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### **The Evaluation of Freedom, Security and Regime Change**

#### ***Are freedom and security conflicting values?***

From - let us say - Tocqueville on, a leading theme of social philosophy was the conflict between freedom and equality. Other value clashes and necessary trade-offs - for instance that between equity and efficiency - have also been discovered and debated at length. One of the recent intellectual vogues regards security irreconcilable with freedom. This paper tries to explore the implications of this claim.

Jacek Kuron (1994) writes thus: 'The socialist state was the system of centrally managed economy and society, and, consequently, of centralised redistribution. It can be stated that it realised the intentions of its ideologists: it established an order of maximum social security in a country, where all citizens were employees of the state. In practice, the workplace provided unlimited services. Theoretically, wages only had to cover food and clothing. Housing, electricity, heating, medical care, crèches, nurseries, schools, books, children's holidays, holidays for the people were (also theoretically) free of charge. The state guaranteed to every worker an old age pension, health insurance and disability provision. Thus, the system guaranteed security, albeit at the same time it divested workers of their freedom and of their autonomous self-determination: prison guarantees the greatest security.'

Peter Ambros is musing over the same theme. In his view, 'It is no coincidence if we can describe the period of captivity using the terms 'stability' and 'predictability', in other words 'security'. Indeed we can even identify this period with it. 'Freedom' and 'security' stand in unsolvable contradiction with each other.' In the former Federal Republic of Germany freedom and security were regarded 'as being equal in value and assets equally worthy of aspiring toward'. Security, social security included, saves peoples 'the worry of having to come up with the means necessary for existence and action', that is, security divests the people of continuous existential decisions, thereby demoting them to the status of children. Hence his concluding thesis that 'Freedom is related to adulthood to the same extent as security is to dependency.' The relinquishing of freedom and adulthood is thus in his view characteristic not only of Eastern Europeans, but also of citizens living in welfare states - the phenomenon is only more conspicuous in the East.

Ambros makes a distinction between positive freedom which covers freedom *to* something, including voting or destruction, and negative freedom, implying *to be free of* something (of suffering, coercion). But there are other interpretations. In the most widely accepted definition of freedom according to

which the boundary of my freedom is another person's freedom the freedom to destroy is conceptually excluded. A. Sen (1992) puts forth an almost reverse interpretation to that of Ambros of positive and negative freedom. He holds that *negative freedom* is *exemption from constraint*. For example, my vote is not constrained either by a political rule which, say, would exclude me from among voters on account of the colour of my skin, or by hooligans blocking my path or beating me up when I go to vote. *Positive freedom* means in his view *what one can or cannot do*. By way of illustrating the point, he says, if I cannot walk freely in a park because I am disabled, then this is a constraint on my positive freedom, but there is no indication that anyone acted violently towards my negative freedom. If, however, it is not on account of my disability that I cannot walk in the park, but because hooligans beat me up if I do so, then this is a violation of my negative freedom - and not only of my positive freedom... If we consider it important that people be capable of a lifestyle that they would choose for themselves, then there are arguments to address the general category of positive freedom.' In this rationale, poverty in itself does not violate negative freedom, since it is not necessarily the consequence of another's direct intervention (or legal intervention). At the same time, however, the fact that a poor person cannot do a host of things - cannot feed his family properly, cannot buy the necessary heating fuel or medicines - is a constraint on his positive freedom. Similarly, the lack of positive freedom may compel the poor to take on work detrimental to their health and their chance of living longer. 'While there is a real distinction between the positive and negative aspects of freedom, ... to concentrate only on one or the other is not only ethically incomplete, but can also be socially disjointed. The social commitment to individual freedom has to be concerned with both positive and negative freedoms and with their extensive interconnections' (Sen, *ibid.*).

Following this system of thought, it seems worth while to re-examine whether the new vogue is of equating security with unfreedom is right. Following Sen's argument, at least positive freedom is not antithetical to security. Even negative freedom has aspects related to security: the absence of the threat of hooligans if I walk in the park is enhancing both negative freedom and public safety (see also Sen 1992).

### ***On security***

Security has many different meanings. Even if we disregard unpredictable meta-social or cosmic uncertainties like wars or natural disasters, we have to cope with many insecurities. One important aspect is public security - the extent to which we can walk safely in the park. I believe it is useful to distinguish at least two aspects of the constraints which Sen deals with in connection with negative freedom. One issue is *legal violence*, on account of which the (secret) police can take anybody away from the park. This is a serious restriction of my negative freedom, and simultaneously an obvious threat to my public security. There may be a political pretext to my arrest (and if this is the case, then naturally they can take me away not only from the park, but also from my home or my workplace, violating my negative freedom and my safety in general). Or the pretext may

simply be that the police considers my behaviour a ‘threat’ to the public. In the latter event, the police’s move is again based on legalised political tyranny, since the ‘safe-guarding of public security’ is a slogan implemented with elastic regulations. In any case, these are instances of the *political curtailment* of my negative freedom.

At the same time the danger that hooligans will beat me up in the street is reduced precisely on account of ubiquitous ‘preventive’ police intervention and due to stringent punishment. Indeed, in dictatorial-totalitarian systems it is police omnipresence and fear of tough or unpredictable retaliation that curtails street violence: in this sense public security can be said to be good. Paradoxically, the political fragility of negative freedom can strengthen ‘everyday’ negative freedom. It follows from this that the concept of constraints, and of negative freedom in general, must be refined. I would make a distinction within negative freedom between a *threat from state power and from fellow citizens*. It is true especially of the former that it is ‘interference of others in one’s personal life (which) has offensive - perhaps intolerable - features going well beyond the resulting failure of positive freedom’<sup>1</sup> (Sen 1990).

Alongside public security, ‘private security’ - the security and predictability of everyday life and its different components - are also worthy of attention. It is precisely this interpretation of security which is at the centre of the currently dominant discourse on the incompatibility of freedom and security, which is equating security with prison. I believe that there can be less pejorative interpretations of security.

Actually, it is rather strange when somebody denies the importance of existential security. I suspect that only those whose security has never been in jeopardy can do it.

János Arany, the Hungarian poet writes somewhere that ‘happiness’ can come simply from ‘the absence of suffering’. By way of analogy I would say that *security is the absence of anxiety*. A child cannot rid itself of its more elemental anxieties and it cannot develop properly if it lacks the mother, or at least a permanent, security-giving care-provider stepping in her place. We can feel anxious over the health or life of our loved ones (or of ourselves), over the stability of our relations with people, over risks of losing much of what we have, or over the opportunity to secure our everyday bread. Some of those may be termed *essential anxieties* (having to do with our biological, mortal nature), others *existential anxieties*, stemming from social conditions. Both are, though - in Freud’s terms - *real anxieties*, that is, not pathological or neurotic symptoms, and it is always painful to experience them. ‘The kind of situation in which anxiety arises naturally largely depends on the degree of our knowledge, and on how powerful we consider ourselves in relation to the outside world.’ Realistic anxiety is, however - Freud continues - neither rational nor expedient because ‘it paralyses all action...’. It would be expedient, rather, ‘to size up coolly one’s own strengths in comparison with the magnitude of the threat, and then to decide whether to escape or defend

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<sup>1</sup> It is also possible that historical experience taints one’s scholarly interpretation of reality. One may feel more intolerable the abuse of negative freedom one is more familiar with.

ourselves, or perhaps an attack itself would provide more chance for everything to end well' (Freud, 1986, p. 321.).

The problem is that in case of a good part of our realistic anxieties our knowledge cannot be adequate. For instance, there may be no cure for the illness we are anxious about. But it may also be that the knowledge which could help to build up the necessary protection is missing only in some (or in many) individuals or groups and that this ignorance is not distributed at random across society. Similarly, for many the problem is not that they 'feel' powerless but that *they are genuinely powerless in relation to the outside world*. When knowledge and power are absent, then there is practically no opportunity for escape, defence, or attack, by means of which 'things could turn out well'. After all, drink and drugs and 'subsistence crime', that is crime to make ends meet, are all forms of escape, but their consequences are neither rational nor expedient.

For the majority of socially 'real', in my term existential paralysing anxieties there have always been expedient solutions. When (with the advent of capitalism) the former agents of existential security - such as the family, the locality, the church, or the whole system of feudal privileges, bonds and obligations - weakened, new institutions emerged. The most important ones were the insurance companies. These risk-sharing communities have their roots in the middle ages and spread alongside capitalism, either as market ventures or as associations of mutual help.

Every form of insurance has served to avert material losses, to provide material security. One of the important developments 'invented' at the end of the last century is social insurance itself. The market failures of the insurance market (Barr 1990, 1994) and the financial weakness of the small solidaristic communities made imperative the creation of an institution in which the state assumes some responsibility in handling the risks. Indeed, *social insurance is a societal response to the new anxieties about income losses connected with industrialisation and an increasingly dominant market*. Anxiety over lengthening and unprovided for old age prompted the development of pension schemes with collective defences and state guarantees. Inability to pay for medical cure brought into being state health care provision systems, or similar insurance-type solutions. All these systems, collectively called social security, developed to a rather high level in Western European welfare states.

### ***The welfare state in jeopardy***

The welfare state or social state<sup>2</sup> always had opponents. Since the mid-seventies theoretical writings as well as practical policies bear witness to a series of onslaughts, initially timid, then increasingly aggressive, against the welfare state. Admittedly, the impact of these onslaughts has thus far barely been discernible on welfare expenditures, whose real value and ratio to the GDP has been either increasing, or at least remaining stable in most developed countries. (OECD,

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<sup>2</sup> Castel argues - rightly to my mind - that the term 'social state' captures better the essence of the last decades. It emphasises that the state endorsed responsibilities but does not give the impression that it succeeded in assuring the welfare of all (Castel 1995).

1993,1994). However, this imperviousness of social expenditures may not last forever. Indeed, slowly but surely all the components of the modern welfare state come under attack. Social insurance schemes are increasingly seen as incompatible with the logic of a market society. Both in Latin-America and in the new democracies pension reforms - projected or already accomplished - make a radical break with the European social insurance model<sup>3</sup>. There are efforts to separate the solidaristic and the insurance-type elements within social insurance so as to make it more 'market-conform'. The proposals advocate such modifications as minimisation of the compulsory level, restrictions on eligibility, the switch from a pay-as-you-go to a funded system, and from a collective scheme to individual saving accounts entailing the privatisation of the accumulated funds (Fox, 1994). A further proposal is the possibility of contracting out from the compulsory system, which may further alter the societal, solidaristic character of social insurance. The Chilean scheme implementing most of these proposals has a mixed record (Barr,1994, pp.221-223.) and the more recent reforms are not unanimously approved of either. As for in-kind services - nurseries, schools, health care - recommendations for marketization are frequent. The aim is to restrict state responsibility to the financially insolvent, the rest providing for their own provision with or without private insurance.

The proposals concerning both social insurance and services reduce either eligibility, or the level of service provision, or both. The intended effect is to increase the individual's responsibility for him-herself, and his/her freedom of choice<sup>4</sup>. The question is what will happen to the minority or majority who do not have the means to join a non-compulsory, adequate scheme. Indeed, many of the poor have the utmost difficulty to make ends meet today, hence it is unrealistic to expect from them to save money optionally for long-term goals. (In Chile and Argentina about half of those belonging to the privatised compulsory saving schemes do not pay regularly their contribution. Thus sooner or later they will lose their entitlement to benefits. Vittas -Iglesias 1992, Vittas 1995). The probable consequence of lowering the standards of the compulsory schemes and of marketising services is the emergence of two-tier systems, one tier paying, one for the poor; the squeezing out of many from one or more systems of provision; and - perhaps most importantly - the emergence of large-scale old age poverty (Korpi-Palme, 1994).

Up until the most recent years, the attacks against the welfare state were mainly based on the alleged adverse impact of social policy on the economy. To this was added the accusation - going back to the parliamentary debates of the late nineteenth century (e.g. Hatzfeld) - that paternalistic care undermines morals, divesting people of their independence (Murray 1981, Segalman and Marsland, 1989). An important criticism of the welfare state focuses on state failures such as

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<sup>3</sup> The Chilean reform was the first to be introduced in 1981. Argentina, Columbia and some other Latin American countries followed suite ten years later. The World Bank is one of the strongest proponents of these reforms (The World Bank, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> It is to be noted that in all the countries having implemented the pension reform the individualised savings accounts are *compulsory* at least for those employed. Freedom of choice is then reduced to the choice between private pension funds. This choice is not only limited. It is also almost as 'paternalistic' as traditional social insurance. The difference is that state guarantees are missing or very weak.

a rigid bureaucracy operating in a non-democratic way, prohibiting free choice and de-personalising services; the emergence of a self-serving administration more interested in the welfare of bureaucrats than in that of clients, and so forth. In recent years the allegation that security is irreconcilable with democratic freedom was added to the censures.

Here I cannot address the authenticity of the economic arguments in detail, a host of books and studies have already dealt with this (Korpi, 1985; Castles, 1988; Pfaller et al, 1991; Pierson, 1992, Therborn 1995). I would merely note that the genuine cause of the economically based attacks is probably different from, or at least more complex than the avowed one. The GDP continues to rise in practically all the advanced market economies (World Bank, 1993). Thus, resources did not shrink. No doubt, the pace of economic growth has slowed down and international economic competition has become fiercer. Hence the arguments in favour of diminishing wage costs. Also, central redistribution is undermined in many countries by the unimpeded increase of inequalities of wealth and incomes (Atkinson, 1994). If social policy were to markedly increase its resources (e.g. to the extent justified by action to combat protracted and increasing unemployment and poverty on the rise), those in a good position ought to make genuine sacrifices. These are increasingly resisted. This resistance has become politically feasible for a number of reasons, from the weakening of post-war solidarity to the end of the 'social policy contest' between the two world systems because it became meaningless upon the collapse of the Eastern Bloc. In short, it seems to me that the economic arguments are deeply infused with the ideology of neo-liberalism or post-modernism aiming at a minimal state and a maximum of individual responsibility and market solutions (Ferge 1996).

The moral arguments have also been discussed *ad nauseam*. It may certainly be surmised that social policy is the root cause of most social ills. Katz sums up the approach of those who believe in the morally degrading impact of state social action. In their view 'social programs had fostered a new, demoralised way of life among minorities clustered within inner cities. They reproduced welfare dependence between generations. They reinforced values and behaviors that varied from those of the rest of American society. They were the source of a new culture defined by behavior rather than income. They were the roots of the underclass' (Katz, 1993). Another argument has been developed for totalitarian state socialist regimes. This type of 'state paternalism' is seen by many as breeding 'learned helplessness' and 'passivity' which people have to 'unlearn' in order to accept competitiveness, entrepreneurship and meritocracy, 'enabling the fittest to productively initiate the new path of development' (Marody 1992.)

It seems to me, though, that both of the above positions are ideologically loaded and ideological convictions cannot be refuted or shaken by means of rational arguments. From a more rational social policy perspective one may analyse the phenomenon called in Italian *assistenzialismo*. It implies that social assistance, if a lasting means of survival, often forces the individual or the family into a situation where they give up all hope and all effort to improve their own fate. This way of life has a strong impact on the socialisation of children instilling in them the acceptance of this way of life, and leading to the syndrome of the

intergenerational transmission of poverty or the cycle of deprivation. According to this logic the duty of social policy is not to curtail help but to try to change those features of the social assistance schemes which inevitably lead to *assistencialismo*, the poverty trap and the unemployment trap<sup>5</sup>. Another negative corollary of social assistance is scrounging or abuse. Solid research evidence is scant on this point. However, even if we concede that abuses are widespread, the question remains whether the loss of society on this score amounts to as much as loss incurred from other kinds of abuse, say, from tax fraud, which breeds though less prejudice against the well-to-do than assistance abuse against the poor. As for ex-socialist countries, the analysis of the psychological impact of totalitarianism is a huge field of research, but conclusive results are scarce. In my opinion, though, the amazing variety of new - legal and illegal - ways of adjustment, coping and survival strategies in the transition countries do not lend much support to the thesis of learned helplessness.

In a more general way one could ask what is the alternative to public social assistance. The obvious former social democratic answers - decent jobs, social insurance or universal benefits - are all rejected in the name of the new ideology about the minimal state and non-interference with the market. One of the recent (New Right) answers is to deny help to the 'undeserving' poor who only had to make more efforts. The consequences are easily foreseeable from increased distress to growing crime rates and, in many countries, the growth of the grey and black economy. The other answer is private charity. Indeed it is often recommended that state social policy, or at least social assistance, be replaced by private charity. Perhaps there is no particular need to prove that private donations are more paternalistic, lay greater emphasis on the hierarchical superiority of the donor, and create greater vulnerability than modern statutory social assistance. Despite all its shortcomings, it is at least predictable, subject to legal redress and the warm-hearted donors do not expect humble gratitude. In fact, private charity cannot assure rights (entitlements), guarantees or controls of any type - without which modern citizenship is devoid of sense. All in all, it seems indeed paradoxical that despite the genuine 'moral hazards' of social assistance, and despite the fact that this is the benefit type which is the farthest removed from any market logic it seems to be more acceptable for the New Right than any other form of public social provision.

As far as state failures are concerned, many criticisms are well founded. Once institutionalised, public policies may easily develop unfavourable traits. This is not the specificity of state bureaucracies, though. In the absence of active societal control, sooner or later any - increasing or large - system may become bureaucratic, impersonal, turning from service provider into a higher authority. This may happen also to organisations in the non-profit sector which have become too large to remain informal and non-bureaucratic. Self-serving or grasping administrators or managers are not to be found exclusively in the public sector, either.

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<sup>5</sup> The French experience with the RMI (Revenu Minimum d'Insertion) shows both the feasibility and the tremendous difficulties of such a reform. (Lafore 1992, Paugam 1992).

Further, the danger of non-democratic practices in state social policy is indubitably great. Even in a smoothly functioning parliamentary democracy, many operations are hidden from the public, and the control of citizens is often weak. Welfare bureaucracies, whose clients belong to the most deprived and least vocal groups, may be specifically prone to autocratic treatment (Niskanen, 1973). *If we affirm, though, that public social policies are inevitably non-democratic, this practically amounts to saying that the state in general cannot operate democratically.* While question marks loom large around the viability of liberal democracies, this accusation seems to be unwarranted. At least, increasing efforts towards decentralisation, toward self-government and local community solutions, toward more freedom of choice for instance in health and education, the growing role of citizens organisations in initiation and control seem to prove that state bureaucracies may become, or may be forced to become, more responsive and more accountable (Culpitt 1992, Donnison 1991).

### ***The negative and positive impact of existential security.***

To come back to the central question: does security really harm freedom, does it for instance deprive me of my freedoms of decision making, of choosing my own fate? This problem, again, can be approached from several angles. It is indeed possible to abdicate to one's right to decision making, either voluntarily or under constraint. Existing socialism did divest its subjects of many kinds of freedoms. It prohibited the freedom of enterprise, of thought, of movement, of association, together with other civil or political freedoms; it also severely limited the freedom to choose a school, a vocation, the type of house one could build, going as far as to limit the choice of such trifles as a hairdo or a jeans. It also imposed severe constraints, starting with the constraint of compulsorily having to engage in paid employment.

These lacks of freedom were, however, not caused by the welfare provisions. More unequivocally: I emphatically deny that society's 'prison character' was due to the institutions of existential security. Firstly, it has to be made clear that social policy provisions 'from cradle to grave' never existed. The principle of 'they who do not work should not eat' was strictly enforced leaving for instance the unemployed (who always existed, even if their number was low) without any provision whatsoever. Also, in the event of a host of misfortunes - low wages or unemployment entailing poverty, homelessness, permanently ill or disabled persons needing home care, all sorts of distress - no state help was available, social work and social assistance being absent from the scene. Secondly, the anti-democratic character of social policy, from its non-participatory operation to some built-in constraints (for instance the fact that access to benefits was linked to employment) was the effect rather than the cause of the lack of freedom. Admittedly, most of the social policy systems functioned better than the system in general, but nothing could escape the impact of political dictatorship.

It may occur, though, even under democratic conditions that one accepts the curtailment of some freedoms. I guess that in these cases we are dealing with a



trade-off. If social insurance is compulsory, then the 'social contract' once concluded binds everybody in a given moment. Since it cannot be reviewed too often, the commitment may also affect those who had not, indeed could not, participate in hammering out the contract. This is, no doubt, a loss of freedom, even if in a democratic regime the loss may be controlled, or the bargain renewed. But - again in the view of Freud - *some* curtailment of individual freedom seems to be the price of civilisation:

The liberty of the individual is not a benefit of culture. It was greatest before any culture, though indeed it had little value at that time, because the individual was hardly in a position to defend it. Liberty has undergone restrictions through the evolution of civilisation, and justice demands that these restrictions should apply to all. The desire for freedom that makes itself felt in a human community may be the revolt against some existing injustice and so may prove favourable to a further development of civilisation and remain compatible with it. But it may also have its origins in the primitive roots of the personality, still unfettered by civilising influences, and so become a source of antagonism to culture. Thus the cry for freedom is directed either against particular demands of culture or else against culture itself. (1951, 59-60, quoted in Wallerstein 1996.)

In the particular case examined here, the voluntary abdication to (some degree of) freedom is countered by more existential security, sometimes on a high level. Evidence shows that in most developed countries people accept the trade-off. They are increasingly aware about the importance of social security, and are even willing to pay - if necessary more -taxes for it (Taylor-Gooby, 1995).

Since this is a mostly voluntary trade-off, it is worth to look into what is gained. In short, existential security means, over and above the lessening of anxieties about, for instance, unemployment, sickness or ageing, that it is not necessary to perpetually obey the existential constraints of the moment in choosing a job, a school, a home, or the next meal. It means that children's life course can be mapped out and prepared for in the best possible way. It means that individual and family autonomy grows in shaping lifestyles or in choosing a life-path. It means that life is less anxiety-ridden. Existential security provides an opportunity, or perhaps only this provides an opportunity for the realisation and development of individual abilities, for the conscious planning of life. To put it into less high-flown terms: if I do not know whether I shall still have my job tomorrow, and whether I shall be able to repay instalments on loans taken out, how can I start building a home, or buying furniture, or plan a long educational career for my children?

Existential security - security of income, security of housing, security of health care - are definitely enhancing freedom and autonomy. By comparison, having to pay tax or contributions is a rather small price. Were this not so, why would the best-off strata have always aspired to buttress their own, their family's and their children's security on all sides with property, individual or other forms of insurance, and why, despite all counter-propaganda, do existing welfare systems in the West resist the attacks? No doubt, affluence accustomed to has turned some into weaklings and has demoralised them. But the chances of people's lives gone wrong seems to be incomparably greater at society's opposite pole.

How, ultimately, one assesses the positive and negative outcomes of existential security is a question of value choices dependent on individual situations and of political attitudes. The fundamental issue lying behind it is the relationship to social solidarity, social integration, the consequences of social polarisation and marginalisation, and the respect for the dignity and autonomy of others.

***People's voice: the value of freedom and of security***

*The importance of the values*

People may value what they do not have - but they seldom aspire to the impossible or the unknown. Under state socialism, after a time citizens responded to the lack of civic liberties in different ways. Many, albeit probably not a majority, gave up their demand for more freedom. (The extent to which this was the outcome of some kind of successful indoctrination, and how much could be attributed to the self-induced belief that there is no sense in yearning for the impossible calls for separate investigation and appraisal.) However, a sort of 'fight for freedom' was never abandoned, finding the most diversified forms of expression, from films or novels with rich hidden messages through diverse forms of gray and black economies to genuine illegal oppositions producing 'samizdats'. With the approach of the change of regime and then in the wake of the change, previously suppressed or repressed feelings, thoughts and attitudes were liberated.

There was a significant change in the open endorsement of the value of freedom one or two years after the transition. This holds true for all forms of freedom, but in a few cases the change of valuation is conspicuous. It seems, for instance, that it was only after the transition that citizens have realised what the state's intervention into private life - regarded for long as 'natural', that is, unchangeable - had previously meant. In Hungary for instance, the ratio of those who thought that 'the state should not interfere with the private life of people' jumped from 50 to 80 %. There was a smaller, albeit similarly significant increase in the ratio of those who considered that 'the free association of people for protecting their interests' is important<sup>6</sup>(Simon, 1993).

While we have some public opinion research about the freedom deficit in former times, there is hardly any information about the importance and evaluation of securities in the *ancien regime*. The few hints we have suggest that social rights and existential securities were ranked at least as high as freedoms: pre-war and early post-war times, when most people lacked them were still remembered in the eighties. However, we do not have any information (let alone comparable statistical data) about the impact of *political* insecurity - the constant anxiety instilled because of totalitarian, unlawful practices concerning all freedoms. We are convinced that this was a major source of anxiety and stress, very likely strongly connected with unusually high morbidity and mortality ratios in the region. Its disappearance is a major gain, but we do not have the instruments to check its psychological impact.

In order to gauge the present status of freedom and security, one may use the results of a relatively recent international survey relating to five 'transition

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<sup>6</sup> The items of the former polls referred to in Simon are different from those used in the SOCO survey. Hence only the overall results may be compared, and even then the comparison is rather imprecise.

countries'<sup>7</sup>. The survey attempted to map the most important social consequences of the transition, including the current working and living conditions, the subjective evaluation of the changes in all those domains, and various value orientations. The investigation of value orientations comprised a set of questions relating to freedoms and securities. 11 types of freedoms and 8 types of securities were presented to the respondents. They had to rate them on a scale of 7 points (7 being the highest score) in two ways: how important they thought these items were, and to what extent they thought that they were assured or implemented<sup>8</sup>.

As far as the importance of freedoms is concerned, their evaluation is rather high. On a scale of 7 scores, the mean score of most freedoms in all the countries was over 6 or only slightly under 6, which means around 80 per cent of the maximum value. Both the average scores and the rank order of freedoms are remarkably similar between countries. The range of the country averages is very small, the lowest mean being 5.4 and the highest 5.7. The difference in the evaluation of the various items within each country is more significant. The highest average score is 6.4 (the importance of the free choice of doctors in former East Germany), and the lowest is 3.9 (the importance of forming political parties in Hungary). However, the ranking of the freedoms is uncommonly close in the 5 countries. Practically everywhere priority is given to 'personal' freedoms and rights (choice of doctors, traveling, choosing a way of life). These are very closely followed in importance by the more traditional civil rights such as the freedom of opinion, of press, of ownership, of enterprise. Out of these, only the freedom of religion changes its ranking in a significant way. It is ranked fourth in importance in Poland, but 9th or 11th (last in the order) in the other countries.

Among the last three items we find everywhere the freedom of forming civil organisation or political parties. It is interesting to note that political rights in the abstract (freedom of press or opinion) are valued much more than those asking for continued and active involvement (form a party or an organization). The implications are not very clear. We are inclined to conjecture that hectic politics and disillusion with the everyday operation of democracy may have had some role in lowering the prestige of these freedoms. Erratic politics, unfulfilled electoral promises, ineffective social actions of civil society also may have had alienated people from active political participation in the last few years<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> The survey furnishing these data was carried out as part of the SOCO project initiated and co-ordinated by the Institute for Human Studies, Vienna. The countries covered included the Czech Republic, former East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. The first results are presented in the International report on the Social Consequences of the Transition, written by Zs. Ferge, E. Sik, P. Róbert, F. Albert. The survey will hitherto referred to as the SOCO survey. (see Ferge et al.)

<sup>8</sup> The types of freedom (in the order of their importance which is radically different from the order presented in the questionnaire) were the following: Choice of doctor; Travel; Way of life; Opinion; Ownership; Press; Enterprise; Political; Religion; Organisation of Civil society; Organisation of political parties.. The securities - also in the order of their importance - were: Children's future; Housing; Family life; Health care; Income; Public safety; Job; Calculability of politics.

<sup>9</sup> It seems to us, post festa, that free elections should have been added to the list of freedoms. This item would have ranked probably at least as high as freedom of press or opinion. At the time of the survey it was assumed in all likelihood wrongly that "the freedom of party organisation" has the same connotation as free elections. .

Existential securities may be thought of, following the logic of A. Sen referred to above as 'positive freedoms'. As such, they are related to the second generation of rights in the UN discourse, or they may be conceived of as social rights as defined by Marshall (1950). These rights concern the education (of children), access to housing, to health and to income. According to the survey, securities or positive freedoms - and also other securities such as safe family life or public safety - are thought to be even more important than civil and political freedoms. The country means for the two sets differ by one scale point - about 15 per cent. All the securities but one got scores far over 6, very close (around 90 per cent) of the maximum. The outlier is what we termed 'calculability of politics' which got a mean around 5. This low score may be due to the obscurity or bad formulation of the term. Or again it may have to do something with the new, not too favourable experiences with politics. But this is really the only exception. Otherwise the uniformity of evaluation is so high in all the countries observed that it is hardly possible to rank the items or to point out significant differences between countries or between social groups.

Thus, both freedoms and securities are important, but under the new conditions securities are valued somewhat more. The two valuations do not run parallel. A new variable was created based on the difference between the average score given to all freedoms and to all securities, called hereafter the „trade-off” variable. It shows - on the individual level - whether one values freedom more, or security more. It was to be expected that many will value security more than freedom. However, the opposite happens also quite frequently. The trade-off variable shows that there is a quite significant minority which values freedom somewhat more or just as much as security (14% in Hungary, 30% in the Czech Republic). And there is a larger group which values security significantly more than freedom (32 in the Czech Republic, 53% in Hungary). The trade-off variable is sociologically meaningful. The most important objective explanatory factors are the educational level and the socio-professional status, and the most important attitudinal ones are left-right orientation, and the evaluation of the regime-change. In other words, those who have a secure and well-paid job, or who are successful entrepreneurs, who are politically more to the right and who assess the new system as altogether better are more likely to be 'freedom-lovers'. However, the evaluation of security is always high and almost the same in the case of 'freedom-lovers' and 'security-lovers': it is always far above 6, mostly above 6.5. Hence, it is mostly the evaluation of freedom which varies with the conditions of the respondents. If we take these - for instance their income level - into account, it seems that the extreme security-lovers just „cannot afford” to be too much concerned about freedoms - they have to struggle too hard for getting along.

*The implementation of the values*

The assessment of the implementation of freedoms - to what extent are they really assured - shows practically no variety between or within countries, while the implementation of securities varies quite significantly.

The first important remark is that people tend to think everywhere that freedoms are, by and large, secure. Indeed, the major achievement of the transition is *the gain in the sphere of politics, freedom in the first place*. This is true even if the new freedoms have misfired in some countries. In the absence of institutions and traditions of conflict resolution, formerly repressed - nationalist or other - passions have exploded, leading to tragic civil wars in at least two countries. In many others, though, including the five countries covered by the survey quoted here, the pluralisation of the political structure as well as the new political institutions are on the way of consolidation, or are already well established. The average score is higher for the implementation than for the importance itself of freedoms. Only two means are under 5, and more than half of the averages are over 6 (7 being the maximum). The few exceptions - a relatively low score for the implementation of the freedom of choice of doctors in Poland, and that of freedom of opinion in Slovakia - while not very significant, may deserve attention on the part of policy-makers.

The closeness of the mean scores of the importance, and of the implementation, of freedoms does not mean that these two sets are fully correlated. People may judge some freedoms relatively unimportant - and still very well assured. The freedom of forming parties or the freedom of religion are for instance not judged too important as compared to the other freedoms, but they are thought to be practically fully assured. This does not mean that freedoms are 'too secure', that there is a 'surplus of freedoms'. Only, there is no deficit, no apparent problem with their guarantees. On the whole, it seems to us that the political fruits of the transition have ripened: *democratic institutions are by and large taken for granted, and people have confidence that they are well established*. Because of the general satisfaction with the implementation of freedoms there is no noteworthy difference between the social groups in this respect.

The picture becomes less uniform and less comforting when it comes to the implementation of securities. *Almost nothing is felt to be fully secure*. (No ratio comparing the importance and the implementation of securities reaches 100%, and on a country level the means are mostly around 60% . ) The only stable component of everyday life seems to be the family. People attach a huge importance to it, and have confidence in its stability. As the analysis of helping networks shows this belief is well grounded: families do help each other, and may be counted on when in need. Otherwise, *there is a significant deficit in desired securities*. It is very similar among the countries: the lowest average score is 4.2 (in 3 countries), and the highest is 4.6. (Hungary). Also, the rank order of the insecurities is very similar among the countries. The *security gap* is everywhere the biggest in case of public safety, then of the future of children and of income<sup>10</sup>. But - especially if compared with freedoms - it occurs in case of all the securities. Social variations are the greatest and sociologically the most meaningful in case of income security,

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<sup>10</sup> The scores are by and large half as high for implementation as for importance.

job security and the security of the future of children. The feeling of insecurity in these fields is the most strongly related to self-assessed or subjective poverty. Other factors having a smaller or greater impact are the objective income level, the job or the educational level, and unemployment in the household. In other words, and not very amazingly, those who are poorer and feel poorer, those whose job is unsafe or who have already experienced unemployment feel more strongly than the others that their most important existential securities are not assured.

Many will be inclined to interpret the strong feeling about weak securities as nostalgia for the past or as the sign of clinging to state paternalism. We do not think so. It seems to us that the aspiration to basic securities is a 'constant' of life. Western social security systems were developed essentially as answers to this need, and people seem to be strongly attached to them. The recent social movements in France at the end of 1995 and in Germany in the spring of 1996 are clear signs. So are the results of public opinion surveys about the importance of state provisions even if one has to pay taxes for them (Taylor-Gooby already referred to, Hadenius 1985). Thus it is not the lost security 'of socialism', but lost security *tout court* which is regretted, all the more so because this is not a necessary feature of a modern market economy.

#### *Whose responsibility?*

The world-wide projects of the withdrawal of state responsibility for services and transfers which serve both social integration and the protection of existential securities does not seem to meet with the general approval of people. According to Jacek Kuron, Poles 'regarded 'socialist social justice' as a totally acceptable norm'. They condemned its distortions, but not the principle of this basic myth. 'To build a new social order while rejecting a myth in which Poles believe - I maintain it is impossible' (Kuron, 1993). This opinion is strongly expressed in the SOCO survey. Apparently, the attraction of the velvety revolutions is fading with the new experiences. More exactly, the societies in transition are becoming more differentiated. The younger, more educated people, having more entrepreneurial spirit are increasingly satisfied, while there is a growing minority or even a majority who think the new system is worse than the former one. There are many reasons for the deceived expectations, but one of them is certainly the loss of securities and the withdrawal of the state.

This does not mean that people would want to relinquish all their responsibilities to the state. In all five countries people are making clear distinctions between various public responsibilities. (Here as in many other instances, the similarity of the countries is noteworthy.) For instance, the responsibility for the maintenance of children is seen as 'half-and-half', half private, half public responsibility. Private responsibility is also endorsed to a large extent in case of higher, even of secondary education. However, health, the protection of handicapped people, primary education and decent pensions are all thought to rate very high on the agenda of state responsibilities in all five countries. This patterns resembles to the western patterns referred to, albeit state responsibility seems to get somewhat higher rates East than West. Whether this is

due to past habits or to increasing poverty entailing growing needs for state intervention is unsure.

What is certain, though, that both in the East and the West of Europe a huge majority emphatically rejects the new dominant ideology about the minimal state. It seems that some ideas expressed in a magisterial treatise on the state by the greatest Hungarian nineteenth century liberal, the baron Eötvös (1851) did not lose as yet their validity. While he praised freedom as the most important human value, he also asserted that it could be enjoyed only in quiet or serenity. But individuals were unable to ensure this on their own - that is why the state was needed. 'The objective of the state is security. If it does not assure this to the individuals, citizens will justly think it a major ill. Such a state, as everything which does not have legitimacy, is necessarily facing decline...'

The conflict between the wishes and aspirations of the majority and the efforts coming from above to curtail the state's responsibility seems to point to something which I would like to call the paradox of democracy. The allegory comes from the New Testament - as read by a Hungarian writer in the early thirties. All the gospels relate the tale of Jesus and Barabbas. The custom was to release one prisoner at the feast day. The Pilate gathered the high priests, the leaders and the people in order to listen to them and follow their desire. One of the prisoners was Barabbas, the murderer. And Pilate asked the people whom did they want to be released, Barabbas or Jesus. The crowd requested the release of Barabbas and Jesus was crucified. In the short story of the Hungarian novelist, Frigyes Karinthy, however, Pilate looks round the assemblage and asks:

'And whom shall I release now, Barabbas or the one from Nazareth? A rumble emerged, the voice of the crowd sounded like thundering. And they shouted: Barabbas. And then they looked upon each other and were frightened, because separately each of them cried: the Nazarethian.'

In case of the social state, the voice of the individuals forming the majority supporting the social state may be less thundering. But when it arrives to the top, it is no less distorted. The analogy is not perfect, though. Pilate - both in the Bible and in the short story - tries to save Jesus. This does not seem to be the case with the current rulers vis-à-vis the social state.

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