

**Owners, Rulers, and Rebels:
Revolution in the Second and Third Worlds**

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Program on Central and Eastern Europe Working Paper Series #26

This paper examines some of the striking similarities, as well as differences, between the combined national and social revolutions of 1989 in Eastern Europe, on the one hand, and Third World revolutions, on the other. The paper reviews a series of similarities between both the old regimes and the oppositional movements that those regimes helped to constitute in both the Second and Third worlds. It also attempts to account for the remarkably nonviolent character of the events of 1989 and for the "exceptionalism" of the Romanian case, where violence did occur. Analytically, the paper suggests that neither the ideological and strategic orientation nor the political capacities and fortunes of rebellious movements "from below" can be fully understood without analyzing the nature of the regimes and elites "above" them, especially the relationship between owners (economic authorities) and rulers (political authorities).

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Introduction

The collapse or retreat of empires has surely been one of the distinguishing and most consequential characteristics of the twentieth century. The struggles for national sovereignty that have helped to corrode empires, moreover, have sometimes (although certainly not always) been fused with attempts to change radically the socioeconomic institutions inherited from the imperialists. The results of this fusion have been nationalist revolutions -- or revolutionary nationalisms -- another phenomenon largely peculiar to the present century. Most recently, in the western dominions of the erstwhile Soviet Union, imperial domination not only provoked and sustained a nationalist opposition, but also unwittingly "radicalized" it (albeit it in a very particular way that I discuss below). Thus, the Eastern European revolutions of 1989, as Pavel Campeanu has pointed out, had "a dual nature: social, since their goal was to destroy the socioeconomic structures of Stalinism, and national, since they aspired to re-establish the sovereignty of the countries in question" (Campeanu 1991, pp. 806-807).

This paper argues that the combined national and social revolutions in Eastern Europe display a number of similarities

with Third World revolutions, despite obvious differences in form and ideology. I want to argue, more specifically, that there are some striking similarities between both the old regimes and the oppositional movements that those regimes helped to constitute in the Second and Third Worlds. As this last formulation suggests, my analysis rests on the view that neither the nature nor the political fortunes of rebellious movements "from below" can be understood without reference to the nature of the regimes and elites "above" them, including the relationship between owners (or economic authorities) and rulers (or political authorities).¹ (By "Second World revolutions" I mean the revolutions of 1989 against the dependent, Soviet-installed regimes of Eastern Europe, although I believe that much of my analysis also applies to the "internal" empire of the former Soviet Union, especially the Baltic states.²)

¹ Of course, comparing the recent social-national revolutions in dependent socialist societies with those that have occurred in dependent capitalist societies are not the only intelligible comparisons that might be drawn. Recent events in Eastern Europe have also fruitfully been compared, for example, with other instances of the breakdown of authoritarianism and/or democratization (e.g., in Southern Europe, Latin America, and East Asia). However, unlike these latter cases, as Claus Offe has noted, the political transitions in Eastern Europe have been accompanied by demands for fundamental -- indeed, revolutionary -- socioeconomic changes, particularly "the transfer of the hitherto state-owned productive assets to other forms of property and, to this end, the creation of an entirely new class of entrepreneurs" (Offe 1991, p. 869).

² This paper does not take up the much larger task of explaining the collapse (or persistence) of state socialism in those countries where it was established through indigenous revolutions (e.g., the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Albania, China, Cuba, and Vietnam).

My analysis has two halves: the first emphasizes the similarities between Second World revolutions, on the one hand (focusing mainly on the cases of Poland, Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia), and Third World revolutions, on the other (including such cases as Mexico, Vietnam, Algeria, Cuba, Angola, Mozambique, Iran, and Nicaragua); the second half of the analysis focuses on the differences between these sets of cases. More specifically, after discussing some of the similarities between both the old regimes and revolutionary movements in the Second and Third Worlds (Part I) -- similarities that have been largely overlooked in recent discussions of Eastern Europe -- I turn to some of the differences in the form or processes of these revolutions (Part II), focusing in particular on the unusually nonviolent nature of the revolutions in Eastern Europe. (These differences highlight certain fundamental dissimilarities in old regimes and revolutionary movements that I necessarily gloss over in the first half of the paper.) Finally, I also briefly examine the "exceptional" (i.e., violent) events in Romania in December 1989 (Part III), the upheaval in Eastern Europe that seems most similar to previous so-called "neopatrimonial revolutions" in the Third World -- a view, I will suggest, that is only partly accurate.³

³ My analysis of the Eastern European revolutions is based generally, in addition to the sources cited, on Garton Ash 1990, Gwertzman and Kaufman, eds., 1990, Brown 1991, Ramet 1991, and the essays in Prins, ed., 1990, and Banac, ed., 1992. My understanding of Eastern Europe has also benefitted enormously from conversations and correspondence with Valerie Bunce.

I. Similarities: The Old Regimes and Revolutionary Mobilization

The old regimes of Eastern Europe shared at least four characteristics with two particular types of Third World regimes that have proven exceptionally vulnerable to revolutionary overthrow, that is, neopatrimonial, personalist dictatorships, on the one hand, such as once ruled Mexico, Iran, Cuba, and Nicaragua, and racially exclusionary, "directly ruled" colonial regimes, on the other hand, such as were once found in Vietnam, Algeria, Angola, and Mozambique. These regime characteristics became the focus of an extremely broad opposition and, by rendering these regimes "unreformable," unwittingly helped to foster the development of reactively "radical" movements (see Goodwin and Skocpol 1989).

What are these lethal regime characteristics? Both Second and Third World revolutions have destroyed states that were simultaneously (1) highly autonomous of relatively weakly organized domestic social classes and interest groups; (2) economically and/or militarily dependent upon, and in many cases installed by, foreign powers; (3) indiscriminately repressive of independent oppositional movements (i.e., potentially loyal and reformist as well as radical and disloyal movements); and (4) intimately implicated in the ownership or control of important economic sectors, if not the economy as a whole -- in other words, there was a very close connection, if not actual fusion, between owners and rulers. As in the Third World, the combination of extreme (domestic) state autonomy, external

dependence, exclusionary authoritarianism, and politicized economies in Eastern Europe ultimately proved to be an especially explosive mixture, as opposition to Communist regimes that never had substantial legitimacy due to their foreign imposition became radicalized, very broadly based, intensely focused on the state, and closely linked to demands for national liberation from external domination.⁴ Let me now explore some of the components of this explosive mixture in more detail.

The domestic "hyper-autonomy," to use Walter Connor's term (1988, p. 9), of the Soviet-installed regimes of Eastern European has long been emphasized in the social-science literature on Soviet-type societies.⁵ In this respect, these regimes were structurally quite similar to those Third World regimes that have proven most vulnerable to revolutionary movements. As Eric Wolf has argued, the penetration of "North Atlantic capitalism" into non-European societies -- like the penetration of Stalinism into Eastern Europe -- weakened or destroyed traditional elites and thereby encouraged "the rise or perpetuation of a dominant central executive, attempting to stand 'above' the contending parties and interest groups":

Diaz ruled over Mexico; . . . France exercised autocratic rule in Vietnam and Algiers through her governor general, vastly more authoritarian than the

⁴ This is not to say that Communism did not have some legitimacy in Eastern Europe, especially in the immediate postwar period (see Naimark 1992).

⁵ Schopflin refers to the "hyper-etatism" of Communist regimes (1991, p. 189); see also Bunce 1985 and Csanadi 1990.

head of government at home; and Cuba was dominated by Batista. (Wolf 1969, p. 284.)

The pre-revolutionary regimes in Iran and Nicaragua were also characterized by an extreme autonomy and personalism in their waning years (see, e.g., Farhi 1990, Ch. 2; Keddie 1992, pp. 173-174; and Wickham-Crowley 1992, Ch. 11).

The domestic autonomy of Eastern European regimes, in fact, like that of pre-revolutionary Third World states, was predicated on and reproduced by their historic intolerance of "civil society," that is, independent associations and ideological currents. Indeed, this latter characteristic of so-called "totalitarian" regimes was thought by many analysts to preclude the very possibility of radical change in Eastern Europe. However, in recent decades, it must be emphasized, many of the Eastern European regimes -- Romania being the clearest exception -- largely shed their totalitarian pretensions, abandoning the goal of ideological conformity among the population, even among Party members, and tolerating "islands of liberalization" within society so long as these did not seem to threaten the regime -- a change nicely captured in Janos Kadar's famous formula that "He who is not against us is with us." Indeed, "After the Stalinist period, the state accepted an implicit 'pact of non-aggression' with society, allowing citizens to pursue private and egoistic ends in exchange for withdrawal from public life and politics" (Ekiert 1990, p. 2; see also Walicki 1991). The advent of this "consumerist" policy of "salamis for submission," as the Czechs called it, suggests that

Second World totalitarianism was gradually becoming, at least in certain key respects, rather more similar to Third World authoritarianism.⁶ The post-Stalinist "social compact," however, even as it opened up some small space for the development of an organized "civil society," also placed the thin popular legitimacy -- and self-legitimacy -- of these regimes on a new, non-ideological, and, as it developed, even more tenuous basis: if the regime could not provide sufficient salami, it had no right to expect submission.⁷

In fact, the politicized economies of Eastern Europe proved increasingly incapable of "delivering the goods," particularly quality consumer goods, during the 1970s and 1980s (although there were important variations among individual countries). To be sure, these regimes proved relatively adept at heavy industrialization through the "extensive" mobilization of ever-greater resources, including labor, but "intensive" economic growth based on the efficient utilization of such resources and

⁶ The Polish regime of the 1980s, according to Walicki, "became similar to traditional authoritarian regimes" (Walicki 1991, p. 97; see also Jowitt 1983, p. 277). Of course, the convergence only goes so far: state ownership of the economy, central planning, Leninist parties, and armed forces generally subordinate to civilian authorities, among other factors, clearly differentiate the Eastern European regimes from most authoritarian regimes in the Third World.

⁷ On the implicit "social compacts" in Eastern Europe, see Pravda 1981 and Pakulski 1986. Brown notes that the reputation of Kadar, the Hungarian leader who is perhaps most closely associated with the idea of a consumerist compact, "could not survive the unraveling of the social compact" during the economic downswing of the early 1980s: "Once he failed to deliver, he was vulnerable" (Brown 1991, p. 104).

technological innovation was systematically undermined by the politicized (and militarized) nature of state-socialist economies. Above all, the "soft budget constraints" of state enterprises that are characteristic of such economies -- the practical impossibility, that is, of enterprises going bankrupt -- provided few incentives for efficient production, quality control, the development of labor-saving technologies, risk-taking, or labor discipline.⁸

In fact, the "success" of economic enterprises in Eastern Europe, as in neopatrimonial dictatorships and racially exclusionary colonies in the Third World, was typically less dependent on economic rationality than on access to state resources and protection from would-be competitors. Such access, in turn, was generally determined by political loyalty to state leaders, party membership, personal connections, outright corruption, and other extra-economic factors. Eastern Europe's dependence on the Soviet Union -- like (neo)colonial dependence in the Third World -- also discouraged initiatives aimed at more efficient national economies in Eastern Europe. Economically and militarily protected from both the competition of the global capitalist economy and potential geopolitical rivals, the Eastern European regimes were thus insulated from two of the most powerful forces that have encouraged economic rationalization in the modern world. Economic difficulties, in fact, led a number

⁸ See especially Kornai 1980 as well as Burawoy and Lukacs's important reformulation (1992, Ch. 3).

of Eastern European states to borrow heavily from the West during the 1970s -- which simply compounded problems of external dependence (see Borocz 1992) -- and to tolerate the "second," "black," or "gray" economies that developed throughout the region, at least so long as these -- like emergent "civil societies" -- were seen to complement rather than threaten the official state-controlled economies.

Economic problems in the region also led to a number of experiments with economic liberalization and decentralization during the post-Stalin era. The (despotically) politicized nature of state-socialist economies, however, impeded the sort of fundamental political and economic reforms that might have increased enterprise efficiency or, at least, made economic austerity more palatable. Significant economic and political liberalization, including greater reliance upon markets and/or the inclusion of new groups and perspectives within the planning process, threatened political elites and well-connected economic agents with the loss of access to state-centered economic resources. The nomenklatura's loss or diminution of political authority or rulership, in others words, implied the loss of its economic authority and privileges. The result was that state-socialist regimes -- again, like patrimonial dictatorships and racially exclusionary colonies in the Third World -- proved notably "unreformable," at least until the late 1980s, when Communist elites, as I discuss below, belatedly and hastily began to disentangle ownership and rulership.

Since the "carrot" of reform was unavailable, Eastern Europe's state-socialist regimes -- or, if need be, their Soviet patron -- used the "stick" against their political opponents. As in the Third World (and elsewhere), however, indiscriminate repression of oppositional movements ultimately backfired in Eastern Europe, temporarily impeding overt oppositional activities, to be sure, but at the cost of further undermining the regime's legitimacy and swelling the ranks of (or at least those sympathizing with) an increasingly radicalized opposition.⁹ (As Adam Michnik noted for Poland, "If martial law was a setback for independent society, it was a disaster for the totalitarian state" (quoted in Echikson 1990, p. 161).) Unrelieved repression and political exclusion predictably weaken the position of oppositional elements calling for "mere" reforms or accommodations with the existing regime and strengthen those "radicals" who argue that the entire social and political order is obviously bankrupt and must be recast from top to bottom. In fact, as Tocqueville once argued, highly centralized and autonomous regimes encourage a certain utopian desire for "total revolution" among their political opponents, a tendency that was

⁹ By "indiscriminate" I do not wish to indicate that political repression in Eastern Europe was particularly violent. By Third World standards, certainly, it was not (excepting the Hungarian counter-revolution). "Indiscriminate" rather indicates that even reformist and potentially loyal oppositions -- dissident Marxists and socialists, say, in the Eastern European context -- were generally not tolerated and were prevented from acting in overtly political ways.

not altogether absent among Eastern European dissidents (see Tocqueville 1980, pp. 216-217).

Successful revolutionary oppositions in the Second and Third Worlds, as this last observation indicates, also exhibit a number of striking similarities, a fact which is perhaps not so surprising given the aforementioned similarities among the old regimes that they opposed. Just as certain regime types are especially vulnerable to revolutionary overthrow, so certain types of revolutionary movements are especially likely to succeed; more than this, certain regime types actually help to constitute, however unwittingly, their own gravediggers. In fact, the oppositional movements in Eastern Europe in 1989, like most successful Third World revolutionary movements, generally shared five characteristics: They were (1) multi-class movements solidified by (2) widespread anger against state authorities and by (3) anti-imperial nationalism or patriotism and (4) led by (contextually) radical leaderships with (5) imitative, "reactive," and quasi-utopian ideologies. Let me now explore some of these characteristics of revolutionary oppositions in more detail.

While the oppositional movements in Eastern Europe were not and, under the circumstances, could not be openly organized, they clearly drew on (1) broad, multi-class and, in some cases, multi-ethnic (or multi-national) support and sympathy -- including

support from both intellectuals and producers.¹⁰ Opposition to Communism, by all accounts, was certainly not confined to the poorest or most oppressed segments of these societies. The extensive opposition to Communism was characterized and indeed "glued" together by (2) a widespread hostility focused on political authorities, a broadly shared anger that helped to "paper over" the latent conflicts of interest within this opposition. Indeed, what made public anger so politically important in Eastern Europe was its pervasive character as well as the fact that it was targeted specifically at the party-state apparatus (see Bunce and Chong 1990).

Most political systems, by contrast, including many types of authoritarian regimes, are structured in ways which obscure or deflect state responsibility for social and economic conditions -- not least by leaving many allocation decisions to the "invisible hand" of the market. Such deflection, moreover, is not generally regarded as illegitimate given the constitutional insulation of the political (or "public") and economic ("private") spheres that is characteristic of capitalist societies, whether democratic or authoritarian (see Giddens 1987, Ch. 5). However, what Kaminski has termed "the fusion principle" of state socialism -- that is, the fusion of the state and the

¹⁰ The exception here is Hungary, where the working class was relatively passive and marginal to the events of 1989 (see Brown 1991, pp. 112-113; Fagan 1991; and Burawoy and Lukacs 1992). This reflects, in part, how far the economic reforms of the Kadar era went towards demobilizing the working class as well as the legacy of the defeated 1956 revolution.

economy -- rendered the state responsible for all that happened in Eastern Europe, whether good or ill, since the state centrally planned, "owned," and distributed virtually all economic resources (Kaminski 1991, p. 8 and Ch. 1). This encouraged the politicization and nationalization of struggles over the production and distribution of goods; in fact, when publics became dissatisfied, they did not blame fate, themselves, or the market -- they blamed the central state (see Bunce and Chong 1990 and Reich 1990, pp. 78-79).¹¹ In the crucial Polish elections of June 1989, for example, the success of Solidarity in each electoral district (voivodship) was directly and strongly related not so much to the prior organizational strength of Solidarity in the district as to the degree of anti-government sentiment as reflected in the proportion of voters who rejected a "national list" of unopposed Communist candidates (Heyns and Bialecki 1991, p. 356).

A similar logic of opposition, I should note, has been encouraged in the Third World context by neopatrimonial dictatorships and by racially exclusionary colonial regimes. These regimes are not only characterized by authoritarianism, but also by extensive economic powers and modes of intervention, blatant political and economic favoritism towards privileged

¹¹ The relative isolation of these systems from the larger global capitalist economy also prevented the development of anger targeted at forces outside of the Soviet bloc, such as the International Monetary Fund. So-called "IMF riots" have become rather common, by contrast, in the Third World (see Walton and Ragin 1990).

clients, and pervasive corruption based on racism and/or "cronyism." Accordingly, these regime types also unintentionally focus a wide array of social and economic grievances upon the state (and thence to its foreign backers), since the successful resolution of socioeconomic struggles requires a redistribution of political power within the state, if not its actual overthrow. A number of recent studies have emphasized the extremely broad social base and nationalist character of revolutions in Vietnam, Algeria, Cuba, Iran, and Nicaragua (see, e.g., Goldstone 1986, Goodwin and Skocpol 1989, Farhi 1990, Halliday 1991, Keddie 1992, and Wickham-Crowley 1992).

A variety of social and economic grievances, in fact, have become "nationalized" in a double sense within the particular Second and Third World contexts that I have been discussing: to begin with, grievances that might otherwise remain localized or diffuse are both aggregated and channelled, as it were, towards the central state; at the same time, such grievances are also redirected or displaced, at least in part, towards the colonial or hegemonic power that underwrites that state. Thus, for example, the economic conflicts of Angolan and Vietnamese peasants with landlords tended to escalate into political struggles with the local Portuguese and French colonial states and, ultimately, into nationalist struggles with the Portuguese and French metropolitan states (and their foreign allies) (see, e.g., Paige 1975, Ch. 4-5). Similarly, the quotidian struggles of Polish ship-builders invariably escalated into political

conflicts with the Polish Communist Party and, ultimately, into nationalist opposition to the Party's Soviet patrons. Given this peculiar logic of social protest, it should be noted, it is all but impossible to weigh with any precision the extent to which Second and Third World revolutions have been predominantly "socioeconomic," "political," or "nationalist" in nature; the point is that certain types of regimes inextricably meld all of these analytic types of grievances or opposition, which is precisely one of their principal weaknesses.

Revolutionary movements in Eastern Europe, then, were also characterized by (3) nationalist or patriotic opposition to domination by a foreign power, in this case the Soviet Union. "Amidst [their] different traditions and histories," William Echikson has noted, "one strong common factor unites the Eastern European countries -- their smallness, their fragility, [and] their preoccupation with obtaining real independence" (Echikson 1990, p. 31). In addition, (4) most of the leaders of the Eastern European opposition were, at least by 1989 and in the particular context in which they found themselves, decidedly "radical," that is, adherents of an ideology and outlook fundamentally at odds with the status quo, an outlook reflected, above all, in the liberal language of human rights and economic privatization (see, e.g., Judt 1988, pp. 191-195, and Scruton 1988a and 1988b). Finally, (5) the dominant outlook of the leaders of the Eastern European opposition, like that of their Third World counterparts, is strikingly "reactive," imitative,

and, as mentioned above, rather utopian -- in many ways, in fact, a simple inversion of the ideology of "real existing socialism." "With all the fuss and noise," Francois Furet (among others) has aptly noted, "not a single new idea has come out of Eastern Europe in 1989" (quoted in Dahrendorf 1990, p. 27). Garton Ash, who notes that "The ideas whose time has come are old, familiar, well tested ones," suggests that "the free market is the latest Central European utopia," "a cure for all ills, social and political as well as economic" (Garton Ash 1990, pp. 154, 152). The reason for this is probably quite simple: so-called "bourgeois" liberalism and free-market capitalism is appealing in Eastern Europe, especially although not exclusively to intellectuals, principally because, like Marxism-Leninism and the "Soviet model" in the Third World of the not-so-distant past, it seems to represent a viable alternative, at once practical and morally superior to a clearly insupportable status quo -- an alternative, moreover, that seems to have succeeded in what are regarded, with not a little wishful thinking, as similarly situated countries. Like Third World revolutionaries, moreover, the leaders of the Eastern European opposition tend to view the relative backwardness of their societies primarily if not exclusively as a result of a larger system of imperial domination and, consequently, believe that such backwardness can be overcome simply by switching geopolitical allegiances and "world systems," a determination reflected in calls for a "return to Europe."

Revolutionary mobilization in both the Second and Third Worlds is linked to the politics of hegemonic powers in yet another way. In the Third World, revolutionary change has been possible when colonial or neo-colonial powers at last grew weary of the high costs of empire, although this typically did not occur until after long and bloody wars of counterinsurgency aroused opposition within the metropolitan power's domestic population (cases include, among others, the French in Indochina and Algeria, the United States in South Vietnam, and the Portuguese in Africa). In Eastern Europe, similarly, a revolutionary breakthrough at last became possible when the Soviet Union grew weary of the high costs of its empire.¹² Neither Soviet forces in Eastern Europe nor (neo)colonial troops in the Third World, in other words, were militarily expelled; the decision to withdraw them came, rather, after the progressive attrition of their governments' political and economic capacity to deploy them (see Mack 1977, p. 177). As many analysts have noted, moreover, Gorbachev's reform policies at home and his abandonment of the "Brezhnev doctrine" abroad both demoralized conservative Communist leaders in Eastern Europe and invigorated their opponents inside as well as outside of the ruling parties. Communism in Eastern Europe, in other words, was delegitimated "from above and outside" as well as "from below." The increasingly clear understanding that oppositional activities

¹² On the transformation of the Soviet Union's Eastern European empire from asset to liability, see Bunce 1985 and 1989.

would be tolerated and perhaps even welcomed by the Soviet leadership only served to fuel popular oppositional movements in Eastern Europe through the course of 1989, producing what one observer has termed a "revolutionary bandwagon" as previously hidden or "falsified" political preferences could be openly expressed (see Kuran 1991, p. 36).

In summarizing this brief and necessarily schematic analysis of the similarities between Second and Third World revolutions, it bears reemphasizing that in the Second World no less than the Third, indiscriminately repressive and highly autonomous regimes supported by foreign powers have provided an unambiguous "common enemy" against which a broad, multi-class and patriotic opposition, infused by a reactively "radical" and quasi-utopian ideology, coalesced. Throughout Eastern Europe, Garton Ash has noted, "stress was laid on the self-conscious unity of intelligentsia, workers and peasants. Of course in part this unity was created by the common enemy. . . . [T]hey were all united by consciousness of the one great divide between the communist upper/ruling class, the nomenklatura, and all the rest" (Garton Ash 1990, p. 146). In Poland, for example, the representatives of the intelligentsia, workers, and peasants within Solidarity "identified themselves as simply 'the society,' spoleczenstwo, as one single 'us' against 'them' (oni)" (Garton Ash 1991, p. 50). In Czechoslovakia, similarly, during the crucial general strike of November 27, 1989,

The two main, often opposing, trends in Czechoslovak politics -- the intellectual "liberal" and the worker

"socialist" -- had joined in their disgust with the regime that had ruled for twenty years. Just as important, the demonstrations in Slovakia showed that the Czechs and Slovaks, the two nations of Czechoslovakia, often at odds with one another, had joined in opposition. (Brown 1991, p. 178.)

This sense of a broad, popular "us" pitted against an alien "them," I have suggested, has not only been articulated against state socialism in the Second World, but also against personalistic dictatorships and racially exclusionary colonialism in the Third World. I would propose, therefore, that it has been externally dependent and domestically autonomous authoritarian regimes which are strongly "fused" with economic institutions that have produced their own gravediggers -- not capitalism or socialism per se. What collapsed in Eastern Europe was not socialism, in other words, but a type of dependent state socialism -- just as what collapsed in the Third World has not been capitalism or even "backward" capitalism, but authoritarian modes of colonial or "crony" capitalism.

II. Differences: The Process of Revolution and the Question of Violence

Before turning to differences in the processes of Second and Third World revolutions, one similarity might be noted. As the previous section implies, the initial success of oppositional movements in Eastern Europe (culminating in the collapse of the old regimes), as in cases of successful revolution in the Third World, is best understood not as the handiwork of a "rising

class" so much as a multi-class, national or "societal" struggle against a commonly despised autonomous state. Of course, once the old regime has been toppled, all sorts of latent conflicts within the revolutionary coalition, including class conflicts and national antagonisms, may emerge in a more overt form (as is now in fact happening throughout the region), but the initial overthrow of the old order in Eastern Europe is not usefully understood, in my view, as the project of a determinant social class.¹³ Indeed, the great irony is that the "successful" completion of Eastern Europe's revolutions along their current trajectories will result in the dominance of a class, the national bourgeoisie, that as yet hardly exists.¹⁴

This similarity notwithstanding, there are at least two striking differences between the revolutionary process in Eastern Europe and that of most successful Third World revolutions: first, the spontaneous and peaceful nature of the strikes and demonstrations of 1988-89 and, second, the absence of counter-revolutionary violence. As most analysts have emphasized, the mass protests in Eastern Europe -- from the strike waves in Poland in 1988 to the events in Romania in December 1989 -- were relatively spontaneous and non-violent nature, especially so in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and, at least initially, Romania.

¹³ For an attempt to theorize the outcomes of multi-class revolutions, see Foran and Goodwin 1993 (forthcoming).

¹⁴ This is doubly ironic insofar as the earlier "revolutions from above and without" in the region were imposed in the name of the working class, a class which also had largely to be created.

By contrast, Third World revolutionary movements have typically been organized and led, usually over many years and even decades, by tightly knit vanguard parties and have relied heavily, although not exclusively, on a strategy of armed struggle.

What accounts for this difference? In my view, mass protests in Eastern Europe could only have been of a relatively spontaneous and peaceful nature given the way in which the highly penetrative and despotic states in the region impeded more organized and/or violent forms of collective action. Indeed, the administrative and military strength and penetrative capacities of the Eastern European regimes -- their tremendous "infrastructural" as well as "despotic" power, in Michael Mann's terms (Mann 1986, p. 113) -- sets them apart from most of the (in many ways similar) Third World states toppled by revolutionaries (see especially Csanadi 1990 and 1992 [forthcoming]). Moreover, despite the serious economic difficulties discussed above, the political crises in Eastern Europe in 1989 did not entail the disintegration of the coercive or administrative power of these states, as in many other revolutionary situations. Certainly, these states did not lose their monopolistic control of the means of violence nor did their means of coercion, surveillance, and control disintegrate -- only the ruling parties' political will to employ them foundered in 1989.

In the Eastern European context, then, there could be no question of establishing "liberated areas" or a situation of "dual power" by force of arms, as revolutionaries have typically

done in the Third World. This was not just a pragmatic decision based on limited organizational capacities (although it was certainly that), but also a result of historical learning based on previous confrontations with the state. The Hungarian revolution of 1956, for example, taught that a strategy of armed struggle would be suicidal. "In retrospect," a leading East German dissident has written,

I do not think that the Honecker regime could have been overthrown by an alternative and formal political party. It could only fall to this kind of [spontaneous] popular uprising. A more organised force would have had its head chopped off at once by the Stasi. (Reich 1990, p. 74.)

Only a very few institutions in Eastern Europe, moreover, notably the Catholic Church in Poland and the Lutheran Church in East Germany, could provide the free "public space" required for organized oppositional activities. Consequently, oppositional groups like Charter 77, Civic Forum, and Public Against Violence in Czechoslovakia, New Forum in East Germany, and the Democratic Forum and Free Democrats in Hungary were, in comparative terms, rather small and incoherent organizations that often brought together people with a wide variety of ideological and strategic viewpoints (note the preference for "forums").¹⁵ Even the Solidarity movement in Poland, Eastern Europe's best organized opposition, was worse than decimated by the martial law regime, losing roughly four-fifths of its membership. However

¹⁵ On the hectic and impromptu activities of Civic Forum, see Garton Ash (1990, pp. 78-130), who notes that its membership ranged "from the neo-Trotskyist Petr Uhl to the deeply conservative Catholic Vaclav Benda" (p. 86).

widespread, then, opposition to Communism was not well organized in much of Eastern Europe. "Civil societies" were emerging, but still quite weak.

It should also be noted that the largely peasant populations of the Third World often require, given their geographical dispersion and/or social atomization, the organization and leadership of (originally) urban-based parties if they are to engage in, or at least successfully sustain, oppositional movements on a national or super-local scale. This is a theme, for example, of numerous studies of the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions (see, e.g., Moore 1966, Ch. 4; Wolf 1969, Ch. 3-4; and Skocpol 1979, Ch. 3, 7). By contrast, the much more urban -- and urbane -- populations of Eastern Europe had been concentrated, homogenized, and educated, not to say politicized, by four decades of Communist rule. Accordingly, relatively little formal organization was needed to bring massive numbers of angry urban people into the streets or, more typically, into easily accessible central plazas.¹⁶ Indeed, there is more than a little irony in the fact that the large public spaces used or even created by the Communists for ritualized mass rallies would prove useful for their opponents.

But it also mattered, of course, that demonstrators were not being shot in the streets. A second major difference between

¹⁶ See Opp and Gern 1992. With the exception of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the revolutions of 1989-91 in the former Soviet bloc have been the only successful revolutions in history of a more or less exclusively urban character.

Second and Third World revolutions, in fact, has to do with the issue of state violence. Most Third World revolutions, it hardly needs emphasizing, have been characterized by a tremendous amount of bloodshed, whereas the Eastern European revolutions not only occurred peacefully for the most part (excepting Romania), but also did not give rise to violent counter-revolutionary movements. Leaving aside the case of Romania, which I will turn to later, there were two basic patterns of change in Eastern Europe in 1989: Where the opposition was comparatively well organized, as in Poland and Hungary, transitions from Communism were the result of negotiations between the regime and its opponents. Where, on the other hand, the opposition was comparatively weak (and the regime, accordingly, less disposed to change), as in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, Communists only capitulated after massive street demonstrations and strikes. Neither pattern, however, was characterized by significant counter-revolutionary violence.

The unusually -- indeed uniquely -- peaceful nature of revolutionary change in Eastern Europe is of course due in the first instance to the fact that the incumbent rulers there ultimately engaged in a full-scale retreat from power that allowed radical change to occur unimpededly, whereas most incumbents in the Third World have fought ferociously against revolutionary movements, usually after as well as before revolutionaries seized power. But in Eastern Europe, as Garton Ash notes, "the ruling elites, and their armed servants,

distinguished themselves by their comprehensive unreadiness to stand up in any way for the things in which they had so long claimed to believe" (Garton Ash 1990, p. 142). What exactly explains this curious fact? Why did Eastern Europe's Communist rulers capitulate so readily, for the most part, in 1989?

We still lack sufficient understanding of what occurred in Communist circles in 1989 to address this issue adequately (although see Bruszt and Stark 1992, Csanadi 1992 [forthcoming], and Tarkowski 1992 [forthcoming]), but some combination of the following six factors seems to explain, for any particular country, the relatively peaceful nature of the Eastern European revolutions:

(1) Of first importance, of course, is the "Gorbachev factor." As mentioned above, the Soviet leadership's weariness of empire provided a necessary if not sufficient condition for revolutionary change. Gorbachev's abandonment of the Brezhnev doctrine meant that "external guarantees of political order were effectively removed by the dominant regional power" (Ekiert 1990, p. 2). Even more, Gorbachev actively encouraged Eastern Europe's Communist rulers to reform. ("Life itself punishes those who delay," he pronounced on his visit to the fortieth-anniversary celebrations of the GDR on October 7.) Gorbachev's reformism took on added significance given the structure of the Warsaw Pact, which left little control over the region's armies to national Communist parties (a result, ironically, of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968). The result, Garton Ash

wittily concludes, was that "Throughout East Central Europe, the people at last derived some benefit from their ruling elites' chronic dependency on the Soviet Union" (Garton Ash 1990, p. 141). (For this same reason, those elites in the region that were least dependent on the Soviets -- for example, in Romania, Serbia, and Albania -- proved more willing to employ coercion against their opponents.) Gorbachev, in short, created the sort of "permissive world context" for revolutionary change that has also been important in the Third World (see Goldfrank 1979 and Foran and Goodwin 1993 [forthcoming]).

(2) Secondly, some Communists undoubtedly perceived liberalization and open elections not as forces that would sweep them away, but as elements of a purely strategic retreat that was necessary -- and not for the first time -- in order to hold on to their power and privileges in the long run (see Tarkowski 1992 [forthcoming]). In Poland, for example, Communists -- as well as Solidarity -- believed that they could win at least sufficient support in contested elections to form or enter into a coalition government. By thus sharing democratically legitimated power -- and, thereby, responsibility for economic austerity -- they seem to have calculated that they could begin to repair their reputations, at least relative to that of their opponents. Of course, these calculations proved overly optimistic, to say the least -- an indication of how poor isolated Communist regimes had become at comprehending popular sentiment -- but they help us understand why at least some Communists behaved as they did.

Moreover, where opposition forces were exceptionally weak -- for example, in Bulgaria and Albania -- this strategy was actually successful, at least initially (see Bruszt and Stark 1992).

Communist leaders, however, profoundly underestimated the breadth of the opposition in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. Miroslav Stepan, former head of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia, later noted that "We were sure that the so-called opposition did not matter, that they hadn't found a 'Czech Walesa'" (Schmemmann 1990). Of course, Marxist-Leninists (and not a few social scientists) generally have difficulty imagining effective mass movements in the absence of strong organization and leadership (see Piven and Cloward 1991).

(3) It has also been suggested that Communist leaders no longer believed in 1989 in their own moral right to rule, in part because of the "yawning gap" between reality and the Marxist-Leninist ideology that such leaders at least ritualistically upheld (Burawoy and Lukacs 1992, p. 148). Garton Ash, who refers to this as the "Tocqueville" factor, argues that this was "perhaps the ultimately decisive factor" in the Communists' decision not to suppress violently the revolution "from below" (Garton Ash 1990, p. 141). In fact, specialists on "post-Stalinist" Eastern Europe have long noted "the identity crisis and deradicalization of the communist parties, the disintegration of the official political discourse, and the transition from legitimation claims based on Marxist-Leninist ideology to ones based on a pseudo-realpolitik with strong nationalist

underpinnings" (Ekiert 1990, p. 2; see also Walicki 1991). In this view, Communists had abandoned any ideological, not to say moral, rationale for their rule long before 1989; what was new in 1989 was that the "realist" rationale for Communist domination, thanks to Gorbachev, was also undermined. By 1989, moreover, the percentage of opportunists and technocrats as opposed to "true believers" was undoubtedly quite high within Communist ranks, especially in the Czechoslovak and East German parties. "[T]he professionalization of the bureaucratic class and the rise of an educated elite meant less tolerance for the patent contradictions between ideology and reality" (Burawoy and Lukacs 1992, p. 148).

(4) Many if not most Communist leaders, furthermore, also probably saw no practical alternative to negotiation and/or capitulation in 1989. Repression of strikes and demonstrations or electoral fraud, that is, does not seem to have been perceived by most Communists as feasible, given the startling breadth of the opposition.¹⁷ Economic stagnation meant that intellectuals and workers could no longer be played off against one another, as was often possible in the past. Moreover, the loyalty of the armed forces to Communist rule, as Nicolae Ceausescu was to discover in December, could by no means be taken for granted, particularly if they were asked to attack huge crowds -- and

¹⁷ In addition, some Communists, in Poland, Hungary, and Romania, for example, seem to have perceived in the events of 1989 as an opportunity to act in effect as "patriots" vis-a-vis the Soviet Union and/or local "hardliners." This was not a small consideration in Hungary, for instance, given the infestation of reformers within the ranks of the Communist party.

without, moreover, any Soviet support.¹⁸ Charles Gati has suggested that the effectiveness of Eastern European security forces "in the face of large-scale riots and disturbances has been and is still limited. On their own, or even in combination with the so-called 'worker's militias,' their numbers were, and probably remain, insufficient to contain or suppress major popular uprisings" (Gati 1990, p. 145; emphasis in original). Indeed, it was largely because of the unreliability of Eastern European armies that the Soviets felt compelled to police the region with more than 500,000 troops in the first place (Gati 1990, Ch. 5).¹⁹

(5) It should also be remembered that Eastern Europe's ruling elites, unlike elites in other revolutionary situations, were not physically threatened by their political opponents. This opposition was renowned, after all, for its civility and its "self-limiting" and even "antipolitical" aspirations. Moreover, the boundaries between the Communist parties and their opponents were rather permeable in some cases; the opposition in Poland and Hungary, in particular, included many ex-party people. And not least, of course, the opposition (unlike most revolutionary

¹⁸ That Ceausescu had created a privileged security apparatus that was resented by the regular army was also an important factor behind its defection (see below).

¹⁹ Gati points out that, inter alia, some East German army units refused to leave their barracks during the protests of 1953, the Hungarian army ultimately refused to defend the old Stalinist regime in 1956, and the majority of Czechoslovak officers under age 30 resigned after the Soviet invasion of 1968 (Gati 1990, pp. 143-144).

movements in the Third World) was unarmed. The corporate integrity of the armed forces and state administration, therefore, was not immediately threatened by the opposition in a way that might have provoked a violent backlash.²⁰

(6) A final relevant factor for understanding the full-scale Communist capitulation in 1989 is the so-called "embourgeoisement" or "self-privatization" of the Communist elite during the late 1980s:

Instead of trying to bring reality into conformity with ideology, it has . . . sought to reconstitute itself under a new ideology which embraces free enterprise rather than state regulation, the market rather than the plan. Instead of trying to make socialism work, instead of trying to give socialist claims a material basis, it turned to a new ideology. (Burawoy and Lukacs 1992, p. 148.)

Many educated and opportunistic party members, in fact, particularly younger technocrats and professionals, did not view reform, and the transition to a private, market economy in particular, as a threat to their careers but, on the contrary, as a way of improving their income and status. In Czechoslovakia, in fact, more than a hundred joint production ventures with Western companies were underway by mid-1986 -- the permitted foreign share of equity having been raised from 40 to 49 percent (Brown 1991, p. 157). In Poland, "privatization from above" was begun in 1987, two years before the fall of the Communist government (Staniszki 1991, p. 128). Consequently, the reactive

²⁰ In fact, only a handful of Communist officials and functionaries have been arrested thus far throughout the whole of Eastern Europe, and only Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu have been executed -- and they, of course, under exceptional circumstances.

"radicalization" of the opposition in Eastern Europe -- which, ironically, amounted to a parallel process of embourgeoisement -- took on added significance: the opposition's gradual adoption of an unalloyed pro-capitalist ideology and concomitant abandonment of such earlier ideals as "socialism with a human face," market socialism, and workers' self-management -- the last "the pivotal component" of the Solidarity movement's programme only a decade ago (Fields 1991, p. 106; see also Mason 1989, pp. 54-55, and Ost 1989) -- served to undermine whatever opposition that technocrats and professionals within the nomenklatura might otherwise have mounted against "radical" change.

This factor, moreover, clearly distinguishes Eastern Europe's Communist rulers (or, at least, a substantial fraction thereof) from other elites that have confronted revolutionary movements, in the Third World and elsewhere. Revolutions, after all, have by their very nature threatened the entire "way of life" (economic as well as political) -- if not the very lives -- of ruling and privileged elites; hence the unmitigated violence with which most such elites have greeted revolutionary movements. But if ruling elites, or at least powerful segments thereof, can actually expect to thrive under radically altered circumstances, then the rationale for counter-revolutionary violence disappears. In the Eastern European context, as long as the nomenklatura's exploitation of state resources and of their own technical knowledge was strictly dependent on the retention of political authority -- as long, in other words, as ownership and rulership

were fused and collectivized -- then violent opposition to democratic change could be expected to follow. But once those resources and skills were privatized and made marketable, a non-violent transition to capitalism became feasible. Elemer Hankiss notes that when the nomenklatura in Hungary discovered in the late 1980s "the possibility of transferring their power into a new and more efficient socio-economic system and of becoming part of an emerging new and legitimate ruling class or grande bourgeoisie, they lost their interest in keeping the Communist Party as their instrument of power and protection" (Hankiss 1990, p. 31). "Making owners of the nomenklatura," as Jadwiga Staniszkis puts it, "may have . . . helped to eliminate the nomenklatura as a political mechanism" (Staniszkis 1991, p. 139). In short, if the long-term fusion of owners and rulers in Eastern Europe served to nationalize and radicalize dissent and opposition, then the last-minute disengagement of economic and political authority, however partial, helped to ensure (along, of course, with the Soviet disengagement from the region) that radical change would occur peacefully. This is not to say that post-Communist economies in Eastern Europe will be owned and managed primarily by ex-Communists, but that such economies are likely to provide a relatively "soft landing" for the region's former rulers.

III. Romanian "Exceptionalism": The Collapse of Neopatrimonial Socialism

The case of Romania presents something of a paradox: on the one hand, the process of change there was apparently the most "revolutionary" among the Eastern European cases, characterized as it was by the brief but bloody confrontation between the population, soon joined by the army, and the Ceausescu regime. Indeed, in Romania for the first time in history a "Communist" regime was apparently successfully overthrown through force of arms and the Communist Party itself (unlike those elsewhere in the region) outlawed. On the other hand, the immediate outcome of the events of December 1989 was the least revolutionary among the Eastern European cases characterized by popular revolt, since those events produced a government dominated by people with more or less strong ties to the Romanian Communist Party (RCP); hence, the Romanian "revolution" did not lead to an unambiguous break with the past.²¹ The "revolutionary" process in Romania is certainly familiar to students of Third World revolutions. This should not be surprising, since the Ceausescu regime -- which has been dubbed a case of "dynastic socialism" (Georgescu 1988) or "socialism in one family" (de Flers 1984) -- was not by any means a typical Communist party-state, but more nearly a neo-patrimonial, personalist dictatorship, a type of regime, I have noted, that has proven especially vulnerable to revolutionary

²¹ My understanding of the events of 1989 in Romania is based generally, in addition to the sources cited, on Campeanu 1991, Codrescu 1991, Ramesh 1991, and Verdery and Kligman 1992.

overthrow in the Third World.²² However, it must be said that the events in Romania in December 1989 bear less resemblance to the Mexican, Cuban, Iranian, or Nicaraguan revolutions against neopatrimonial rule than to the events in Haiti in 1986 that resulted in the flight of the dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, but not in a genuine social revolution. Like Haiti, in fact, Romania has experienced something of a "half-way" or "aborted" revolution (see Fischer 1990 and Gilberg 1990). The spontaneous protests of December (like earlier protests in Haiti) were sufficiently widespread to cause the army's defection, and thus assure the dictator's downfall, but they were not strong enough nor sufficiently well organized, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, to thrust their own representatives into positions of power. Instead, state power was reconsolidated by dissident (and not-so-dissident) members of the RCP and the national army grouped into the so-called National Salvation Front, an entity that did have the solidarity and connections, not to mention the guns, to take power. The result is a "neo-Communist" regime, as its opponents have labelled it, just as the Duvalier regime in Haiti was followed by a "neo-Duvalierist" regime.²³

²² See Goldstone 1986, Goodwin and Skocpol 1989, and Wickham-Crowley 1992, Ch. 11, on these vulnerabilities; on Romania's "socialist patrimonialism," see Linden 1986, Georgescu 1988, Tismaneanu 1989, and Fischer 1990.

²³ The National Salvation Front is not "neo-Communist" because it is attempting to retain all the old Stalinist institutions; as Verdery and Kligman (1992) emphasize, this is not in fact the case (among other things, the Front has announced plans to privatize the economy). However, the regime may accurately be termed "neo-Communist" because of the background

What accounts for this "exceptional" pattern of change in Romania in 1989? The opposition in Romania was exceptionally weak, comparatively speaking, due to the extraordinary penetration and disorganization of civil society by Ceausescu's secret police, the Securitate, which was essentially his "praetorian guard."²⁴ (Duvalier's Tontons Macoute played a similar role in Haiti.) The former head of the Securitate has claimed that there were ten million hidden microphones in Romania (among a population of 23 million), and it was widely believed, whether true or not, that one in three Romanians collaborated with the Securitate (Codrescu 1991, pp. 21, 43). The anti-Ceausescu protests in December, consequently, were of a highly spontaneous nature indeed; ironically, in fact, the first protest in Bucharest actually began during a rally called by Ceausescu himself in order to denounce earlier protests in Timisoara. In any event, there existed no pre-existing oppositional group in Romania like Solidarity or Charter 77 that could place itself at the head of the protests.

The eventual refusal of the regular army to suppress the demonstrations can be partly understood as a consequence of its alienation from Ceausescu due to the dictator's coddling of the

(and certain mentalities) of its principal leaders.

²⁴ The membership of one Romanian opposition group that claims to have been founded before Ceausescu's fall, the so-called "Antitotalitarian Forum," consisted of three families! According to its leader, "If we had taken anybody else in, it would have exposed the group to infiltration by the Securitate" (see Echikson 1990, p. 51).

Securitate and his use of it to spy on and divide the army (a typical ploy of neo-patrimonial regimes):

Having starved the armed forces of resources and built up the secret police as the real guardians of the regime, the military was made to dig ditches as cheap labor. It was the grand risk of the Ceausescu clan that they would not have to call on the army, because if they ever did, the leadership made it almost certain that the troops would not defend them. (Segal and Phipps 1990, p. 965.)

Ceausescu's highly personalistic and nepotistic rule also antagonized members of the RCP and completely marginalized would-be party reformers. As Vladimir Tismaneanu has noted, the party "remained the only cohesive social stratum" that could possibly "oppose Ceausescu's plans to turn Romania into a Third World dictatorship. This is the main reason why the General Secretary . . . resorted to permanent rotation of cadres, to that perpetual game of musical chairs which makes everyone insecure and fearful" (Tismaneanu 1989, p. 374).

Not surprisingly, some RCP members and army officers who became alienated from the regime began plotting to replace Ceausescu, allegedly with Soviet knowledge. Ultimately, on the back of the spontaneous protests, they succeeded. The National Salvation Front also easily won the first "free" elections of May 1990, in large part because they were held too quickly for other parties to organize effectively and because the Front controlled access to television (Verdery and Kligman 1992, p. 123). Ironically, then, the most "revolutionary" events of 1989 thrust into power the least revolutionary and most compromised leadership. Nevertheless, the Romanian case also demonstrates as

well as any other in Eastern Europe how state-elite configurations shaped the possibilities for (and limitations of) radical change "from below."

Conclusion

In Eastern Europe during 1989, as before and elsewhere in history, a conjuncture of widespread protest "from below" and the inability and/or unwillingness of the state to suppress such protest "from above" -- given, crucially, the absence of intervention by an external power -- resulted in revolution, thrusting formerly marginal "radical" dissidents into positions of political power.²⁵ I have argued that the revolutions "from below" in these dependent state socialist societies, like those that have occurred in dependent capitalist societies, cannot be understood without reference to the elites and states that protesters confronted. In Eastern Europe, one simply cannot grasp the nature of oppositional movements, nor why they triumphed with so little bloodshed in 1989, without understanding how those oppositions and their paths to power were structured by the very regimes they sought to displace. More specifically, I have argued that Eastern Europe's Communist regimes -- like certain regimes in the Third World -- both unintentionally

²⁵ Of course, whether Eastern Europe's new leaders will prove any more capable than revolutionaries elsewhere of reshaping their countries in the ways they desire remains to be seen. See, e.g., Foran and Goodwin 1993 (forthcoming).

"nationalized" grievances that might otherwise have remained localized and diffuse and unwittingly fostered the hegemony of precisely those oppositional leaderships that were committed to a radical, fundamental restructuring of the state and society. The success of "radical" oppositional movements in both the Second and Third Worlds has not been a consequence, therefore, of certain specifiable property or class relationships or socioeconomic contexts per se, so much as a result of certain types of political regimes that are domestically autonomous, internationally dependent, and substantially entwined with economic authority. More accurately, then, revolutionaries fare best where it is essentially impossible to speak of class structure or socioeconomic conditions without simultaneously describing a structure of political authority. Rebels prosper where owners and rulers collude.

Acknowledgments

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 12th Annual Albany Conference, "Making History from Above and Below: Elite and Popular Perspectives on Political Sociology," sponsored by the Sociology Department, State University of New York, Albany, April 24-25, 1992. This earlier version, in turn, drew extensively on a paper co-authored by Valerie Bunce (Department of Government, Cornell University) that was presented at the 1991 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, August 29-September 1, 1991, and at the Proseminar on State Formation and Collective Action at the New School for Social Research in New York City. For their queries and complaints about these earlier papers, not all of which I have been able to address, I would especially like to thank Benedict Anderson, Richard Bense, Nancy Bermeo, Craig Calhoun, John Foran, Jack Goldstone, Mike Hanagan, Jim Jasper, Sadrul Khan, Richard Lachmann, Marifeli Perez-Stable, Michael Schwartz, Charles Tilly, and Mayer Zald. My greatest debt is to Valerie Bunce, without whose help this paper could not have been written.

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