7. Is there a specific East-Central European welfare culture?

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INTRODUCTION

To analyse the question whether there is a specific East-Central European (ECE) welfare culture this chapter focuses on three issues.[1] At the level of attitudes it discusses the thesis that the totalitarian system created a new type of person, 'Homo Sovieticus', who is characterized among other things by 'learned helplessness' conducive to total reliance on the (welfare) state. My arguments against this thesis are that historical forces shaping people go much further back than a few decades, and that a need for security is part of modern European culture, and not specific to ECE countries. Accusations about learned helplessness serve a liberal agenda to cut back welfare expenditures. The second section takes a historical look at social security. It discusses the role of the state in, and its relationships with, the civilization process and social security development in Western and Eastern Europe. The state was heavily involved in the civilization process in the nineteenth century. But it assured protection and full citizenship to the propertyless only with the emergence of 'common social property' (social insurance) as a counterpart to private ownership. Socialist dictatorship found a tragic solution to the dilemma of assuring security to propertyless people by abolishing private property altogether. Yet even in this truncated form, security promoted norms of 'civilized' coexistence that ultimately may help democratic attitudes. The third section discusses 'welfare culture' on the societal level as it appears in the relationship to some values. It takes a stance against the thesis of a 'bloc culture' in ECE. The appeal of equality and public responsibility may be somewhat greater in ECE countries, but between-country variation is significant in both blocks, and basic values are rather similar in the East and the West of Europe.

THE *HOMO SOVIETICUS*

A wide range of writings has dealt with the legacy of the Soviet totalitarian system. Some of these analyse how it marked and distorted the personality of people under totalitarian rule. The authorship of the term *Homo Sovieticus* itself is under debate. It is usually credited to Józef Tischner, a Polish priest and important Catholic philosopher. Others trace the authorship to Aleksandr Zynoviev, a Soviet philosopher. Clearly, the term is not value-free, whoever coined it. Its use is double-faced, and its overall legitimacy is dubious.

The list of alleged character defects of the *Homo Sovieticus* is long. Very early after the regime change, M. Marody (1992) put forward the thesis that the morality of people was seriously undermined by the totalitarian system, and that learned helplessness was a main feature that created obstacles to entrepreneurship, weakened individual responsibility, and made people expect everything from the state. Some years later a study by Sztompka (2000) summarized quite a few of these defects under the term 'civilizational incompetence'. This incompetence supposedly distorted the economy by paralysing entrepreneurship, politics by blocking the emergence of citizenship, and everyday life by stifling all concerns for the everyday virtues of civility. It was believed to result in what was called 'primitive egalitarianism', and in demands for welfare and social security from the state. According to Sztompka, coercion also led to 'opportunism, blind compliance, reluctance to take decisions, avoidance of personal responsibility', adding up to a syndrome of 'prolonged infantilism matched by state paternalism' (also Rose and Haerpfer, 1992; Mueller, 2000).

There is some truth in the above analyses. Forty-five, let alone seventy years of totalitarian or authoritarian rule certainly marked people. This may be at the root of many psychological or socially ingrained attitudes. In our view, the most painful of all is the much-invoked democratic deficit in people's attitudes. Nevertheless, generalizations of this type are trite and unjust. The term 'civilizational incompetence' seems to me particularly inappropriate. It is a variant of traditional Eurocentrism. It implies that all societies outside the heart of Europe are barbarians. As for personal traits like opportunism or blind compliance, the political system might have imposed them on many people (or at least they simulated compliance). Still, these character defects have certainly not been the privilege of only those living in East-Central Europe. Moreover, inasmuch as Eastern attitudes are specific, and there is a civilizational deficit there, 'communism' is certainly not the only culprit to have created them.[2]

Historical heritage is complex. The pre-war history of Central and Eastern Europe represents a varied and often heavy legacy. The borders of

Europe – what was regarded as its centre and what was periphery – varied over the centuries. As Wiarda (2002) puts it, the barrier, even if moving all the time, has been 'a cultural wall, a religious wall, and a socio-psychological wall as well as an economic and strategic one'. It meant for the periphery – with exceptions – a longer lasting feudalism, belated and more vulnerable democratic institutions, and a widening economic gap between core and periphery. Thus if there were significant differences in 1990 between a Hungarian and a French farmer, or between a German and a Polish mechanic, who knows how much of these can be ascribed to 'communism' and how much to former centuries (let alone to presumed national or ethnic character traits)? Meanwhile, there have always been islands of commonality. Alongside the aristocracy that was always international, many traditional and modern professional groups have had shared civilizational codes before as well as after the Second World War.

I would also argue that the socio-psychological upshot of decades of 'communism' is not exclusively negative. Before 1945 in most Eastern countries, social relationships had a feudal character with practically unbridgeable social distances, and asymmetrical social relationships between upper and lower strata, men and women, and people of high and low status. Unequal relationships were deeply ingrained, manifesting themselves not only in forms of communication and addresses, self-humiliating words, but also in body language (deep bows, kissing the hands of the master, etc.) These asymmetries have been radically reduced since the Second World War. Most of these changes are probably irreversible: interpersonal attitudes were not imposed from above but have evolved spontaneously on the basis of post-1945 societal changes that finally shattered feudal structures. The new generations have been socialized according to new behavioural codes. By now these codes are ingrained at least in a majority, are in line with the new democratic institutions, and are even safeguarded by law, for instance in the case of women or children.

Some of the character defects mentioned above merit special attention here as they relate to values and attitudes toward the welfare system. Accusations of primitive egalitarianism, or demands for welfare and social security from the state because of learned helplessness have a direct bearing on the issue. I shall focus first on allegations concerning a pampered population relying entirely on a profligate and paternalistic state.

Ironically enough, these allegations are not new. Identical or similar arguments were used, for example, to prevent the institutionalisation of social security in the French Parliament at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Hatzfeld, 1971), or to attack welfare arrangements in Sweden in the 1960s, in the UK during the Thatcher era, or for decades in the USA (Segalman and Marsland, 1989). All this was duly analysed and

ridiculed long ago by Hirschman (1991). Similarities over time and space are uncanny. A text published in 1971 by a British author is almost word-perfect: 'The moral fibre of our people has been weakened. A State which does for its citizens what they can do for themselves is an evil State; and a State which removes all choice and responsibility for its people and makes them like broiler hens will create the irresponsible society' (Boydes, 1971, introduction).[3]

The thesis of the lack of individual self-reliance caused by communism forgets at least two facts. It ignores the history of public social protection in the so-called core European countries where public demand played a large role. And it forgets that in the second half of the nineteenth century East-Central Europe was closely integrated into Europe, and was then adopting similar public policies. The beginnings of social security in the last third of the nineteenth century were largely contemporaneous in East and West, or at least there was no startling lag. To give just one example: within the Bismarckian social insurance system, the first law on health was enacted in Germany in 1883, and that on accidents in 1884. The respective Hungarian laws were enacted in 1891 and 1907 (Szikra, 2004). It may be worth noting that even well-known and respected studies of European welfare systems like that of Flora and Heidenheimer (1981) or Hugh Heclo et al. (1984) talk about Europe while overlooking developments in East or East-Central Europe.

After an early start, social protection developed slowly in ECE countries until the Second World War due to conservative politics, slow industrialization, and rigidity of the social system. It remained restricted to a minority. Czechoslovakia was in many respects a significant exception. After 1945, or rather, from the 1960s onward, the institutions of social security developed rapidly all over the region in a sort of welfare competition with the West. Development was motivated by the idea of social catching up with the West, by the need for political legitimacy, and by a real or rhetorical ideal of assuring mass well-being. Yet even after several decades of state socialism, the 'communist' social protection system never approached Western standards (Therborn, 1995).

Thus despite early acceptance of the 'European model', the socialist paternalist state is a legend. The main missing elements were democracy (its legal basis, civil participation), a lack of the spirit of care and compassion, and lack of concern about levels of adequacy. There remained in each country large uncovered areas of social risk. Hungary for instance was relatively effective in family policy, but help with obtaining first homes was missing, social work was practically banned, and provision for the unemployed was non-existent. The Hungarian state was very far from the paternalism of typical Western welfare states.

Learned helplessness seems to be a convenient myth and prolonged infantilism a malevolent one. People had to have many skills to organize everyday life under conditions of a shortage economy, and do it on a shoestring. Moreover, people had to cope with countless problems on their own because the welfare system was defective and rigid. They had to find more or less unconventional solutions not only for housing, but also for all the individual or family problems that did not quite fit the public system tailored to mass needs. They had to cope on their own without public help, social work, market solutions, or supportive civil organizations. Many collective coping instruments open to citizens living in a free society – from strikes to opting out from wage-work – were also legally unavailable. Only inventiveness – the opposite of learned helplessness – helped people to find solutions. Though illegal resistance like strikes and underground collective opposition was rare, unconventional behaviours were ubiquitous and probably played a part in preparing the collapse of the system.

Accusations of a pampered population eager to have security have never been politically innocent. The need to abolish the causes of learned helplessness – that is, the need to cut back the caring state – was spelt out long ago. By the early 1990s the economist Kornai had already criticized the oversized, allegedly premature welfare state that was detrimental economically and morally. He and many in his wake opted against putting the premature being in an incubator that would have been the logical consequence of the metaphor. They rather opted for its dumping. 'The main problem with the welfare system inherited from the communist regime is that it leaves too wide a sphere of action, and a corresponding range of resources, in the hands of the government rather than with the individual. This infringes on such fundamental human rights as individual sovereignty, self-realization, and self-determination'. In this view people should be responsible for themselves: 'They must give up the habit of having the paternalist state think for them, and must be assisted by reformers in this "detoxification" '. The freedom to choose and be responsible for it is, according to Kornai, 'a trivial requirement' in the United States. However, 'for generations that came to maturity under the communist system, a different principle was instilled: that the ruling party-state was responsible for everything. . . . Since the state provided for any unforeseen eventualities (e.g. illness, disability, death of the breadwinner), there was no need to prepare for the uncertainties of tomorrow' (Kornai, 1997: 287). A similar argument was advanced by the dean of Warsaw University: the state should be only the 'facilitator of private transactions' and not the benevolent protector of the people: 'Poland must modernize and demystify the state in order to throw off the inherited inertia of the socialist era' (Krol, 1997).

To conclude on the *Homo Sovieticus*: while admitting that there may be differences in the psychological make-up of people's attitudes towards state protection in core and peripheral European countries, I would argue that: (1) The historical roots of differences go back much further than socialist dictatorship; (2) The need for social protection and the demand that the state assume responsibility for these needs are not specific to the ex-socialist countries: the European model of social protection is embedded in modern European culture; (3) Accusations of learned helplessness and similar character traits have long formed part of a liberal political-economic agenda aiming at undermining the legitimacy of the social functions of the state, in Western as well as in Eastern European countries.

THE NEED FOR, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SECURITY IN THE WEST AND EAST: SECURITY AND CIVILISATION

The West

Security as we understand it at present may be a social construct, but its importance seems to be paramount for individuals as well as for societies. Security of course has many meanings. One of its modern faces is the security of civil freedoms, ownership included. Another is protection against threats and risks that may undermine normal everyday existence. Modernity based on the individualization of society needed both types of security. However a conflict pitting everybody against everybody else nips any such development in the bud. Hence the need for a new collective protective agency, some form of 'the Leviathan'.

The modern state had, indeed, as its first function the protection of the life and property of its free citizens in a social environment based on rights. The Universal Declaration of Human and Citizens' Rights of 1789 declared property a sacred and inalienable right. In the interpretation of Castel (2003), property at this point was understood as ownership of self, the foundation of a free and autonomous individual. The conception of individual independence 'was constructed through the valuation of ownership, coupled with the rule of law'.

The security of the individual was rooted in this autonomy protected by the state. But for propertyless individuals freedom and autonomy were hollow concepts. The protection of autonomy and hence security became meaningful only if there was property to be protected. That is why Castel's observation is of seminal importance. He points out – and this is rarely if ever done – that 'This construction should have considered a central

question the status, or the lack of status of the individual having no ownership' (Castel, 2003: 26). Indeed, if protection is related to property, what happens to the propertyless individual?

This central question was not raised. Security for those having no property to assure their independence was 'forgotten' for a long time. The old forms of protection based on proximity – family, village, lord, church, and guild – were shattered and splintered as a consequence of modernization. Under the new conditions it was assumed that those without property should live from their day-to-day work. But work was totally insecure, and the meagre resources it assured stopped altogether when work was lost, when illness or death struck, when one became too old or too weak for labour. Thus the majority could enjoy neither social independence nor an autonomous life, and did not have any well-defined status in the new society. The lower classes living in dire poverty did not have any hold on their present, let alone their future. Their life was overshadowed by the basic insecurity of their everyday existence. The insecurity of the poor represented physical, social and even moral dangers, as well as a constant threat to the rule of law and order in the new civilization that was emerging (Elias, 1939, 1969, 1982). The attempts to deal with these dangers were numerous, including repressive state policing (poor laws, etc.) and individual charity. None of them worked effectively or on a large scale. Thus the community – ultimately, the state – was forced to take on new proactive functions.

The new state functions are usually called welfare functions, which add up to a welfare state. I propose to split them in two – civilizing and welfare functions – even if the dividing line between the two is not always clear-cut. The story of their unfolding is well known. I take up the issue only to bring out some differences between East and West.

De Swaan (1988) describes in detail the emergence of such new activities and institutions like the enforcement of a common national language, literacy, and also behavioural codes through (for instance) compulsory schooling, or the fight against contagious diseases through sanitation and public health measures. Large urban projects that made towns more liveable or the development of transport and communication through public efforts could be added to these. All these developments created protection against the dangerous poor by improving general infrastructure, by advancing public safety, by alleviating the worst aspects of poverty that hurt new sensibilities. Much of the state's effort in the nineteenth century was aimed at handling the aspects of poverty most disagreeable to the non-poor, namely public squalor. These efforts meant sanitation and increasing orderliness of the environment as well as the inculcation into the poor of many aptitudes, attitudes, and norms promoting a modern, 'civilized' lifestyle.

I propose to distinguish these civilizing attempts from the genuine protective or welfare functions aiming to abate private squalor. In fact the first public attempt to civilize the poor did not solve the original dilemma spelt out by Castel: how to assure social protection and fulfil the original promise of the Enlightenment to protect the property and life of citizens while assuring for all full citizenship. The solution to this dilemma was found at the end of the nineteenth century or only in the twentieth century. It consisted in inventing labour law and social law, in giving strong legal protection to work and the security of those having no property. Social insurance based on a new type of property, 'common social property', created a stable social status and identity (Castel, 1995; 2003). Together with a strong economy and more resources, these new securities promoted 'civilizational' standards. Thereby they could also strengthen the operation of modern (mass) democracies. They allowed growing segments of society – at least in a number of countries and for ever longer periods – to live together according to modern rules of law.

THE EASTERN SOLUTION

The need for security existed in countries situated in the East of Europe, too. Dictatorial state socialism however found a different solution to the dilemma between the lawful sanctity of ownership as the basis of security, and the impossibility of assuring the security of propertyless people living from their work. It cut the knot in a way completely opposite to that of the West, using a despotic shortcut feared already by Hobbes. The state became all-absorbing ruler. The rule of law was violated: private property was almost totally abolished, all or most property was transformed into allegedly common, but in practice, state ownership. At one stroke civil rights and civil and political freedoms were to a large extent abolished (substantively, if not formally). The tragic consequences of totalitarian rule are only too well known to need to be discussed here. Yet state ownership opened opportunities that were not necessarily harmful.

Private property being abolished, no open resistance opposed the reduction of income inequalities or use of public (state or cooperative) ownership and public resources for state purposes. The list of these goals is long and varied. Many of them were neither reprehensible in themselves nor incompatible with modernity. They included full employment, that is, easy access to secure waged work for practically everybody. The construction of 'nationwide, compulsory, collective institutions' (de Swaan, 1988) in a social protection system was also on the agenda. In the course of rapid (even forced) modernization, the state's civilizational and welfare functions

merged. An all-encompassing school system and practically universal health and social protection systems were built up in some decades. The price paid for them was extremely high in terms of real autonomy and freedom. Yet, for the majority who in pre-war society enjoyed neither freedom nor security it did not seem so: as many contemporary and current surveys testify, people valued social security. Also, security promoted many types of habitus in line with attitudes conforming to 'European' civilization. I venture therefore to argue that the reduction of the civilization gap between East and West, men and women, and higher and lower echelons of society was probably the most positive outcome of socialist dictatorship. In most countries these efforts 'paid off', even if in a way largely different from their original intentions. More literacy, insight into the relationship between present and future, and information about modernity probably improved the chances of people adjusting, later, to the requirements of political democracy and a market society. After the political transformation the new political class had a huge responsibility in handling this inheritance. They had the option of attempting to protect the inherited human assets or of squandering them away.

The switch from dictatorial state socialism to capitalism in its rather wild form took its toll. In some cases the shock was so strong as to reverse (at least for a while) the civilization process. Elias warned about this danger when he wrote: 'The armour of civilized conduct would crumble very rapidly if, through a change in society, the degree of insecurity that existed earlier were to break in upon us again, and if danger became as incalculable as it once was' (Elias 1939: 307, 1969, 1982). Apparently in some of the countries (parts of the former Soviet Union or Yugoslavia) the change was too rapid to maintain that armour.

Even in countries where there was no major disaster, transition rapidly ended the feeling of security. The new system restored the rule of law, private ownership and the market, and also increased massively the number of people with no property. In the first years of transition undeniably many, if not all, collective arrangements built up under the former system continued to protect those who could remain on the labour market or had acquired entitlements related to their former labour. It did not occur to anybody though that collective social property could play a lasting role in protecting the new propertyless outside the labour market. Everyday security crumbled for those who had lost their jobs and livelihood, despite new arrangements to handle unemployment. Labour rights weakened; vulnerability and insecurity reappeared on a massive scale. Under these conditions the maintenance and strengthening of former arrangements should have been a first priority to prevent a civilizational setback harming the whole social fabric.

The new political classes did not manage their heritage well. With the diminishing economic functions of the state there was a historical opportunity to concentrate on its civilizational and welfare functions. This opportunity was missed. The fate of the Roma in the ECE countries is blatant proof of this. In Hungary for instance, at the end of the 1980s over 80 per cent of Roma men had a full-time job; now almost 80 per cent are without a job. For decades they climbed the civilizational 'ladder' with tremendous effort, only to fall with dizzying speed after transition (Kemény, 2003).

The need for collective defences has been rapidly mounting in other respects, too. We live not only in a 'risk society' (Beck, 1992), but in a society genuinely threatened by harms and dangers including destabilizing insecurities, environmental disasters, and ultimately various forms of chaos. Most threats are largely related to the operation of an uncontrolled global market. New dangers make imperative the creation of powerful and legitimate global institutions, and, ultimately, perhaps also a global state (Soros, 1998; Stiglitz, 2002). But these institutions will have to be financed. In all probability, still-existing nation states will be compelled to foot the bill for this emerging new state or institution working for peaceful international co-existence.

In the so-called new democracies not enough was done to prevent the weakening of social security of propertyless people, or to face the already visible need for collective arrangements against new dangers. The main gains in social policy are connected with what may be called Europeanization, including more democratic procedures, institutionalization of social work, re-emergence of civil organizations, and new concerns with poverty (Guillén and Alvarez, 2004). The efforts of the Union to put poverty and exclusion firmly on the agenda have been relatively successful. Still, anti-poverty efforts have remained insufficient, and civil society is still too weak to put genuine pressure on the state, or to control it (Ferge and Juhász, 2004).

Meanwhile many interest groups have pushed East-Central Europe towards the American solution of social protection, or just a downsized version of it. Strong attempts have emerged to Americanize, instead of Europeanize, ECE countries. Supranational monetary agencies (e.g. IMF, World Bank, WTO) have had a major role in shaping post-socialist societies, particularly where the countries have been indebted (Deacon et al., 1997). The main elements on their social-policy agenda were the strengthening of individual responsibility and the weakening of public responsibility in social matters; the promotion of privatization and marketization in all spheres; the emphasis on targeted assistance to the truly needy at the expense of universal benefits; and the scaling down of social insurance, allegedly to assure work incentives. In short, a leaner state in general, and a diminished welfare state in particular. These ideas have found powerful

supporters in most ECE countries. Many have gone further in the privatization of pensions or health-care, or in introducing flat-rate taxation, than West-European countries. The privatization of pensions for instance has made such headway in the last years that East-Central Europe has often been presented by liberal spokesmen as a social-policy model to be followed by all members of the Union.[4] And of course this may happen.

To conclude, a relatively civilized way of life and peaceful social coexistence evolved mainly in the decades following the Second World War, simultaneously and in interaction with the collective arrangements of social protection. This process occurred in East and West with similarities and differences. The weakening of universal arrangements may undermine hard-won civilizational gains. This danger may be greater in new democracies than in old ones.

PUBLIC CULTURE AND SECURITY

At present, liberal pressure on the welfare state is ubiquitous. And unfortunately the European Union does not offer unconditional support to the European social model. The social components of the original Lisbon commitments are wavering, and pressure from the EU to increase competitiveness at the expense of social cohesion is strong. The welfare gap between Western and Eastern Europe may inevitably increase if – as observed by the European Commission (CEC, 2004) – 'economic convergence criteria and budget deficit reduction goals (appear to) take precedence over social cohesion goals' (ibid.: 35). Meanwhile, convergence criteria and budget-deficit goals seem to be more strictly enforced, and failure to implement them more readily sanctioned by the Commission itself and by many other supranational or global forces, than are social cohesion goals. This hits particularly harshly poorer countries in dire need of combating poverty and social exclusion partly for the sake of competitiveness.

Meanwhile in all ECE countries public opinion appears to continue to support the welfare state, the European social model and its basic values. Whether this is a common European feeling, or whether it is a specific cultural trait of the (allegedly) pampered Eastern countries remains to be seen.

The thesis of *Homo Sovieticus* assumes that there was a bloc culture in ECE that could not absorb modernity. According to Sztompka (2000), 'the Communist system succeeded in creating a common cultural framework, over and above distinct national cultures, and relatively isolated from wider global culture: the unique syndrome of values, rules, norms, codes, standards typical for the bloc as a whole, the *bloc culture*'. Primitive egalitarianism, and demands for welfare and social security from the state, as Sztomka

Table 7.1 Hungary: Changes in income inequalities and agreement or disagreement with the opinion that income inequalities are too large, 1987–2003 (Percentage distribution of answers) (fully disagree = 1, fully agree = 5)

	1987	1992	1999	2003
Indicators of income inequality				
Gini coefficient	0.24	0.27	0.31	0.32
Multiplier between top and bottom decile	4.6	6.0	7.6	8.1
Opinions about income inequality: inequalities too large				
Fully or slightly disagree: not large	11	8	3	3
Unsure	12	8	4	6
Slightly agree: somewhat: too large	36	39	26	26
Fully agree: much too large	41	45	67	66
Total	100	100	100	100
N =	2498	1213	1199	3956

Sources: Income: TÁRKI 2005, p. 37. Opinions: TÁRKI Monitor 2003.: (http://www.tarki.hu/adatbank-h/kutjel/pdf/a134.pdf).

adds, belong to this culture. Thus we have to search for empirical evidence of egalitarianism and statism in ECE and West-European countries.[5]

A cursory look at Hungarian opinions on equality over time would confirm Sztompka's thesis about egalitarianism, except that the opinions do not seem to be primitive or un-reflected at all: the condemnation of excessive inequality is strengthening over time, simultaneously with the increase in the country's income and wealth inequalities (Table 7.1).

The assumed bloc culture is not very uniform, either: the Czechs seem to be less worried by large income inequalities, which, in fact, were smaller in their country than in the others both before and five years after the transition. The other transition countries perceived the significant increase in income inequality and did not quite like what they saw (Table 7.2).

It should be noted that structural differentiation, usually highly important in determining welfare opinions, is not very significant in the case of the rejection of inequalities. For instance, it is almost uniformly high in all educational groups, with the significant exception of Czechs with higher education (Table 7.3).

The high valuation of equality goes hand-in-hand with a very high valuation of newly-gained freedoms. In the SOCO study of 1995 (Ferge et al.,

Table 7.2 Four countries in ECE: Distribution of opinions about the acceptability of income inequalities (Percentage distribution of the answers of the respondents)

	Czech Republic	Poland	Hungary	Slovakia
Income inequalities are:	Opinions for around 1990, 5 years before the survey			
Too small	25	19	5	17
Acceptable	65	65	74	73
Too large	10	16	21	10
	100	100	100	100
	Opinions for 1995, at the time of the survey			
Too small	9	7	3	15
Acceptable	24	13	8	11
Too large	67	80	89	74
	100	100	100	100

Note: The opinions for 1990 are *ex-post*. The comparison between 1990 and 1995 may not reflect therefore 'reality'. It captures, though, the feelings of the respondents about the changes caused by the transition. N = around 1000 in all the countries.

Sources: Ferge et al. 1995, SOCO survey, Table V.23, p. 316

Table 7.3 Four countries in ECE: ratio of respondents who think that income inequalities are too high, within groups of different educational level of head of household (%; 1995; only heads of household under 60)

	Primary	Vocational	Secondary	Higher	All respond-ents	*N* (total under 60)	Sign. Level
Czech Republic	82	67	67	44	*67*	691	***
Poland	82	77	82	72	*80*	663	n.s.
Hungary	89	92	90	84	*89*	651	*
Slovakia	69	74	76	74	*74*	589	n.s.

Note: *** = significant at the 0.01 level; ** = significant at the 0.05 level; * = significant at the 0.1 level.

Sources: Ferge et al., 1995., SOCO survey, Table V.24, p. 317

1995) a series of questions attempted to gauge the value of various aspects of freedom, from the free choice of a doctor to freedom of opinion or the press. On a seven-point scale all civil and political freedoms got very high scores in all five countries covered. (The average for these freedoms was around 6.)

When it comes to preferring freedom to equality, the population of ECE countries as a group seems to prefer freedom a bit more than their Western counterparts. The European Value Survey for 1999/2000 shows in the pooled data set of 23 European countries that 54 per cent of the population valued freedom more than equality. In 7 out of the 14 Western countries the ratio was higher than average, while this was the case in 6 out of 9 ECE countries.

However, the trade-off between freedom and security is also important. Do people think that freedom can be enjoyed without basic securities? Data are scarce on this issue, but the SOCO survey of 1995 gives some clues. People were asked separately about the importance they attached to various types of freedoms and security. The importance of security on average scored clearly higher than that of freedom. The security of the future of children, housing, health care, income, public safety and of jobs got an average score between 6.6 and 6.8 out of a maximum of 7 in all five countries covered.

A variable was constructed based on the difference between the average valuation of all freedoms and securities. This seems to be a very artificial and indirect variable. It proved to be very robust, though. We conducted several surveys after 1995 in Hungary, asking the same set of questions as in the SOCO survey. The results showed a high degree of steadiness in this respect. In all surveys only about one-fifth of the sample valued freedom more highly than, or at least as highly as, security. Meanwhile over one-fourth valued security much more highly, and over half, more highly than freedom (Table 7.4).

Results for the other ECE countries covered in 1995 showed some between-country variation. The proportion of those who valued freedom more than security varied from 14 per cent (Hungary) to 30 per cent (Poland). Security was valued more highly than freedom in all the countries, but the intensity of the longing for security was different (it was strongest in Hungary, weakest in Poland). While security seemed to be regarded as more important than freedom, the relationship between freedom and security depended strongly on how much security one had. Those who are better off, i.e. more educated, with higher income and with more secure jobs tend to value freedom more than, or at least as much as, security. The reverse is true for the poor or insecure strata: security may become all-important at the expense of freedom. The differences were

Table 7.4 Hungary: Percentage distribution of the scores of the derived variable about the comparative importance of freedom and security

	1995	1997	2000
Freedom is more than, or as important as, security (score 1)	14	16	18
Security is more important than freedom by maximum 1 grade (score 2)	33	27	29
Security is more important than freedom by 1,0 to 2 grades (score 3)	26	28	27
Security is more important by more than 2 grades (score 4)	27	30	26
Total	100	100	100
N =	1000	1200	974

Note: Method of calculation: the difference between the average score of all securities (7-point scale) and of all freedoms (7-point scale) varies between –6 and + 6. This new score was compounded in the four groups presented in the table.

Sources: for 1995, Ferge et al, 1995; for 1997 the Hungarian Panel Survey, TARKI; for 2000: an Omnibus survey of Sonda-Ipsos. Support from the Hungarian Research Foundation gratefully acknowledged.

significant in all five countries covered. Some examples regarding the effect of people's educational level may prove the point. The rate of those for whom security was much more important than freedom was 27 per cent in the Czech Republic among those with only primary education, and 2 per cent among those with higher education. The respective data were 18 and 3 per cent for Poland, 41 and 8 per cent for Hungary, 28 and 8 per cent for Slovakia. The rates for freedom-lovers, by contrast, ranked between 19 and 43 in the Czech Republic, and 7 and 27 per cent in Hungary, with higher values for the more educated. These results suggest that increasing insecurity may jeopardize democracy.

Thus security, and the role of the state in social matters, seems to be very important indeed for people in East-Central Europe. It has still to be answered whether they form thereby a 'bloc culture' far removed from European culture. Available evidence does not support this thesis, and certainly not on welfare issues.

The commitment to equality is far from being an East-European phenomenon. On the contrary, it is a typical core European value. Table 7.5 summarizes this point. In all the surveyed countries at least two-thirds of respondents think that income inequalities are too large. The bias of ECE

Table 7.5 Geographic coverage: European countries that were members of the European Union in 2005. Percentage distribution, of responses in the 1999 survey to the statement: 'Differences in income are too large'.

The countries are ranked according to the rate of those who strongly agree.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly agree and agree together	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Total
Portugal	82	14	96	2	2	100
Slovakia	*74*	*20*	*94*	*4*	*2*	*100*
Hungary	*69*	*25*	*94*	*3*	*3*	*100*
Czech Rep	*61*	*27*	*88*	*6*	*6*	*100*
France	60	27	87	7	6	100
Latvia	*58*	*39*	*97*	*2*	*1*	*100*
Slovenia	*50*	*41*	*91*	*5*	*4*	*100*
Poland	*49*	*42*	*91*	*6*	*4*	*100*
Germany East	*45*	*49*	*94*	*4*	*2*	*100*
Austria	41	45	86	9	4	100
Spain	36	54	90	7	3	100
Great Britain	30	50	80	13	7	100
Sweden	29	43	72	18	10	100
Germany West	21	56	77	14	10	100
Northern Ireland	18	51	69	22	9	100
Cyprus	12	54	66	21	12	100

Note: There are no more recent comparative data on the issue. The next survey on social values is planned for 2009 (http://www.issp.org/data.shtml). The separation of the two Germanies in the 1999 survey served comparability with former value surveys. The splitting of the UK into Northern Ireland and Great Britain is not explained in the available documents. ECE countries are in italic.

Source: ISSP, 1999, Survey on Social Inequality

(preference for equality) appears mostly in the ratio of those who strongly agree with the statement. The quotients cover an unusually wide range, between 12 and 82 per cent. Three of the seven former socialist countries are above 60 per cent. Meanwhile Portugal and France are also in this group. A similar pattern emerges in the case of all those who 'agree': the ECE countries are over-represented among the egalitarians, but they do not form a separate bloc. Only a more profound analysis could show the respective role of such factors as former dictatorship, poverty level of the country,

shock of the rapid increase in inequality, deception over unfulfilled expectations, current level of inequality, and so forth.

The ISSP survey of 1996 also contains information about people's opinions on the state's responsibility. Respondents were asked whether the state should assume responsibility in the case of health care, benefits for the elderly, decent housing for all, jobs for all, provision for the unemployed, price control, the growth of industry, control of industrial damage to the environment, and reduction of income differentials. The answers show a preference for statism all over Europe. The ratio of those who agree (strongly or at all) that the state has a role in these matters is a majority in almost all cases. On only one question – provision for the unemployed as a public duty – are there countries where agreement is under 50 per cent. Otherwise, in all the cases and countries at least 60 per cent accept state responsibility or regard it as important. The data of the European Value Survey for 1999/2000 confirm a bias towards statism in many countries and in the case of several issues, particularly on the issue of assuring basic needs for all. It has to be added that, in this battery of questions, there was one question evoking less strongly statist answers. People had to place themselves on a scale from 1 to 10, 1 meaning that individuals should take more responsibility for themselves, and 10 meaning that the state should provide for everybody. The mean for the 22 countries covered was 5.14, a very slight statist bias. Out of the 13 'core' or old countries only 3 were above this level, but out of the 9 new countries, 7 were above it, that is, leaning towards statism.

The role of the state is considered important also in the case of income inequalities. A sizeable majority all over Europe would like to see state intervention even in this particularly delicate matter. The majority of respondents in all European countries (with the exception of Denmark) covered by the 2002 ISSP survey think that the state should curb income inequalities. They agree more or less strongly with the statement that 'the government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels'. The ratio of those who 'agree strongly' varies between 8 and 45 per cent (Denmark and Greece) among the 14 old member states, and between 22 and 40 in the four ECE countries covered by the sample. The total rate of those who consent is relatively very low in Denmark (43 per cent) but very high – over 75 per cent – in six Western and three Eastern countries.

Out of all the questions we analysed in the cross-country surveys only one showed a clear bloc impact: whether the state should assure jobs for all. The range of those who agree varied between 70 and 90 per cent, but in all ECE countries this was over 80 per cent, and in all others, under it. Past experiences seem to colour these answers: state responsibility played a similar role everywhere in most fields (or was stronger in the West than in

the East). Only massive job creation by the state was a specific trait of state socialism in the East.

Briefly, then, there seems to be no deep gap between Western and ECE countries in Europe, as regards the strong adherence to basic European values of freedom, equality, and also security. There are between-country variations in both sets of countries, and the sets are to a large extent overlapping. Statism is slightly stronger in the East than in the West but we did not find evidence for the thesis of a bloc culture.

CONCLUSION

Popular welfare culture does not seem to be very different in the East and West of Europe. Attacks on it are also ubiquitous. In East-Central Europe it is based on allegations of a pampered *Homo Sovieticus*, 'learned helplessness', and 'primitive egalitarianism'. These seem to be clichés used at various times and in various places to discredit social security and to make a case for cutting back public expenditure. Indeed, historical forces shaping the character of people go much further back than just a few decades, and the demand for state-provided security is part of modern European culture, not specific to the East of Europe. In the 'core' of Europe, the social security of people without property (workers, employees) was achieved at the end of a long gestation period with the creation of 'common social property' (essentially social insurance based on strong labour rights) as a counterpart to private ownership. Socialist dictatorship found a tragically different solution to the dilemma of assuring security to propertyless people by abolishing private property altogether. The price was extremely high in terms of the violation of the rule of law and of freedoms. Yet even in this truncated form, this security promoted norms of 'civilized' coexistence even in the worst-off social strata (in Hungary, the Roma) that, ultimately, helped the rapid adjustment to new societal rules and norms. Everyday security was probably instrumental in facilitating the emergence of democratic attitudes.

Unfortunately the new political classes did not deal well with this social heritage. They totally missed the opportunity offered by diminishing economic functions of the state to concentrate on civilizational and welfare functions. (Their irresponsibility is only partly explained by the circumstances of globalization and the pressure of supranational agencies.) As a consequence of indifference on behalf of the ruling political and economic groups, at least half of the citizens – among them Roma in countries where their number is high – are still losers in the transition. Meanwhile, the safeguarding of political and social security, and state action to curb increasing

inequalities within the limits of the rule of law, is probably unusually imperative in ex-communist countries. The basis of democracy may be weakened if the expectations of the majority meet with an unresponsive state.

It seems that the contradiction between two basic aims of the European Union as formulated in Lisbon – an increasingly competitive economy and an increasingly cohesive society – has to be approached in a more innovative and more humane spirit than is actually done. The issue is not whether social disasters will ensue if the wise recommendations of scholars to curb global market forces are not followed. These threats are real but they relate to an invisible future. The present chapter has a shorter perspective. It argues for societies that are liveable here and now – East and West.

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NOTES

1. The part of Europe covered by the paper is alternatively called Central and Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, 'Mittel-Europa'. Here I use the term East-Central Europe, ECE for short. This area corresponds roughly to the new EU member states and the candidate countries.
2. I put 'communism' in inverted commas because I find the term a misnomer. It is by now too widely used to attempt to change it to something politically more appropriate like 'dictatorial' or (for later decades) 'authoritarian state socialism'.
3. I thank Adrian Sinfield and John Veit-Wilson who drew my attention to the parallels, and to Adrian Sinfield who found the Boydes text.
4. A compulsory, privately-funded pillar was introduced in Central and Eastern Europe between 1997 and 2002 in Hungary, Poland, Latvia and Croatia. The scheme was on the agenda in 2000 in Bulgaria, FYR Macedonia, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and also in Russia and the Ukraine (Lindeman et al., 2000). The Czech Republic and Slovenia seem to resist all pressures.
5. Unfortunately there are few comparative data over time and space. We shall use some Hungarian sources, the SOCO survey of 1995 covering five ECE countries, the European Values Study (EVS) and various waves carried out within the ISSP, that is, the International Social Survey Programme. The World Values Survey could not be used for these particular issues.

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