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CIVIL SOCIETY AS AN ETHICAL CHALLENGE
(Paradoxes of the Creation of the Public Sphere in Post-totalitarian Poland)

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The author describes the meaning of the idea of civil society for the abolition of the totalitarian communist regime in Central Europe. He pays a special attention to the character of a public sphere under that regime, totally under control of the state, as well as to the agents of the opposition (such as the *Solidarity* movement) and their struggle for liberation and creation of a new democratic public life in Poland. The focus is laid on the ethical motivation of political transformation of relations between private and public. Trust and justice should lead the social reform and penetrate all spheres of social and political activity. The ethically based idea of civil society has been serving also as a blueprint for reconstruction of public sphere in Poland after 1989.

Introduction. The idea of civil society in Eastern Europe and in the West

Arguably the revival of the idea of civil society has been connected with the significance of the concept during the years of struggle against the totalitarian communist regime. The idea of establishing a network of non-governmental organizations, which seemed at that time obsolete in modern capitalistic society, showed its power in the confrontation with the totalitarian state. The triumph of the revolutions in the Eastern Europe showed that the opposition's strategy was effective. The creation of institutions, which were independent from the state, marked the limits of the state's intervention into social life. This in turn appeared to be a deadly blow for the communist ideology largely based on the assumption that the state should control all spheres of the social reality.

To universalise this kind of politics in practice was to develop the idea of civil society as an alternative to the state not only in the situation of totalitarian oppression but also in liberal, parliamentary democracy and a free market economy. This shift was in coincidence with the general critique of the state as a threatening power, which always tended to subordinate an individual to its own purposes. Such a critique, which found its best expression in the work of M. Foucault, led

to the considering of the alternative strategies for the organization of the social life (see Foucault 1982, 135–195). Paradoxically, the liberals, on the other side of political spectrum, also saw the danger of the growing power of the state and they referred to the idea of civil society in order to create a sphere relatively free from state intervention. J. Habermas (1989) in his influential book on the public sphere opened up the debate regarding the extent to which the network of organizations free from governmental control could exist in contemporary society (see also Kelly 1994). Civil society for both political camps involved in the debate offered a chance to overcome the seemingly inevitable gap between the organization of social life and the demand for the free expression of an individual's needs. The concept of the public sphere is to a great extent a utopian project, which was a postulate of liberalism existing only in the limited form. As a postulate, civil society always played an important role as a regulative idea allowing people to estimate the extent of state intervention.

In Eastern Europe the slogan of civil society used by the democratic opposition served a different purpose. The unrestricted power of the state was both a postulate of the doctrine and a political reality. Civil society was to be a cure but also an ideological and political response to the communist state's claims to unlimited control over individuals. However, in order to show the roots of the popularity of this concept we have to turn for a moment to the history of communist ideology.

Communism and the public sphere. Ideology and reality

Communism in Poland as well as in other Eastern European countries led to the total absorption of the public sphere by the state apparatus. This happened in both the political and ideological dimensions. The communist ideology adapted almost the whole field of traditional thinking, reformulating it in collective terms. In the fight against "bourgeois" ideology, stress was put on the deficiency of the concept of individualism as a useful tool for understanding and organizing social reality. The communist ideology instead proposed a collective solution, which was embodied in the idea of the Communist Party. The Party became then a political incarnation of the collectivist ideology. As Ken Jowitt emphasizes, the communist party was a mixture of modern and pre-modern features, which helped it to accommodate some strata of society, especially peasantry that still adhered to the traditional style of life. Jowitt (1992, 16) concludes that: "[T]he distinctive quality of Leninist organization is the enmeshment of status (traditional) and class (modern) elements in the framework of an impersonal-charismatic organization." The collectivist ideology thus took on in political practice the form of "familiarization" of the Party that is "... the routinization of a charismatic organization in a traditional direction" (*ibid.*, 40). At the very empirical level of everyday life and the political and economic constitution of the communist society the collectivist

ideology degenerated into the constant struggle of different cliques and group of interest (see Verdery 1996, 19-38). Although this situation did not disturb the official ideology of collectivism to any remarkable extent; it made this ideology repulsive for the majority of people.

Responding to this collectivist ideology, the underground movement had to put emphasis on the value of individualism. In fact, it reflected, at least to some extent, the experience of millions of people. One of the paradoxes of social life under the communist government was that people did not trust any service that the government provided. People learned how to behave in a no man's land between state-organized social life and the demands of their personal situations. So everybody had to have a lot of individual initiative to survive but the problem was that it was an initiative restricted to the conditions of existing social institutions. People in Poland, especially in the 1970s, became "shameless" liberals—symptomatically, unaware of it at all. But it was also clear that the communist ideology was right in this respect that an individual could not survive without the help of others. Contrary to the official ideology, however, those others came from the closest social milieu: friends and family. Collectivism then appeared at the pre-modern level of "natural ties" of kinship and locality crossing the lines of the political divisions.[1] Using Jowitt's categories one can say that as far as the official life were a mixture of pre-modern and modern elements, the everyday life of people was kept at the level of pre-modern relationships. Thus, individualism was limited by these circumstances and in fact at all levels of society the collectivist ideology triumphed.

What then was a distinctive feature, which differentiated official collectivism from the private, everyday one? It was trust.[2] People had a clear idea that they could trust their friends and family members, which, however, they lacked when they had contact with officialdom. So, we had a situation of almost symmetrical division between the two spheres divided by the distinct cohesion mechanism. On the one hand, the official collectivism degenerated into a clique-like struggle for power and economic benefits. On the other, the private-public sphere was organized by personal trust. I use the oxymoronic "private-public" phrase intentionally here so that to emphasize that although this sphere was founded on the virtue of private, often the family ties, it had to play the function of expressing public

[1] I remember the story, which was said in the most dramatic time in Poland just after the imposition of Martial Law about a block of apartments. People living there were of different political orientations but all of them suffered the shortage of alcohol that was rationed at that time. So, they exchanged recipes for the moonlight vodka and in this activity all political barriers were broken.

[2] Here I would not like to go deeper in the theory of trust. I accept at the theoretical level the definition of trust given by Piotr Sztompka (1999, 25): "Trust is a bet about the future contingent actions of others".

opinion. It was expressed in a truncated, distorted form of political gossip, jokes, and stories repeated from person to person. One of the most interesting and insufficiently investigated issues under communism was the interaction of both spheres. On the surface, they ignored each other but there were interventions on both sides. The secret police agents very often fabricated in Party Headquarters or political jokes as a part of internal struggle within the power apparatus. On the other hand, the rulers had at least to some extent to take the "public opinion" into account and to manipulate it.

Emergence of *Solidarity* and the restoration of trust

When in August 1980 Polish workers went on strike it was soon obvious that the issue at stake was much more important than just obtaining better conditions of life and work. The workers' protest started from the postulates concerning salaries and other benefits, but it involved the rejection of the communist state as a legitimized representative of the working class. Lacking any substantial democratic validity, communism was bound to refer to Marxist eschatology as the ultimate justification of the social and political order. This kind of justification was very far from social praxis and the working class was conceived as a theoretical construct rather than an empirical reality of life in the factories or in industrial suburbs. However, the ideologists of the communist state constantly tried to prove the link between political power and the working class. Rejecting this historical legitimization, the workers set in motion what in Ernesto Laclau's terms could be described as a chain of equivalents.[3] Different demands found their common denominator in opposition to the existing regime. Ken Jowitt describes the significance of *Solidarity* as follows:

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[3] Here I refer to Ernesto Laclau's concept of "empty signifier" and "chain of equivalence". Describing in his book (1996, 38) the principles of political actions he writes: "The concrete aim of the struggle is not only that aim in its concreteness; it also signifies opposition to the system. The first signified establishes the differential character of that demand or mobilization *vis-a-vis* all other demands or mobilizations. The second signified establishes the equivalence of all these demands in their common opposition to the system. As we can see, any concrete struggle is dominated by this contradictory movement that simultaneously asserts and abolishes its own singularity." Laclau's favourite example is a situation of total disorder in the society when there is no clear social structure. In such a case people initiate a political action directed at the establishing of *any* kind of order. The very idea of order becomes an empty signifier on which the aims of all political groups concentrate. Of course, when a particular group is able to substitute its own idea of order for an empty signifier, then the idea of order loses its allure. The universality of an empty signifier must be established again. Laclau describes this situation as "...constitutively split between the concrete politics that they advocate and the ability of those politics to fill the empty place" (*ibid.* 41).

> *Solidarity* is the most powerful and consequential liberal democratic revolution since the French Revolution. A striking illustration of the ironical, not dialectical, nature of historical development, *Solidarity* was a liberal democratic revolution carried out by a working, not a middle, class; a working class created by an anti-liberal Leninist party and nurtured by an anti-liberal Roman Catholic church (1992, 253–254).

Jowitt is right if we consider the form of *Solidarity* movement. It far transcended the communist system of institutions and had inevitably to clash with the communist state. Therefore, *Solidarity* showed that the strategy of cooptation did not work any more, and thus the "...inclusion of social forces was not longer an adequate strategy to maintain the Party" monopoly" (*ibid.*, 254). However, if we have a look at the content of demands, especially the so-called "economic demands", i.e. those, which were stated before "politicization" of Gdansk's strikes, we find quite a different image. The workers asked for some bureaucratic favours, and they expected to get them from the state as a sign of "good will" of the communists.

This attitude was justified even by the geopolitical situation of Poland at that time with the polarization of the world between two competing political camps. In such circumstances, which imposed this self-limiting revolution, *Solidarity* had to find its purposes in the ethical sphere. As it could not develop any political program, which would result in a seizure of power, it had to concentrate on the moral dimension of political and social life. In other words, the values until then restricted to private (or as I have dubbed it "private-public") sphere were to emerge as the values accepted in the official sphere of governmental politics and administration. The most striking example of this ethical attitude was the debate over economic matters. The official standpoint of *Solidarity* at that time was to promote self-management of the units of economy. Workers were supposed to have a decisive influence on creating both the policy of their factory and its governing body. This idea, of course far from any liberal programs, was to some extent tactical, as then nobody could predict the collapse of the communist state. In such a situation self-management in the economy seemed to be the first step, still acceptable to the state, to a free market economy. However, I do not think that this idea was developed only for the sake of diplomacy. This idea had its ethical dimension connected with the whole issue of ethics of work and ethic of solidarity. Jan Rulewski, referring to Father Tischner's sermon, presented at the First Congress of *Solidarity* the ethical vision of economy.

> I dream of an enterprise... in which the worker, the official, the engineer are owners of this enterprise and that on top of that they run it. Because there is a difference proved by the political experience of our state, that in so far as our friend helps us

> he rules to some extent in our country which [would not be] the same if we were [to] run the country ourselves. That is why we must create a situation in which factory property would be divided up and returned to the work[ers] of that factory according to the length of service put in. This would be an irrevocable act, which would be a safeguard against conflict... This obligates not only the workforce, but obligates families and creates a new model of culture in our society (Sanford 1990, 197).

Economics was thus to express the moral values appreciated in the private lives of people. Trust and justice should lead the social reform and penetrate all spheres of social and political activity.

Solidarity premised its ethical involvement on a double stance. On the one hand, it had to play "normal" functions of a trade-union organization fighting for the rights of workers. On the other hand, *Solidarity* had to be an example of ethically motivated association whose task was to implement values into the hostile environment of the communist state. This discrepancy influenced all dimensions of the movement. *Solidarity*, as constituted in 1980, presented a patchwork of different political orientations unified by an agreement as to the ethical values expressed in the name of the union. For that reason, *Solidarity* abandoned the traditional branch scheme of organization of the trade union movement, which would lead to the partition of the union, and adopted a model in which only regional, not professional or occupational divisions were permitted. This model of organization, as well as the name itself, was to emphasize a deep unity grounded in ethical values.

The most important set of values adhered to the issue of national identity. *Solidarity* was taken by the majority of people, involved in the movement as another embodiment of the Polish struggle for independence, as a continuation of a long tradition. This mood was ingenuously expressed in the statement that recovering national identity and dignity became the main task of *Solidarity*, more important than creating a free market economy or a socially just society. This task was even considered more important than building up a democratic society. The nation, understood as a set of values closely connected with the teaching of the Catholic Church, was supposed to play the decisive function in organizing society. Instead of searching for compromise in the political sphere, Poles were to uncover hidden and partly forgotten values and base their agreement on them. Walesa's famous remark at the end of the 1980 strikes "... we really come to terms as a Pole with another Pole" meant a simple formulation of such an ideology (Drzycimski, Skutnik 1990, 433).

The significance of *Solidarity* for the restoration of the idea of civil society

Solidarity played a very special role in the communist block as well as in the West for two reasons. First, *Solidarity* represented the highest level of success in the development of the strategy of democratization of the communist regime. In the confrontation with the oppressive regime, all other strategies directed at the radical change of the political situation had had no chances at all. The uprisings in the German Democratic Republic in 1953 and in Hungary in 1956 proved that the regime was able to face and fight any attempt to overturn its rule. The Polish October and, first of all, the Prague Spring dashed hopes so long cherished by the liberal, revisionist Marxists that the evolution within the regime could lead to the creation of a more just system of socialism with a "human face".[4] In such a situation, the creation of the strategy directed not at the seizure of political power, but at the reshaping of the society, was of crucial importance. Establishing *Solidarity* proved that such a strategy could work.

However, the lesson of *Solidarity* was much more complex. By withdrawing from the direct struggle for power, by introducing (or rather reintroducing) an ethical dimension to the trade union activity and, more generally, to the social and political life, *Solidarity* created a new political battlefield, which due to the absence of a better concept was called "civil society". This new political dimension also attracted attention in the West, first as a success in the fight against the regime but afterwards as a confirmation of the role of values in political life. Ethical values, which were an important motivation for all political movement established after the French Revolution, became eclipsed by the pragmatic politics of welfare state oriented democracies in the West. The gap between politics and ethics seemed to be an inevitable consequence of modern democracy. The success of *Solidarity* showed that the ethical motivation could still play an important role in politics. Moreover, *Solidarity* emerged as an organization not only independent from the state but first of all opposing the state apparatus. This showed that the potential existing in the public sphere was still utilizable as a source of political inspiration and activity. It turned out that people could organize themselves without state support and that this organization worked even better than the state provided services. So, even in the West, where there was no need for such a clear distinction between the state and the public sphere as in the Eastern Europe, the disappointment with the omnipotent bureaucracy became more and more widespread. *Solidarity* thus looked in the "Western eye" as a combination of two utopian projects: politics based on ethics and the free association of ethically

[4] The Polish March and the Prague Spring were probably the last attempts to use Marxism as an instrument against the communist regime. After those failed revolutions, Marxism in Eastern Europe became marginalized to the status of the official ideology or the academic discourse of intellectuals.

motivated people against state apparatus. These two projects were from the historical point of view the framework of the modern political agenda in its diverse incarnations from liberalism to nationalism. For liberals the most important point in the *Solidarity* experience was that people could create a movement, which almost from scratch restored the public sphere. The transparency of national values, apparently resisting any attempts at their eradication, was of vital importance for nationalists.

Solidarity was also, and first of all, the workers' movement. This feature of *Solidarity* enabled the leftist thinkers to appropriate the movement as the fulfilment of the leftist utopia. As Michael Walzer observed, one of the features of an ideal society in the leftist thought is

> the political community, the democratic state, within which we can be citizens: freely engaged, fully committed, decision-making members. And a citizen, in this view, is much the best thing to be. To live well is to be politically active, working with our fellow citizens, collectively determining our common destiny—not for the sake of this or that determination but for the work itself, in which our higher capacities as rational and moral agents find expression. We know ourselves best as persons who propose, debate, and decide (1995, 9).

In its heroic period of 1980-81 *Solidarity* was a perfect example of an association of aware citizens. Its strength was based on the active participation of the members in the decision making process. This participation gave to *Solidarity* the kind of legitimization, which the Communist Party always lacked. Therefore, for the West, the Polish August of 1980 confirmed also of the usefulness of a conception, which saw popular participation in social life as a sign of real democratization of society.

All the above-mentioned factors created the image of *Solidarity,* which fitted every possible concept of civil society. The exception was probably the concept of civil society that linked it to the intervention of the state. However, even in such a case one could say that the dramatic gap between the state and the independent movement was only temporary due to the confrontation with communist totalitarianism. In a different situation *Solidarity* could have became a partner of the state in the process of solving social problems.

Martial Law or the ethics of anti-politics

When on 13 December, 1981 Gen. Jaruzelski in his pathos-laden speech announced the introduction of Martial Law, he also could not refrain from using Romantic rhetoric. The talk was full of reflections on the history of Poland and dramatic references to the fate of the Nation. It showed how deep the ethical

dimension of social life was rooted in the political discourse during the period of the so-called first *Solidarity*. Gen. Jaruzelski, speaking about his decision as a drop in the stream of Polish history, seemed to a great extent to appropriate the nation oriented discourse which *Solidarity* put in the centre of political rhetoric. This discourse of values and of the unity of Nation was inevitable and this situation marked the deep change, which *Solidarity* introduced to the social consciousness in Poland, even consciousness of its enemies.

However, for the actors of political game at that time, the differences between both camps were much more important than possible similarities. The opposition emphasized even more its commitment to the reconstruction of the society on an ethical basis and renounced any attempts to seize the political power. Adam Michnik in his paper written in 1982 in the internment camp in Bialoleka tried to reconsider the theoretical framework and history of the opposition movement in Poland in order to draw possible scenarios for the future. He starts from the claim:

> The essence of the programs put forward by opposition groups... lay in their attempt to reconstruct society, to restore social bonds outside official institutions. The most important question was not "how should system of government be changed" but "how should we defend ourselves against this system" (1985, 28).

Michnik sees in this attitude the unique character of *Solidarity*, which made the movement a role model for the struggle with any dictatorships.

> *Solidarity* can be erased from walls, not from human memory. The exemplary character of the Polish experiment has been stressed repeatedly: for its absence of violence, for its tactic of restoring social ties outside official structures (*ibid.*, 39).

For this reason the resistance to Martial Law was perceived as a moral rather than a political issue.

> It is difficult to find a universal formula. Everyone has to answer in his own conscience the question how to counter the evil, how to defend dignity, how to behave in the strange war that is a new embodiment of the old-age struggle of truth and lies, of liberty and coercion, of dignity and degradation (*ibid.*, 40).

Stressing the ethical involvement of the opposition, Michnik expressed the common view at that time that the battlefield between the Party and the opposition is of an ethical nature. This was the reason why the idea of civil society gained even more attention than in 1980-81 during the first *Solidarity* period. After the imposition of Martial Law it became even more obvious that the sources of exerting power were still available for the Party apparatus. People, who believed that in the face of the prevailing democratic and ethical legitimization of *Solidarity*

the Party nomenklatura was ready to lay down arms, were terribly disappointed. The state seemed to be still able to control situation on the political level. It, however, expressed weakness as far as informal social relations were concerned. The Party was losing its grip on political discourse. Instead of using the rhetoric of socialism and social reforms, it had resorted to using the national phraseology. The famous Jaruzelski's statement: "[W]e will defend socialism as independence" is a good example of the official discourse of the 1980s. Using Ernesto Laclau categories, one can say that it was an attempt to forge a link between two different signifiers: socialism and independence in order find a place for the first in commonly accepted language of politics.

This endeavour was doomed to end in failure, as the "socialism" signifier lost any power to attract people's motivation. The attempt at reanimation of socialist ideology by the connection with the national discourse could not work, as the opposition and the Catholic Church occupied the domain of this discourse. Therefore, despite holding the political power, the Party was defeated in its attempts to hegemonize the political discourse. In such a situation the idea of civil society got a new significance. It became an expression of the society organized *against* the state; the society unified around the common symbols and values. The very idea of solidarity served as a basis for such a vision of society. Conflicts in the society and the concept of conflict itself were perceived as being brought from the outside by powers, which were foreign to society. The first steps in recovering the pre-existing social unity depended upon resisting the temptation of playing off a regular political game.

The idea of civil society, which resulted from these sources, had a mainly ethical character. Civil society was to be an organization of people against the state and beyond the state. The state was considered inevitably corrupt and the only chance for spiritual restoration lay outside the system. So, at the foundation of the idea of civil society there lay an ethical rather than a social challenge. For this reason the idea of civil society as accepted in the 80-ies was to a high degree deliberately utopian. It was to serve as a criterion of the society's recovery from contamination by the totalitarian state. The network of independent associations, societies and organizations was supposed to be an expression of such a change. Because it was not possible to build such a network in the presence of an oppressive regime, it had to be imagined as an ideal social system.

Civil society as a myth and as reality

Real problems appeared when in 1989 the dissidents came to power and had to change an ethical utopia into a real system of institutions. Then, the problem arose of how to reconcile the two concepts of civil society. On the one hand, we developed the idea of civil society as an ethical challenge. In this concept civil

society was a utopia of moral self-development rather than a political program. In this utopian meaning civil society was perceived as a moral dimension of any human interactions, which brought trust into them. Politics from this perspective was perceived as an extension of human relationships. So in this version of the concept of civil society there was no inevitable break between politics and ethics or between state and civil society. It was the corrupted politics of totalitarian communism that implemented this gap in historical circumstances of "real socialism".

On the other hand, civil society was considered a network of associations formed outside state boundaries. This definition, of course, could not be contradictory to that outlined earlier, but it happened in the historical state of affairs. *Solidarity* was the organization based on values, directed against the state and tending to be unified in its program as well as in organizational structure. All the more, it was so powerful that there was almost no physical space for the existence of other organizations. The unity was especially important in the confrontation with the state, so it was obvious that different political opinions tried to find their place within *Solidarity*. Therefore, the ethical dimension of civil society prevailed over the idea that civil society is a place where different orientations tried to reach a compromise between them, the public sphere and state administration.

It was not a problem under communism but when the regime had finally collapsed, this ethical concept of civil society paradoxically became an obstacle in forming structures of the democratic state. Being used to very high ethical standards, to the clear opposition state *versus* civil society, and to thinking in the categories of unity, the former dissidents got in trouble with accepting a disturbed and chaotic social reality with different competitive forces and disarrayed ideological programs. Consequently, it was not this kind of civil society that they cherished as an ethical utopia. From a theoretical perspective the problem took on a form of the question to what extent civil society and the functioning of public sphere was dependent on individual virtues of participants in social life. This issue appeared, for instance, during the debate on the election success of the post-communists in Poland. The standard explanation of the political success of the post-communist party involved ascribing to it the mechanism of the "escape from freedom". During the transformation people got freedom but lost the security, which the totalitarian state provided. Freedom became for most of them too much of a burden. Therefore, they attempted to reconstruct the former situation and thus voted for the post-communist party. This explanation is very often used by disappointed dissidents like J. Kuroń, A. Michnik or J. Tischner. Tischner is the author of the concept of *homo sovieticus*, which serves as a description of individuals formed by totalitarianism. Reference to the relics of communism enables him to account for the failure of radical ethical change by the anthropological mechanism of mental enslavement.

In the quoted paper after discussing the four possible answers to question "what is civil society?" Michael Walzer comes to the conclusion that

> there is a fifth answer, the newest one... which holds that the good life can only be lived in civil society, the realm of fragmentation and struggle but also of concrete and authentic solidarities, where we fulfill E. M. Forster's injunction, 'only connect', and become sociable and communal men and women. And this is, of course, much the best thing to be. The picture here is of people freely associating and communicating with one another, forming and reforming groups of all sorts, not for the sake of any particular formation—family, tribe, nation, religion, commune, brotherhood or sisterhood, interest group or ideological movement—but for the sake of sociability itself. For we are by nature social, before we are political or economic beings (1995, 16).

Civil society from Walzer's perspective is the "... setting of settings: all are included, none is preferred". It is shaped and limited by the two most important factors: citizenship and state. Walzer observes:

> Citizenship... is today mostly a passive role: citizens are spectators who vote. Between elections they are served, well or badly, by the civil service... But in the associational networks of civil society—in unions, parties, movements, interest groups, and so on—these same people make many smaller decisions and shape to some degree the more distant determinations of state and economy (*ibid.*, 18).

Citizens of contemporary civil society are rather grass-roots activists then the heroic figures making the crucial decisions of peace and war. Walzer also opts for co-operation between the state and civil society. Here, he refers directly to the Eastern European experience of separating the state and civil society or even, as I have argued, opposing civil society to the state. Mentioning the book written by Hungarian dissident George Konrad called *Anti-Politics*, Walzer writes:

> He [Konrad] urged his fellow dissidents to reject the very idea of seizing or sharing power and to devote their energies to religious, cultural, economic, and professional associations. Civil society appears in his book as an alternative to the state, which he assumes to be unchangeable and irredeemably hostile. His argument seemed right to me when I first read his book. Looking back... I can easily see how much it was a product of its time... No state can survive for long if it is wholly alienated from civil society. It cannot outlast its own coercive machinery; it is lost, literally, without its firepower. The production and reproduction of loyalty, civility, political competence, and trust in authority are never the work of the state alone, and the effort to go it alone—one meaning of totalitarianism—is doomed to failure (*ibid.*, 21).

The relationships between the state and civil society can be, and are, very complex and sometimes hostile but both parties need each other. However, only a democratic state can support civil society and vice versa: civil society can flourish only in a democracy.

If we compare Walzer's vision of civil society with the idea of civil society developed by the democratic opposition in Eastern Europe, we immediately see the differences. On the one side there is plurality, fragmentation, citizen's involvement in grass-roots activity, on the other, ethical standards, unity around values, an ambivalent attitude to politics, either anti-politics or involvement in the highest level of the political discourse. These two sides seem difficult to harmonize but if we perceive the differences as a reflection of historical circumstances then we can also find background similarities. In both cases the point was to develop the strategy, which enabled people to participate more in public life. In both cases such a task demanded a reformulation of the idea of citizenship and the relationship between ethics and politics. In Eastern Europe the goal was to renew the role of trust in social relationships. In the West the most important thing is to introduce more and more plurality in the social life to oppose and to supplement the pragmatic state's administration. In both cases freedom is the issue, which make people fight for the development of civil society.

Both sides can learn from each other and use each other experience. The Western proponents of civil society can take out the Eastern European experience proof that in some situations ethics can be more powerful then politics, and that the ethical dimension of social life remains an inevitable part of any sound society. For Eastern Europe the lesson is a bit different. We learn that sometimes it is worthwhile to take a risk of lower ethical standards if it pays back by increasing social activity in the different spheres of social life.

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