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Democratization in Central and Eastern Europe and the Minority Issues[1]

Abstract: The aim of this article is to present some ramifications of the democratization processes in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) since 1989. The analysis concentrates on relations between the new dominant groups and cultural (mostly national and religious) minorities. The author outlines the concepts of democracy under conditions of cultural pluralism. He concentrates on similarities and differences between three levels of relations between the dominant groups and minorities: "institutional," "semi-institutional," and "non-institutional." CEE is not homogenous neither among the countries nor among these spheres. Moreover, relations between dominant groups and minorities do not seem to be much more complicated than in some (actually many) Western countries. However, it seems to be easier in CEE to express oneself on political and cultural maters without fear of governmental reprisal than without fear of societal reprisal.

Keywords: democracy, systemic transformation, Central and Eastern Europe, cultural minorities, institution, cultural and political domination.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to discuss some aspects of the post-1989 democratization processes in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).[2] The paper will concentrate on the relations between, on the one hand, the new politically and culturally dominant groups which have emerged or become strengthened in the region since 1989 and, on the other hand, various cultural minorities. I shall show similarities and differences between three levels of these relations, which will be called here: institutional, semi-institutional, and the level of collective behaviour.

In this way of labelling, I shall slightly deviate, in my opinion, from the standard usage of the term "institution" in the current practice of social sciences: sociology,

[1] This paper is a much broader version of my short article to be published shortly in England. It draws partly on ideas presented in English in my "Democratization and Cultural Minorities: The Polish Case," *East European Quarterly* XXV, 4, 1992, pp. 463–482. Polish examples not included in the present paper can be found in the above mentioned publication. New ideas and materials devoted to CEE were discussed during a seminar at Institut für Soziologie—Osteuropa-Institut of the Freie Universität Berlin in April 2007. I appreciate for all comments made by participants as well as for the opportunity to do research in the FU-Berlin's libraries. Foundation for Polish Science (Mistrz Programme—Academic Grants for Professors) kindly supported this research.

[2] I shall also mention some consequences of the Eastern Enlargement (Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Hungary and Slovenia) of the European Union (1 May 2004) and of the acceptance by the EU of Bulgaria and Romania on 1 January 2007, for the "cultural democratization" of individual CEE countries.

social and cultural anthropology, and economics. What dominates, in my opinion, in this general field, is a very broad, post-Durkheimian and post-Parsonian concept of institutions (Hodgson 1994: 58–76) hardly distinguishing them from any other relatively permanent, regular, patterned ways of thought or action, which impose the form upon activities of people. I would prefer a much more restricted post-Goffmanian (in Erving Goffman's analysis of total institutions, for instance asylums) and post-Foucaultian (in Michel Foucault's analysis of *panopticon*, prisons or mental hospitals) concept. This second way of understanding institution stresses those forms of social organization which are founded on coercion, subordination, disciplining and formal rules.

In my own analysis of the institutional aspect of social life I shall also refer to neo-institutionalism in the social sciences. For Elinor Ostrom (1991: 51) institutions are "the sets of working rules that are used to determine who is eligible to make decisions in some arena, what actions are allowed or constrained, what aggregation rules will be used, what procedures must be followed, what information must or must not be provided, and what payoffs will be assigned to individuals dependent on their actions." These rules are not only formal, but in many cases informal. Ostrom's "operational rules" constitute for me the collective behaviour and attitudes level of analysis. For Ostrom, these rules directly affect the day-to-day decisions made by actors concerning when, where and how to withdraw resources, who should monitor the actions of others and how, what information must be exchanged or withheld, what rewards or sanctions will be assigned to different combinations of actions and outcomes. Her "collective-choice rules" are close to my semi-institutional level of analysis. They affect indirectly "operational choices." They are used by actors who make policies about how the common resources should be managed. Ostrom's (1991: 52–53) "constitutional-choice rules," on my institutional level of analysis, determine who is eligible to craft the collective-choice rules. In many empirical cases all these levels of analysis are closely connected with each other.

At least few sentences should be devoted to methodology of this paper. First, I shall limit the analysis to the CEE nation-states which are "unitarian" now, some of them being the succession states of the former federations, like the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Therefore, the significant process of devolution of these multinational states due to the democratic and nationalistic forces, as well as to wars and other dramatic and even tragic developments will be neglected here. Second, as a consequence of the fact that it is hardly possible to collect representative material from the whole post-Communist CEE, what I am presenting in due course can be considered only as an indication that some processes and phenomena have taken place (and have been considered by competent scholars, Western and Eastern, as very important) and not that I have discovered some clear regularities, visible to the same extent and with the same strength throughout the region. Third, due to the research material available, many of my examples will deal with religious and para-religious minorities. Religious minorities are obviously cultural groups, and, moreover, in my opinion religion is one of the most crucial foundations of ethnicity (Gordon 1964; Mitchel 2006). Religion is a particularly important criterion of cultural

diversification of CEE societies, closely related to national diversification. Fourth, I do not distinguish in this paper between the national and ethnic minorities. Fifth, I am trying to pay a lot of attention to research results published by scholars coming from—and working in—the region I am discussing here.

In this paper, I shall sometimes, especially in the last, concluding section, refer to similarities and differences between the Eastern and Western European societies regarding the situation of cultural minorities.

Democracy and Democratization in Times of Post-Communist Transition[3]

Democracy, in its simple sense, is a form of government in which it is recognized that ultimate authority belongs to the people; the people have the right to participate in the decision-making process and to appoint and dismiss those who rule. For Robert A. Dahl (1971; 1989), a classic of modern theory of democracy, the key and simplest characteristic of democracy is the "continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals."

Democracy has been known and appreciated in Western civilization for more than two thousand years, but has been rarely practiced. No wonder. In order to have a stable democratic government in the modern sense of the term, a society has to meet many important prerequisites, like an advanced economic development; acceptance of institutional checks on the power of the state; absence of major cleavages; tolerance of dissent; access of citizens to information, and acceptance of the diffusion of power. This is rarely the case. Following again Dahl, one could say that democracy has two important dimensions: the right of citizens to participate in the public life and the right of public contestation of the government. These two dimensions can vary somewhat independently. Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset (1990: 6–7) broaden the Dahl's idea of political democracy. For them, "democracy (or what Robert Dahl terms polyarchy)—denotes a system of government that meets three essential conditions: meaningful and extensive *competition* among individuals and organized groups (especially political parties) for all effective positions of government power, at regular intervals and excluding the use of force; a 'highly inclusive' level of *political participation* in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular and fair elections, such that no major (adult) social group is excluded; and a level of *civil and political liberties*—freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations—sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation." The authors note that countries which satisfy these criteria do so to different degrees and that the boundary between democratic and undemocratic regimes is sometimes blurred and imperfect. Nevertheless I shall follow these ideas in my own analysis. Moreover, I share the views that the "absence of provisions for devolution and decentralization of power, especially in the context

[3] I shall not refer in this paper to otherwise very important general and philosophical problems of modern theory of democracy, for instance to the issue of deliberative democracy, see, e. g., Joseph M. Bessette (1994).

of ethnoregional disparities, feeds ethnic insecurity, violent conflict, and even secessionist pressures. These, in turn, are poisonous to democracy"(Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1990: 29). Decentralization of power is important, according to these authors, since centralization tends to undermine democracy and therefore constitutes one of the obstacles to democratization. I will return to this crucial question.

Both democracy and democratization have a number of meanings. I am interested here only in the political process, but first of all in its cultural aspects. Cultural democracy is, for the purpose of this paper, a social situation in which cultural values and norms of the majority of population are being publicly accepted and expressed. However, the "cultural market" is not limited to majority's values and norms; there is freedom of expression of various cultural ideas, freedom to form and join cultural organizations of various kinds and to freely participate in them.

If one agrees with Dahl and his followers that the right of public contention is a crucial aspect of political democracy, one may apply a similar rule to cultural democracy. Cultural democracy, in the full sense of the word, would mean not only the right of cultural minorities to express freely and publicly their own beliefs and values, but also the meaningful and extensive cultural *competition* among individuals and organized groups.

Democratization will be understood here as a process of transition from an undemocratic (authoritarian, totalitarian) to a more democratic system. The particular results of this process are usually difficult to predict. Results depend on history, class structure, ethnic composition, and perhaps other factors. Analysis of the democratization processes in other regions shows this very clearly.[4] The situation in post-Communist CEE seems to be, however, specific in at least two respects. First, their transition included the economic transformation from the relatively egalitarian system of state-directed production and distribution into market economy and increasing inequality. Second is synchronization of democratization and the achieving of the national sovereignty, or identification of nationalism and democratization.[5] To these factors, one should add "Europeanization" and globalization. As a consequence, one could create many different models of the democratization process.

Political democratization means, by definition, that the ruling group who does not represent the majority of the population, loses the monopoly of power. It does not necessarily imply its total elimination from the political scene. Its members retain their citizenship rights. Cultural democratization is a process of transition from cultural monopoly executed by a previously dominant group, in which process the values of majority of population are becoming more and more overtly and publicly appreciated, but without the old and new minorities having to completely withdraw from the public scene.

Some authors, like John S. Dryzek and Leslie Templeman Holmes (2002: 4–12), believe that at the beginning of the 21st century we should no longer talk about the

[4] See, e.g. *Transition from Authoritarian Rule. Latin America*, edited by Guillermo O'Donnell, Phillippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (1986) and other books authored or edited by O'Donnell and Schmitter under the general title *Transition from Authoritarian Rule*.

[5] See Linz and Stepan (1996), also Erika Harris-Grossbergerova (1999).

democratization process in post-Communist CEE as something still to be achieved. Using a number of tests, they state that CEE countries are fully-fledged democracies if we use as models real Western nation-states, and not some sort of ideal. Therefore, we should stop worrying about transition to democracy and start worrying about consolidation of democracy.

And, in fact, many scholars do worry about this consolidation. The process of "democratic deepening" in CEE, or democracy as an "unfinished business" in post-Communist world, is still an important research problem. A good example is the periodical *East European Politics and Societies*, and in particular its Special Issue 21, 1, 2007.[6] In June 2007, the Council of Europe's "Freedom House" released its report "Nations in Transit 2007. Governance Crisis in Central Europe. Is the Democratic Consensus Eroding?" Among eight European Union member-states accepted in 2004 ("EU-8") none's "Democratic Score" improved since 2006. The Czech Republic, Latvia and Estonia stayed at the same level and Hungary's, Lithuania's, Poland's, Slovakia's and Slovenia's score worsened. Bulgaria's and Romania's score improved. These two latter countries were still on the waiting list at the time of evaluation, to be accepted by the EU in 2007. The highest "Democratic Score" was that of Slovenia, the lowest among "EU-8" was Poland's.[7]

It is very difficult to define the point at which the consolidation stage has been completed. Some say—according to Dryzek and Holmes (2002: 8)—that consolidation is achieved when there are no longer major debates about the rules, but only under them, others are of the opinion that it is completed when the new system has become "the only game in town." However, watching the developments in CEE, I accept the opinion of Dryzek and Holmes that "democracy is an ongoing interactive process, rather than some clearly defined end goal." I also accept the view that we should stop worrying about democracy in CEE only if we accept the minimalist or electoralist model of democracy in the sense given by Joseph Schumpeter (1942).

In this minimalist sense, realistic democracy is the electoral struggle between competing political elites, with apathetic but supportive masses, accepting voting as the limit of participation (Dryzek and Holmes 2002: 7–8). This kind of model is called (and criticized) by Fareed Zakaria (1997) as "illiberal democracy" and by Guillermo O'Donnell (1994) as "delegative democracy." Democracy, even if consolidated, can in some future time break down and there is not only one type of consolidated democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996: 5–15). I believe with all of these authors that we should cherish democracy as long as we have it, because it is a very vulnerable system.

In one of the previous paragraphs I have mentioned opinions about the significance of decentralization for democracy. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996: 33–34) in their discussion of democratization and consolidation of democracy in multinational states, go even further. They stress the need to explore a variety of non-majoritarian, nonplebiscitarian formulas. They mean equal citizenship for all, various procedures and devices of "consociational democracy," and in particular acceptance

[6] See, for instance, Agnieszka Paczynska (2005), Grzegorz Ekiert, Jan Kubik and Milada Anna Vachudova (2007), Susan Rose-Ackerman (2007), Fabrizio Coricelli (2007), Anna Grzymała-Busse (2007).

[7] See: www.freedomhouse.hu, 30 July 2007.

for some forms of collective rights, territorial and non-territorial (institutional) autonomy.

We should be cautious, though, with the enthusiasm for decentralisation, autonomy and strengthening of divisions in culturally plural societies. Robert Dahl was warning that any system is in peril if it becomes polarized into several highly antagonistic groups; that sub-cultural pluralism (mostly of an ethnic and religious character) often places a dangerous strain on the tolerance and mutual security required for a system of public contention. One example of institutional cultural and political pluralism in CEE is the organization of ethnic parties. Sometimes they are accepted by state constitutions, sometimes, if formally not accepted, they are non-ethnic "in theory" and label, but ethnic in practice. In the opinion of many scholars, the ethnic party system rather reinforces social cleavages than bridges them. According to this view, the voluntary-associational parties found in most of Western liberal democracies tend to be inclusive in their membership and attempt to represent interests of a number of different segments of society. The inter-party competition focuses in this situation on the undecided voters located in the ideological centre. This moderates the party positions. In an ethnic party system, ascriptively-defined party membership precludes vote transfers by "floating voters." More and more insurgent and radical ethnic parties push the dominant political parties to the flanks, if not to the extremes. Flanking may be destructive to democracy, hampers the ability of a democratic regime to consolidate itself (Hislope 1997), may stimulate ethnic conflict.

It seems that the type of representational arrangement in politics is a very important (even if not decisive) factor influencing this conflict. John Ishiyama shows, for instance, an important difference between political systems of post-1989 Latvia and Estonia. Latvia employed in the electoral law a single-member districts with a majority formula and two ballots. Estonia employed a variation of proportional representation system. Latvia adopted a very restricted "ethnic citizenship" law and Estonia—a much more loose "political citizenship" law. As a consequence, the political representation of minorities (mostly ethnic Russians) is much higher in Estonia and the level of ethnic conflicts (when they are not stimulated by outside powers) seems to be much lower.[8] Other scholars, based on the developments in Spain, Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, show that the sequence of elections (local and national) can have an impact on the construction or dissolving identities, and ethnically defined rifts (Linz and Stepan 1996: 124; Mueller and Pickel 2003: 8).

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[8] See, e.g., John Ishiyama (1999: 251 252). Estonian scholars are also of the opinion that it "is possible to define the current situation in Estonia as the first stage of the integration process." Estonian citizenship became a very important asset to many local Russians. It seems to them that the Estonian Russians emerge as a new ethnic group. See: Aksel Kirch, Mait Talts and Tarmo Tuisk (2004: 35, 42–43). This is not to say that the ethnic conflict does not exist in Estonia. Sometimes it is highly visible and dangerous, mostly due to the involvement of the Russian Federation. Ethnic tensions in Tallinn in May 2007 were a very good example of continuous problems.

Cultural Domination and Minority Situation

In this paper, I shall analyse the post-1989 situation of cultural minorities in CEE during the painful and complicated process of political democratization. What is a "minority group," as understood in this paper? I shall follow the Louis Wirth's (1945: 347) classic definition. It refers to the minority as "a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination."

There are a number of complications of the minority status. Let me mention some. Characteristics, upon which minority status is based, are socially defined and dynamic. Minority groups, when confronted with assimilation by a stronger social environment, may seek an unequal treatment in the form of institutional protection of their specific features (for instances of their language). This protection is often considered a "positive" or "reverse" discrimination and may result in a backlash on the part of other group(s). Minority groups are afforded unequal treatment because they lack the power to negate or counteract that treatment. Minority status is often relative—the same group may be a minority in one context but a demographic majority and a dominant group in another. There may be significant differences regarding the situation of a given group between the perspective of the minority group itself on the one hand, the perspective of the dominant group on the other hand, and finally the perspective of the "impartial observers." Minority denotes usually a group (and not individual) status and thus people cannot voluntarily and easily remove themselves from their minority position. The sociological meaning of minority is not the same as the mathematical definition (Marger 1991).

The existence of minority groups implies a counterpart, sometimes called a "majority group." Following many scholars, I shall refrain from using the term "majority" as a simple and symmetrical opposition to "minority," understood as a collectivity having sociological and not only numerical characteristics. The "dominant group," the real sociological and anthropological counterpart of sociologically understood "minorities," does not have to be (and in many situations is not) a numerical majority. In this paper, therefore, the term "majority" will be used only in the mentioned above numerical sense, otherwise, in sociological and not demographical contexts, the term "dominant group" will be applied. By minorities, the defined above suppressed groups will be understood, regardless of the numerical proportions.

Central and Eastern Europe and Its Democratization

Several common features seem to distinguish generalized CEE from generalized Western Europe.[9] The most important of these features are: a) political dependency

[9] A very good account of social, economic and ethnic problems in pre-1989 Europe can be found in Norman Davies (1996), and Lonnie R. Johnson (1996). In the following three paragraphs I shall partly draw upon Mike F. Keen and Janusz Mucha (1994: 2–4).

and a resulting delay in the development of indigenous political structures, b) economic underdevelopment and the long maintenance of an agrarian economy along with its peasant class, a late transition from feudalism to capitalism and industrialism, c) a relatively tardy codification of national languages, d) a delayed sense of national identity among the lower classes, e) a persistent sense of religious identity and the religious tensions that have often accompanied it, f) between 1948 and 1989, the dominance of the Communist system, g) after World War II, labour immigration significantly changed the ethnic composition of Western Europe which was not true in CEE.

Four major political powers dominated the region at one time or another throughout its history: Germany, Russia, Austria and the Turkish Ottoman Empire. Viewed in terms of its religious structure, the region is a mosaic of six denominations: Roman Catholicism, Uniate Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodoxy, Islam and Judaism.

As one of results of the above mentioned long lasting and strong processes of domination, the ethnic composition of individual CEE countries is complicated, with large minorities originating from the former metropolises. Let us consider some examples. The ethnic Russians constitute nearly 9% of Lithuania's population, 13% of Moldova's population, 22% of Ukraine's population, 30% of Estonia's population, and 34% of Latvia's population. Not surprisingly, this concentration of Russians has a significant effect on the relations between the post-Soviet successor states and Russia, as well as on the ethnic or national aspect of the post-1989 democratization processes in these countries. In the former Yugoslavia, Serbs constitute 14% of Croatia's population, and in some areas nearly 100%. Because of past shifts in borders and history of political domination, Hungarians (highly concentrated in the region of Transylvania) constitute about 7% of the population of Romania. Hungarians also make up 11% of the population of Slovakia.

When we analyze the democratization processes in CEE, we must face the above mentioned problem of nationalism. Of course, it comes in many variations. There seem to be significant differences between nationalism and its genesis in CEE (quite often considered to be backward, undemocratic, ethnic), and in Western Europe (quite often called enlightened, democratic, civic).[10] From the interwar period on, it is difficult, however, to agree on the substance of this opposition (Auer 2000: 223–225; Neuburger 1997: 1).

Originally, for example for Alexis de Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill or Giuseppe Mazzini, nationalism was regarded as progressive and supportive of the development of liberal democracy. Significance of nationalism for the strengthening of group solidarity seems to be unquestionable (Auer 2000: 216). Dryzek and Holmes (2002: 12), who often refer to Stefan Auer, state that:

> it is possible to be both a nationalist and a democrat; [...] nationalism can sometimes promote liberal democratization in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe. This argument is consistent with deeper European history, where nationalism and democracy have occasionally reinforced each other—especially when nation could be defined in opposition to empire.

[10] See, e.g., Ernest Gellner (1983); Eric Hobsbawm 1990); Stefan Auer (2000: 213–245); Todoritchka Gotovska-Popova (1993).

The latter is actually the case in many CEE countries, both after World War I with the collapse of the Russian, Ottoman and Austrian-Hungarian empires, and after 1989 with the collapse of the Soviet and Yugoslav Communist systems. As some authors believe, the

> nation-state in Western Europe was mainly the result of a unification and centralization process. The struggle was fought against domestic monarchies. Although at times this 'homogenization' process was oppressive—and even brutal—the main result was the creation of a relatively homogenous nation. In Eastern Europe [...] the national movements were fought against foreign rule and thus received some kind of negative legacy. This 'enemy factor' of nationalism in Eastern Europe [...] later brought bitter social consequences (Gotovska-Popova 1993: 174).

The "enemy factor" in CEE nationalism may be nowadays more visible than in other regions of the continent due to the fact that, because of historical reasons, ethnic and not political (civic) identities seem here to have been of the basic character and still are the most important political and social resource. However, it is hard to imagine any nationalism without the "enemy factor" anywhere in the world, and both the "ethnic" and "civic" nationalism can cause serious problems (Auer 2000: 220; Mueller and Pickel 2003: 3, 6). In CEE, the same forces which have led to the defeat of Communism, i.e. ethnic nationalism, turned into a major threat to peace, prosperity and progress toward democratic stability (Offe 1996: 73). As Erika Harris-Grossbergerova (1999: 591) puts it, "not all nationalism leads to emancipation, not all national emancipation ends in democracy and not all transitions to democracy will end up as democracy."

I believe that many scholars are generally right when they say that the Communist idea of "proletarian internationalism" was never well rooted in this region. The Communist regimes suppressed the nationalistic sentiments and ethnic aspirations but they did not succeed in erasing them from the social consciousness. Internationalism meant, in practical terms, either attempts to Russify, or to Serbianize, Romanianize, Hungarianize, Slovakianize, Polonize, etc. In 1989 (or even earlier) the deeply existing nationalisms have just surfaced (Offe 1996: 65). However, we should not forget the relative popularity in many some social circles in the Soviet Union of the idea the "Soviet personality" and in Yugoslavia of the "Yugoslav nationality." I shall return to this complex issue.

But why have we had so much nationalism in post-Communist CEE? Why do the dominant groups not wish to respect collective rights of minorities, and in some cases do not grant the citizenship rights to all minority members who have lived on the given territory for decades? Once again, history, or better historical memory, seems to be at least a partial explanation. Following Polish scholars, Lynn M. Tesser (2003: 501) wrote four years ago, that memory of foreign (particularly German) domination continues to have political resonance in Poland, particularly the association between minority rights, ethnic conflict, war, and the state dismemberment. Poland's first-rate experience with border changes and population expulsion has led to a very reserved attitude toward minority protection when only 3 to 4 percent of the population claims a nationality other than Polish. Slovaks tend to associate Hungarians, the largest and very well organized minority, with the past Hungarian domination and the state

dismemberment (Tesser 2003: 512). Slovaks, says also Silvia Mihalikova long for state stability: "The majority of Slovak population who were in 1993 [the year of dismemberment of Czechoslovakia—JM] eighty or more years old had lived in seven different state entities and had their life regulated by eight different constitutions, without even moving away from the place where they were born. Out of the five regimes they experienced, only two can be considered democratic (Mihalikova 2005).

According to Mary Neuburger (1997: 10–11), after the 1991 elections in Bulgaria, when the Turkish party became a part of the state government, a "campaign against the past and present 'Turkish yoke' [began] which brought the limits of Bulgarian hatred and toleration into bold relief." For the Baltic states, a very important goal is to protect their national cultures, devastated during the Soviet rule. "To ensure the long-term survival of the states' dominant language, culture, and society—says Michael Johns (2003: 685)—it is necessary to enact laws that will protect them. By nature, laws that protect one culture, disadvantage another."

Needless to say, historical memory causes many problems in plural societies, regions, continents. Each group can have its own memory of the same situations, but the dominant groups have tools to enforce, institutionalize their own memory. Erika Harris-Grossbergerova (1999: 589) reminds us that this memory "has a tendency to idealize its own nation and in the process selects only the past, usable for the given elites and circumstances; secondly, the process buried in past injustices and glories of 'the nation' is bound to hinder the integration of society, which is what the future requires." Historical memory is very often a political tool useful in hands of politicians striving for power or executing it.

"Two Cultures" in Post World War II CEE and the Collapse of the Communist System

A few remarks on immediate pre-1989 processes seem to be necessary. Let me start with Poland. During the interwar period, ethnic minorities constituted about one-third of the population of Poland; after World War II, they constitute only about 5 percent of the total. Similar numbers refer to religion. Before the war, nearly one-third of the population had a non-Roman Catholic background, today this proportion does not exceed 5 percent. In this demographic sense, it is true to say that Poland was not before the war, but became after the war—a "state of Polish and Roman Catholic nation."

Before World War II, many political parties operated in numerous CEE countries. During the Communist regime, the leading role of the Communist parties became a major political rule. The citizen's rights did not include the right of public contention, freedom of association, free elections. Political homogeneity was based on oppression. The political system was not pluralistic and the government did not recognize that ultimate authority should belong to citizens.

In Poland, but also in Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, in Slovakia and partly in the Czech lands, the Roman Catholic Church has been considered by the majority of

people to be the guardian of the very highly valued national heritages and of the continuation of the national traditions. According to the beliefs of nationalistically oriented groups in these countries, to be a good Pole, Slovene, Croat, Hungarian etc. meant to be a member of the Roman Catholic Church, to observe the Catholic traditions. Irena Borowik (1999: 10–12), Eileen Barker (1999), Sinisa Zrinscak (1999) and other authors give many examples of sociological findings proving this thesis. They refer mostly to the post-1989 survey findings, but this kind of mentality seems to have long lasting character. For instance in Poland, most of the Communist Party members had belonged to the Roman Catholic Church and even among the members of the Association for Secular Propaganda the majority believed in God and considered themselves good Catholics.[11]

The official Communist ideology was in the whole region of a strongly antireligious character, though. The percentage of non-believers in Poland has been extremely tiny, unlike in other CEE countries[12]. Let me give some examples. According to the data, in Belorus before 1989 only 22% of respondents in the national survey declared that they believed in God (65% were non-believers), and in 1997 the proportion of believers jumped to 42% (Babosov 1999: 154). In Ukraine, 5% of the population declared that they were believers before the fall of Communism, compared to 70% presently. In Bulgaria, 13% of believers before 1989 are compared to 60% in 1994; in Hungary over 70% of the population identified themselves as religious persons, the rest being non-believers or undecided (Borowik 1997: 153; Babosov 1999: 165; Todorova 1997: 165). In Czechoslovakia, in 1991 (two years before the "velvet divorce") nearly 40% declared in the national census that they had no religion (Misovic 1997: 191).

The normative system, having been propagated in CEE during the Communist period, did not reflect religious beliefs of the overwhelming majority of Poles, large majority of Hungarians, a majority of Czechs and Slovaks. In Poland, in Hungary, and most probably in Slovakia, Slovenia and Croatia, the ruling ideological minority imposed on the numerical majority not only the political and economic system but also a cultural (ideological) system that seemed to be functional to the political domination. In this sense we can say that not only political but also cultural democracy was missing in these countries.

However, many indicators suggest that most of the people in this region came to believe in some values officially interpreted at that time as socialist (justice, equality, welfare, which can also be defined as values close to Christianity). In the 1970s, about three million Poles belonged to the Communist Party, hundreds of thousands belonged to Communist parties in each of other CEE countries. The presented above figures regarding religious beliefs in CEE mean that the influence of traditional and institutionalized religious culture diminished significantly in most parts of the

[11] Nonbelievers in Poland as a "cultural minority" during the Communist period (what may sound ironic) and afterwards is an interesting subject which will not be discussed in this paper. They will be mentioned, though. On this subject in Poland see, e.g., Janusz Mucha (1989). Also, "social minorities" like homosexuals will not be analyzed here.

[12] I take into account the possibility that the surveys in the field of religiosity were far from accurate in this region under Communism. They seem to be much more reliable now.

region after the implementation of Communism. The very well known concept of *homo sovieticus* (Zinoviev 1986) has its background in radical changes in mentality. *Homo sovieticus* is a critical notion referring to a category of people with a specific mindset which was allegedly created by the Communist system. The idea that the Soviet system would create a *new Soviet man*, a "better kind of person," was first put forward by the Soviet ideologists. *Homo Sovieticus*, however, was a term with negative connotations, invented by its opponents. In many ways it meant the opposite of the officially proposed *new Soviet man*: someone characterized by general indifference to the traditional morality, including indifference to the results of his/her labour and lack of initiative, indifference to common property and petty theft from the workplace, isolation from world culture, obedience or passive acceptance of everything that government imposes on people.

Vanda Rusetskaya (1997), a Belorussian scholar, is of the opinion that the "break-down of the Soviet Union has led to the emergence of new political realities. However, when it comes to national self-consciousness, the stereotype of the existence of 'the Soviet man' remains." A Bulgarian, Nonka Todorova (1997: 165) says:

> The Marxist communist ideology was imposed not only by force of arms and propaganda. It was supported by the intellectual circles and gradually took up the integrative and eschatological functions of Orthodoxy. It had its social base among the poor and suffering strata of Bulgarian society—the workers, the peasants, and part of the intellectuals. Its science-like character corresponded to a large extent to the developed process of industrialisation and modernisation. [...] Undoubtedly, the state-party and 'scientific atheism' [...] play an important role in the mass decline in traditional religiosity.

Miklos Tomka (1997: 205, 207) writes about his "Catholic" country, referring to the "Goulash Communism" and acceptance of the Communist system by many Hungarians:

> Motives for this arrangement came both from the ruled and from the ruler [...] the apathy of the parents and Communist indoctrination implanted [...] much distrust both of the recent past and of the European Christian culture. [13]

As a consequence, in my opinion, in the CEE, including Poland, two cultural systems operated during the Communist period and perhaps, in some countries, operate even today. [14] One was the system based on traditional national cultures and on the "Mother Churches" or "National Churches" in the Eileen Barker (1997) sense. Actually, I have already mentioned the strong connection between the national and religious consciousness in many CEE countries. Barker says that in almost every country, the main protagonist claiming the *right* 'to win' is the Mother Church or National Church. During the Soviet period these were, to a greater or lesser extent, oppressed." [15]

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[13] Tomka is also of the opinion that after 1956, people saw no alternative to pretend formal acceptance of Communism, p. 213.

[14] According to Andrzej Krawczyk (2007), a Polish specialist in the field of CEE, the Communist Party of Czech Lands and Moravia has more than 90,000 members in 2007. During the last parliamentary elections, it gained 13% of the votes and one third of the seats in the Parliament. During the previous elections, in 2002, it gained 18.5% of the votes, and in the elections to the European Parliament in 2004, 20.3% of the votes, what gave it the second place." Belarus is another interesting example.

[15] See, e.g. E. Barker (1997: 38). N. Todorova (1997) and other scholar observe, however, that along with the revival of the traditional religiosity and strengthening of the Mother Churches, many of them have

The other culture system was based on the dissolved and diffused Communist ideology. If we stress the first culture, the cultural system was highly undemocratic. If we stress the second system, it would be difficult to say so.

What is the result of the process of transition, or at least how does the situation look like now, after seventeen years? In various countries in various periods it looked different, sometimes closer to a liberal and sometimes to an illiberal (minimalist, delegative) arrangement, but (as mentioned above) it would be difficult to question the democratic character of the current overall systems in CEE. In cultural terms, there is a democracy too, at least in minimalist sense of the term. National, religious and social values of the vast majorities of populations are being publicly appreciated and expressed, supported by the parliaments. In Poland and in some Central European (mentioned above) countries, the Roman Catholics constitute the culturally and politically dominant group. In many Eastern European countries, the same can be said about the believers of the Orthodox Church. All groups representing other kinds of normative systems constitute cultural minorities. Some of them are national (like Germans in Poland, Hungarians in Slovakia or Romania, etc.), others are religious-national minorities (like Uniates in Poland, who are mostly Ukrainians, or Roman Catholics in Belorussia, who are mostly Poles), ideological minorities (Communists), or even "philosophical minorities:" nonbelievers.

Therefore, the situation has changed completely. The former political "tyranny of the minority" was replaced, in the transition process begun at the end of the 1980s, by a democratization in at least its two aspects presented in the previous sections of this paper: the right to participation based on citizenship and the right of public contention. Does all this mean that polyarchy, using again Robert Dahl's terminology, became a reality on the CEE public scene? The problem of the remaining parts of this article is to what extent democracy is only minimalist, delegative, illiberal, and to what extent it is of a liberal character, or, to put it differently, how has the democratization affect the minority rights.

Democratization and Cultural Minorities: Institutional Aspects

I shall be interested here in the political decision-making process, both on European and on national level. Within the religious field, the Mother Churches can make important decisions directly influencing minority rights. These processes are founded on "constitutional rules" in the Elinor Ostrom's sense.

The institutional European aspirations (in the sense of candidacy to the European Union) of many CEE countries became, in my opinion, one of the crucial factor in the democratization processes. It enforced many constitutional changes in the legal systems of the CEE countries. The EU can be also described as an "outside power" of national, religious, and other minorities, in Milton Gordon's sense.[16] This

been, after systemic transformation, treated with suspicion due to their actual or perceived collaboration with the Communist regimes.

[16] For the analysis of the "inside" and "outside" power of ethnic minorities, see Milton M. Gordon (1975: 104–105). See also Johns (2003: 686).

particular "outside power" is analysed by many authors writing on the democratization in post-Communist CEE. It had various aspects, though. On the one hand, and in a sense counterproductively, it has strengthened the nationalistic and religious feelings in many countries because it "appeared as a threat to only recently acquired [...] sovereignty" (Tesser 2003: 518) as well as to the "traditional morality." Second, in some countries, for instance in Poland, the "government generally tended to treat minority protection as a matter of international affairs rather than domestic policy—likely a function of the fact minority protection provisions in bilateral treaties were less controversial domestically than comprehensive legislation" (Tesser 2003: 495). Actually, it is not the "bilateral treaties" what is important, but rather the possibility to indicate that domestic legislation was enforced by outside considerations. Third, in some significant cases, for instance in the Baltic countries, ethnic

> minorities often remained ignored in the process of public mobilization related to EU membership. Such a marginalization is not only problematic for democracy, it is also not rational from a political point of view. Instead of developing a sense of national identity in such circumstances, minorities are likely to transgress the national level, in other words, to be ethnic and European without having a national belonging (Kasatkina 2004).

Four, the "outside power" of an ethnic minority can have disintegrative consequences for a pluralistic state wishing to democratize and at the same time stabilize its own national culture. Situation of Estonia, Latvia and even Lithuania, and the attempts of the Russian Federation to regulate internal relations in these countries seem to be particularly enlightening during the post-Soviet period.

The "outside power" of a minority means not only the EU. It can also take shape of a friendly interest in the welfare of a minority on the part of an individual sovereign state or of an outside influential group within the society at large. In Poland, both the German and the Jewish minorities that were particularly successful during the democratization process, had this "outside power," in Poland and abroad. Other cultural minorities had much less access to this resource.

The "outside power" of the minorities could be considered, in institutionalized terms, as the rules imposed upon the nation-states, and, even if observed, rarely treated as their own, accepted rules.

The state itself and the state branches in various regions are, however, the most important institutions determining the situation of cultural minorities. In Poland, soon after the appointment of the first non-Communist cabinet, the national and then regional authorities allowed to register cultural associations of German Poles. The first post-Communist Parliament appointed Ethnic Minorities Committees. However, a bill on ethnic and national minorities was accepted by the Parliament only in 2005 (Łodziński 2005). Representatives of national minorities became members of Parliament. Since 1990, some regionally concentrated ethnic minorities have been electing their representatives to the local councils in regions where they dominated numerically (mostly the German and Belorussian groups). The Jewish contribution to the Polish culture became officially recognized and appreciated, and the highest state authorities have been continuously stressing their willingness to contribute to permanent improvement of Polish-Jewish and Polish-Israeli relationships.

It is very interesting to look at the state constitutions in CEE. Some of them are more ethnic and some more civic oriented. Let me give some examples. The Slovak Constitution of 1992 emphasises the Slovak nationality. However, it should be remembered that Mr. Rudolf Schuster, a German-Slovak coming from the Hungarian populated region, was the President of the Republic of Slovakia during the 1999–2004 term. The Czech Constitution of 1992 refers to the citizens of the Republic.[17] The Polish Constitution of 1997 is directed to the "Polish Nation—the citizens of the Republic"(Łodziński 2005: 142).

The significance of the constitutionally founded electoral system and citizenship system, for the chances of national minorities to integrate and fully participate in the democratization processes was already indicated in this text. Let me add one thing. According to Arturs Jansons (2003), a Latvian scholar, when the new state language law was being discussed in his country before it became adopted in 2000, "the government and responsible state institutions conferred with international organizations and experts from Europe but not with representatives from the national minority organizations." This seems to be one of the explanations of the ethnic tensions in Latvia. Not only Baltic national minorities face the generalized language problems, regulated on the institutional level. Slovaks in Hungary, Hungarians in Slovakia, Turks in Bulgaria, all have had to endure the problem with the usage of their mother tongue as a language of local administration, with the original spelling of family names, etc.

Let us turn to the religious field. The institutionalization of religion has many faces in Poland and most of other CEE countries. This refers nearly only to the Mother Churches. In Poland, and in other Roman Catholic countries, the state authorities signed and parliaments ratified official agreements with all traditional denominations during the 1990s. It is relatively easy to register in Poland a denomination.[18] The same situation occurs in the whole CEE, but only when we are talking about religions traditionally functioning on a given territory and officially recognized before Communism. There is another story concerning the New Religious Movements, very often called the "sects." The same literature indicates that these mostly legal minority denominations have been blooming during the whole post-Communist period. That does not mean that the state institutions and the Mother Churches fully accept their existence within the process of cultural democratization. State institutions distance themselves from the "sects," deny them financial supports, infiltrate them using the police forces, publish reports about their destructive role.[19] Eileen Barker, in the quoted above article of 1997, as well as many other authors mentioned here, stress the fact that the Mother Churches use their political power to fight the "sects" as well.

Despite the problems, many minorities were very successful during the democratization process. Their today's presence in the public sphere was hardly possible under Communism. It seems to me that their successes on the institutional level

[17] See, e. g., Matthew Rhodes (1995); Tesser (2003: 514, 524).

[18] See, e. g., Maria Libiszowska-Żółtkowska (2001) and Tadeusz Doktór (2003: 123).

[19] For Poland, see, e.g., Tadeusz Doktór (1999: 185) Zbigniew Pasek (2006); for Hungary, see, e. g., Istvan Kamaras (1997); for Slovenia, see, e. g., Ales Crnic and Gregor Lesjak (2006); for Russia, see, e. g., Marina Vorobjova (2006).

could have been a consequence of three factors. First was the actually existing in early 1990s positive attitudes of the new political elites toward liberal policies and liberal democratization. Second could have been the "inside power" (again, in Milton Gordon's sense) of some minorities within the new institutional structure—their own institutional, economic and cultural (including symbolic) resources, or at least their potential for massive political action. This factor was missing everywhere in countries under consideration, most probably with the exception of Slovak Hungarians and Bulgarian Turks. Third was the really existing "outside power," in the sense presented at the beginning of this section.

Democratization and Cultural Minorities. Semi-institutional Aspect

Institutional (in the sense presented above) aspects overlap with societal aspects, actual ways of thought and behaviour of the people. The most important areas where they meet are the parliaments and regional councils. The parliaments are, in my understanding, not only the supreme decision-making bodies but also public arenas where opinions of various social groups are being openly presented and discussed, and future decisions are being negotiated by deputies. Semi-institutional process does not have to be limited to the state or local representative bodies. For instance, at the beginning of the democratization process in Poland, the National Committee of the Solidarity Trade Union was such an arena of semi-institutional debates leading to the future political decisions. Public statements of high-ranking government officials, other high-ranking national and regional politicians, of high-ranking representatives of the dominant churches (Mother Churches), would also belong to this shadow category, as long as they are not (yet) being translated into effective political decisions. Mass media debates seem to me also very important on this level of analysis.

In Poland, relatively high ranking secular and Church officials have presented publicly their opinions (sometimes in the Roman Catholic media, printed and electronic) considered anti-Semitic by many listeners and readers. The atheists and the homosexuals became another target of the cultural majority in this country during the whole post-Communist period. The literature on CEE stresses the role of mass media, both "independent" and "partisan" (in the sense that overtly representing ideological worldviews and political organizations), in influencing political decisions for and against equal participation of cultural minorities in the post-Communist democratic process. I am aware of the fact that neglecting the role of the liberal media is unfair, but sociological literature mostly analyzes the negative stereotyping of minorities by media. Tadeusz Doktor's (1999: 182) work on the New Religious Movements in Poland is an interesting example. He states that in the presentation of "dangerous sects," "an emotionally laden and cognitively simplistic stereotype emerged and dominated the media coverage of this phenomenon. This became so acute that in 1997 the Ethical Commission for the Media expressed its concern at the degree of stereotyping of minority religious groups, and appealed for a more balanced presentation in the media." Mary Neuburger (1997: 11) analyzes this same problem in her work

on Turkish national minority in Bulgaria. After the 1991 parliamentary elections in which the Turkish party garnered the third largest number of parliamentary seats, the pages of journals of some political parties were "colored with images of violated cultural boundaries and 'historical injustices'."

To sum up this section: the democratic process brought not only changes positive from the point of view of political and cultural inclusion of minorities within the newly created public space. It would, however, be completely unrealistic to believe that freedom of expression could eliminate political and cultural conflict and xenophobia.

Democratization and Cultural Minorities: Collective Attitudes and Behaviour

The weakly institutional sphere of collective attitudes and actions is also very important for the democratization processes. These attitudes and actions reflect the long-lasting cultural and political socialization. They constitute also a strong background of many semi-institutional activities mentioned in the previous section of this article. In CEE, they also show how unpopular have been liberal tendencies still existing in many former and present elites, how shallow has been the liberal consensus among the new elites and rank-and-file citizens. It should be stressed that these attitudes and patterns of behaviour are not "non-institutional" in the senses presented here in the introductory remarks.

Two examples from the early stage of the democratization process in Poland will be discussed here. The first is the situation of the German minority. Until 1989, the political and legal authorities were denying the existence of this group. Popular attitudes of Poles were also against legalization of German activities in Poland. Institutional situation changed dramatically after the 1989 parliamentary elections. Many German Polish organizations have since been registered and the right of German Poles to develop their own culture was officially recognized. It did not change very much the popular mood. Ethnic tensions in Silesia (south-western corner of Poland), nearly completely hidden during the former forty years, strongly emerged. The local Germans hoped to get the support from close-to-unify Germany and the local Poles had already the support from Polish nationalist parties: both sides tried to use their "outside power." At the end of the 1990s, the tensions shifted a little from the Polish-German into the Polish-Silesian dimension, and the issue of regional autonomy of Silesia emerged. Many Poles believed that the recognition of any cultural rights of people claiming German or Silesian nationality and living in Poland would give more arguments to those who would like to dismember the country.

Another very early Polish example is a conflict between the Roman Catholics and the Uniates (Greek/Ukrainian Catholics) in the city of Przemysl, in the south-eastern corner of Poland. Due to the democratization of public life, the Uniates demanded that the Roman Catholic Church administration should returned the church building taken from the Uniate parish soon after World War II. The Roman Catholic hierarchy decided to return it to the owners. Institutionally, we have to do here with the recognition of the rights of cultural minority. However, on the level of collective be-

haviour of the Roman Catholic Church members, the situation was different. These parishioners started the protests against their own Church hierarchy. They thought that Poland, including her churches, was solely for Poles, i.e. Roman Catholics. The conflict lasted for weeks and eventually only the Pope's intervention on behalf of the Uniates helped to resolved it. During the next months, however, tensions continued to be very strong.[20]

Tadeusz Doktór and Eileen Barker, in their works quoted above, present very negative attitudes and actions of many members of the Mother Churches against the New Religious Movements in the whole CEE throughout the 1990s. We should bear in mind the fact, though, that these negative attitudes are the reaction on the great success of the New Religious Movements in other segments of the CEE populations.

Let us turn to national questions. Lithuania seems to be one of the most peaceful CEE countries, when analysed from this point of view. However, according to Natalija Kasatkina (2003: 12) it does not mean full public participation of non-Lithuanians:

> The most common criteria [of ethnicity—JM] are surname and accent. Language is an especially important [...] criterion of Lithuanian identity. [...] Hypertrophied linguistic sensitivity [...] does not encourage the public participation of non-Lithuanians. [...] Obvious or less visible, ethnicity remains in everyday life.

In Hungary, according to Gyorgy Csepeli, Antal Orkeny, Maria Szekelyi and Ildiko Barna (2003) the second half of the 1990s brought the visible increase in the hostility against minority groups, and this hostility was already in 1994 quite strong.

In all these cases, we had to do with actions of the cultural minorities demanding the recognition of their rights and the reactions of groups formerly monopolizing the public cultural scene. Moreover, the culturally dominant groups, pressured the highest political and religious institutions to fight the demanding minorities.

Conclusions

The Communist systems guaranteed neither cultural demographic majority nor cultural minorities their full civic rights. The dynamics of relations between the Communist systems in Europe and the minority rights was very complicated, but that was not the main topic of the above analysis. Instead, the complications of the post-Communist systems were presented here.

The post-1988 democratization processes meant the recognition of the continuing responsiveness of the governments to the preferences of the countries' citizens, considered as political equals. As a consequence, nearly each individual and each group has felt free and even obliged to express oneself on political and cultural matters without fear of governmental reprisal. The situation became complicated, though. The governments found themselves under two pressures. On the one hand, they met the emancipatory demands on the part of the cultural demographic majority having been deprived for long of its cultural and political rights. The governments wished and had to satisfy the needs of this group, even

[20] For the analysis of these two conflicts in Poland see, e. g., Piotr Wróblewski (2007).

suppressing the rights of some minorities, in particular those considered as responsible for former cultural and political domination (illegitimate from the democratic point of view), or regarded as simply "alien." On the other hand, new governments felt obliged to respond positively to the demands of other minorities, having also been suppressed culturally, politically or both under the previous regime. It seems to me that in CEE it has been easier to express oneself on political and cultural matters without fear of institutional governmental reprisal than without fear of negative stereotyping by the media and of societal reprisal.

Decades of socialization into intolerance resulted in the post-Communist Europe in a situation in which demands for democracy mean relatively often the demands for "our" full participation in public life and not for "everybody's" participation. Demands for democratization often mean demands for the "good" (meaning—our) solution of cultural and political problems and not necessarily demands for the right of public contestation of "our" decisions. Robert Dahl's thesis on the consequences of subcultural pluralism raises some questions. What would be the advantage of tolerance when we have no pluralism of preferences? Is it really pluralism or rather political or cultural monopolization that is dangerous for democracy? How to transform loyalty to a system of values that proved to contribute to the success of the democratization processes into a tolerance that is a crucial element of democracy but inevitably means acceptance of the existence of values that are "not ours," or that had even been contested by us?

This paper dealt with the political situation and its cultural aspects during the long democratization processes in CEE. However, we should not forget that the tensions, or even conflicts, between dominant groups and minorities in this region did not exceed (with the obvious exception of Yugoslavia and its wars, ethnic cleansing, etc.) the standard European post-war practices and that the difference between CEE and Western Europe seems to be a matter of degree rather than the matter of substantive opposition.

As Klaus Mueller and Andreas Pickel (2003: 5) have reminded,

> Anti-state terrorism by national minorities as in France, Spain, or Northern Ireland has not occurred. [...] Citizenship laws and minority protection have raised complex problems, but their treatment largely follows the standards of the European Council. While problems with radical rightwing movements and the status of non-citizens cannot be denied, they are very similar to those in Western Europe. Moreover, the postcommunist states' willingness to give up some of their newly gained national sovereignty to the supranational institutions of the EU would not seem to be typical characteristic of nationalistic regimes.

Whatever the "sins," painful for cultural minorities and dangerous for democracy, committed by governments, parliaments, organized groups, media and individual members of the dominant collectivities in CEE against these minorities during the democratization and consolation processes, we should bear in mind that the standards regarding treatment of minorities are not necessarily met to a much larger extent in Western Europe. I already mentioned that in the previous paragraph. Stressing very strongly the fact of the important goal of protecting national culture in post-Communist CEE (in particular in post-Soviet Baltic states), Michael Johns (2003: 695)

indicates the by-product of this policy in the form of some disadvantages to minorities. In his opinion, however, the EU's OSCE monitors the situation in CEE much more thoroughly than the situation in Western Europe. In addition, recommendations and regulations issued by OSCE high commissioner on national minorities are very often ignored in Western Europe. He comes to the conclusion that "both Eastern and Western European states have discrimination in their societies," "a double standard is clearly in place," but at least "the states in the East are aware of the situation." Unfortunately, I am not sure if societies are aware enough.

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