political or civil society agenda between intellectual „veterans” and the younger generation of intellectuals for whom Communism was already history. The paternalism of the former could only remind younger intellectuals of the hierarchical relations that may have existed between intellectuals and omnipotent rulers during the Communist era. In addition, after the introduction of political pluralism and the achievement of a national state, many intellectuals experienced a „hangover” over the fact that there were no more great historical themes around and no visible enemy to struggle with. This was the first „collective” experience of post-Communist intellectuals with politics within a democratic framework, and the lessons they learned in this regard were not so much different, if at all, from those of Western intellectuals. Among the first bitter findings was the „discovery” that politics has more in common with persuasion and less with telling the truth; and further, that it is very often impossible to connect intellectual inquiry with political action, and that ideas and interests are not necessarily correlated at all (Goldfarb, 1998, 15). To defend intellectual integrity in political arena seems to many almost impossible if not unbearable stand. Sceptics rather treat intellectualism as a private thing and the notion of „public intellectual as an oxymoron (Christopher Caldwell, 2011).

On the other hand, not rarely, grave personal disappointment with politics, or as it was commonly termed, „political disenchantment,” led many intellectuals either to withdraw completely from politics (including the sphere of civil society), as mentioned, or to resort to anti-democratic discourses (for example, accusations against Western materialis-

tic and market-oriented societies, which presumably do not care about ideas) in the hope that this might return to them their privileged status. In this sense, the uncertainties brought about by the „time of transition” are largely responsible for one being able to hear only very weak voices among the intellectual ranks about the need to normalize the situation, meaning by this that intellectuals will sooner or later have to subject themselves to professionalization of their status in the same way as has occurred with other formerly privileged social groups. The „rational” decision to leave politics came mostly from those who had strong scholarly positions and reputations in their respective scientific disciplines. They would usually argue that their temporary entrance into politics was led by the aims of supporting the development of a parliamentary democracy, national independence and processes of genuine professionalization of politics. After these aims had been achieved, it was only natural that the intellectuals would return to their professions and let politics be politics.

It has often been missed, however, that intellectuals have not only been the prominent agents of transformation, but have themselves been equally affected by the processes they triggered in alliance with other players in the social arena. Many consider this as yet another paradox: the marginalized intellectuals eventually succeeded in toppling the previous regime, which seemed to have a long life ahead of it, but were unable to secure for themselves the „leading role” in the democratic system they had initiated. It could be that their expectations, when they were attacking the old system, were much lower than afterwards, when it suddenly collapsed, multiplying their hopes. It should be remembered that most intellectuals in Eastern and Central European (post)Communist states – did not initially or for quite some time take part in their political contests with the regime in order to replace the extant political power, but merely to soften and eventually to fully democratize the old power structures. Moreover, as Mastnak (1992) reminds us, non-conformist intellectuals did not perceive their activities in a usual sense, that is, as political, but rather termed them „antipolitics.”

Not all among the intellectual protagonists can be considered *a priori* either losers or winners. Clearly, it is necessary to speak more prudently in this regard. To generalize so far as to include among the „losers” the entire educated stratum makes no sense. Quite the contrary: the inauguration of a democratic political system, no doubt, removed very important hindrances which blocked the full realization of their

potentials both in academia and in the political arena. In addition, there were also improvements in their economic status in some countries, including Slovenia. If during the former regime their economic fortunes entirely depended on the distribution of social and economic resources by narrow political elite without any responsibility to the populace, the new democratic regime established more transparent and democratically verifiable instruments for ultimate decisions in this respect. Of course, there is no ideal distribution at hand, particularly not in societies which suffer from scarce resources in comparison with wealthier ones. In this sense, one can agree that the processes of democratization, social differentiation and marketization (of both economy and society) will variously affect different segments of the educated stratum. Here, the humanistic intelligentsia usually experiences, due to the specific nature of its disciplines, more hardships than is the case, for example, with economists and lawyers, to mention those who find it easiest to comply with the imperatives of market forces.

I would therefore only partially agree (and for some rather limited analytical purposes) with Garton Ash's (1995, 153) statement to the effect that „the independent intellectuals have fallen from abnormal importance, which they had before 1989, into abnormal unimportance” under post-Communism. In both depicted historical sequences intellectuals had before them various choices due to their diverse activities and with these, intertwined professional attachments, and, last but not least, their institutional locations. If Garton Ash's assertion implies that intellectuals in a post-Communist society again found themselves in a situation of political marginality, then one has to be aware that this fact in a democracy does not have the same meaning as it did in the previous authoritarian framework. However, this optimistic tone certainly does not imply that after the establishment of a pluralistic and democratic order, intellectuals had realized all their aspirations. As we have seen, many continue to struggle with their identity in a completely new framework: those intellectuals who became professional politicians, for example, wrestle with the dilemma of whether they still belong to their previous professional role or have ceased to be intellectuals as such. Bozóki (1993, 102) attempted, in my view convincingly enough, to widen the sociological angle of looking at these quandaries by suggesting a more differentiated picture of their potential choices or typical „behavioral strategies” in the post-Communist world: some intellectuals could thus play

the roles of „professionals,” some those with a „sense of mission,” some staying faithful to „brooding,” and others „people of rapid retreat.” The modalities, that is, the salience of this or that type of intellectual posture differed within different societies, but could be found in all (post) Communist contexts. What this otherwise convincing and useful typology misses (as is the case and limit of any ideal-type construct) is that quite a significant number of intellectuals during their active career exchanged several, if not almost all, of the roles that were available. One could argue that this is also one of the legitimate and distinguishing properties of the intellectual profession or, preferably, calling that does not pertain – at least not to the same extent – to all social groups.

Finally, we should raise the question of whether the accomplished past historical work and the present frustrations of intellectuals in post-Communist societies in general give us any hints as to their future commitments and choices. It will, of course, take some time before intellectuals will be able to distance themselves from the past heroic times and emotions, and define anew their relevant political roles in the post-Communist aftermath. In so doing, however, they cannot expect anymore to be as united and coherent as they were in the past when the common enemy was known and visible. Even in times of normalcy, there are many worthwhile goals to struggle for: to be the agent and voice of civility, to maintain political equilibrium in fluid and unstable times in societies undergoing deep economic, political and cultural transitions, building autonomous institutions within the framework of a civil society, to cultivate the role of democratic intellectuals, etc.

One should not be too pessimistic: some intellectuals are today in fact deeply embedded in these roles. Post-1989 era offers new challenges for intellectuals: George Lawson (2010) in the spirit of Kundera demands from them not to laugh in triumphalism about the events of 1989 or to forget the lessons of what came after, but „to struggle against power by remembering the complexities, contradictions and paradoxes of the post-1989 era”. Lawson in this regard prioritizes the new phenomenology of metageography of international politics which requires from intellectuals to critically conceptualise the post-cold-war order, to reconceptualise the critical issues of sovereignty, intervention and responsibility in the contemporary world, further the vulnerable security climate complex, etc.

Such intellectual challenges might be even trickier than was the case in the past: to understand and to cope, for example, with the neoliber-

al imposition of „market” – whereby „customers” are taking the place of „citizens” – is at least not less demanding than was the case with previous confrontations with „dialectical materialism”. Besides, totalizing control and closure of vital social spheres did not die with the ending of communism but has reincarnated itself in even more sophisticated forms under spell of the rhetoric of „democracy” and „capitalism”. Paul Blokker (2010) in particular emphasizes the urgency to „differentiate between ideological, cultural, political and economic forms of closure by imposing exclusively „absolutist, essentialist view that tolerates only one type of discourse as the true expression of the needs of society.” Blokker further fears by relying on C. Dobrescu (2003) that this kind of social direction exemplifies the risk that central and eastern European modernization and nationalism are understood in a homogeneous and one-sided way”.

However, it is also true that there exists a critical mass of those who are either searching for new objects of hatred or calling for a complete retreat behind their ivory towers. But as we have already been consoled, such historical detours belong to the ritual fulfillment of a scenario „*du éternel retour*.” The question is thus still open, and will remain so for some time: is democracy in this part of the world already able to take care of itself, and simply forget the roles of critical intellectuals and intellectuals with public responsibility, respectively? Can realistic assessment by Jean Baudrillard (2007) to the effect that „state intellectuals” in France after 1980 s did not stray beyond the confines of their offices or their writings influence the extant more or less same behavioural pattern among intellectuals in East-Central Europe?

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