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Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe: Lessons from the 'Dark Side'

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Introduction

The key thrust of this book was to challenge some of the orthodoxies that exist in the literature on civil society in general, and on civil society in post-communist Eastern Europe in particular. In order to do so, we have assembled a collection of chapters that look in rich empirical detail at several organisations and movements in different Eastern European countries. In particular, we have chosen mainly groups that are often *a priori* excluded from civil society on both conceptual and normative grounds. Each chapter then offered analysis of these civil society organisations (CSOs) in terms of their mobilising strategies, their relationship with the state and political parties, their internal organisation and ideological goals, and their overall position in their respective political systems.

This concluding chapter will provide some concluding observations. Rather than summarising each chapter in detail, I have tried to find elements that can potentially be generalised, by linking the empirical material presented in the chapters with the theoretical and conceptual problems surrounding the concept of civil society that were highlighted in Chapter 1. In particular, I offer generalisations concerning first, the uncertain boundaries between groups of civil society on the one hand, and the state, political parties and uncivil society on the other; second, the relationships between civil society and different political systems and democratisation; third, the influence of the legacies of the past on civil society; and, finally, the cyclical nature of civil society mobilisation.

The uncertain boundaries of civil society

Civil society is most often defined as organised collective activities that are not part of the household, the market (or more general economic production), and the state. Moreover, several authors also make a distinction between 'civil society' and 'uncivil society'. As was pointed out by Petr Kopecký, however, the boundaries that are set to distinguish between civil society and other sub-systems of the polity are problematic, both

theoretically and empirically.[1] The chapters in this book bear these problems out quite clearly.

(Un)civil society and the state

One of the key problems in defining civil society concerns its boundaries and relations with the state. Civil society is commonly defined on the basis of its independence from the state. This has several facets, some of which I will address later in this chapter, but financial independence is often considered most important. Indeed, this criterion has also at times been used to exclude so-called 'uncivil movements', like *Matica Slovenská* in Slovakia, from the narrowly defined civil society in their respective countries. However, this appears to be naively rigid, especially if financial independence is interpreted in a static way.

First of all, many of the ideal cases of CSOs in Western Europe – ranging from ecological movements to anti-racist organisations – are financed, if not fully dependent, upon their national state. A major comparative study found that even in the US '(g)overnment is (...) almost twice as significant a source of income for American non-profit organizations as is private giving, despite the presence there of numerous large foundations and corporate giving programs' (Carothers 1999–2000: 26).

Second, the criterion of financial independence from the state becomes even more problematic if one looks beyond the confines of the relationship between civil society and the national state. Nowadays, borders have changed in meaning, and, in particular, with respect to civil society and its financial support, the world has become more and more integrated. This can be seen clearly in post-communist Europe, where Western states and private foundations have invested billions of dollars in both the building of (domestic) civil societies and the using of NGOs to develop and implement international aid programmes, following similar practices in Africa and Latin America. But what does this 'globalisation of civil society', or the so often proclaimed arrival of 'global civil society', mean for the argument of fiscal independence? If civil society should be financially independent from its own national state, shouldn't it then also be independent from other states?

Finally, state support for organisations of civil society is not always the same over time. For example, while Matica Slovenská received generous funding during the Mečiar governments, this was far less the case during other governments (see Malová; also CSGP 2000). This is similar to the situation of the War Veterans' Movement in Croatia under the Tudjman and post-Tudjman governments (see Chapter 5). Thus, while at one point in time a movement is almost indistinguishable from the state, it appears to be a model of self-sustainable and independent organisation at another point in time. Does this influence its inclusion or exclusion from civil society? Moreover, is there a financial threshold that determines whether an organisation is or is not a member of civil society?

I believe that the criterion of financial independence should not be interpreted too rigidly. Civil society organisations can (at times) even be fully dependent upon the state, i.e. receiving their full budget from the state. The key point is that they are not legally a part of the state structure; in other words, they should enjoy at least formal independence. To be sure, (un)civil organisations that are highly dependent upon state funding are probably less likely to act truly independently, but so are, for example, movements that are led by people who share political affiliations with leading state members. In fact, empirical studies show that while NGOs may appear to de-radicalise when participating in a policy network with the state, this may be more because they are not influential enough to mount serious opposition to state policies, than because of their co-optation through financial dependence (Grugel 1999).

(Un)civil society and political parties

The relationship between political parties and civil society has always been problematic, mainly because political parties (in Western Europe) have historically been seen as part of civil society. Recent developments in theory and research nevertheless indicate that contemporary political parties, at least in Western Europe, are now part of the state, rather than of civil society (see Katz and Mair 1995). Moreover, the democratisation literature has seemingly accepted the distinction between political parties and civil society, with the former trying to occupy the state, while the latter merely tries to influence it (e.g. Linz and Stepan 1996).

Several chapters in this book show that the relationship can be rather complicated in reality. First, some groups, like the Slovak National Movement (SNM), actually functioned partly within the state, while it also included (high-ranking members of) political parties and broad-based popular movements. SNM also served as a breeding ground for new political parties, by providing the basis for future party organisations, or by supplying personnel for future political parties. Second, some groups chose to function both as a civil society organisation and as a political party.[2] This is most radically the case with *Samoobrona* in Poland, being both a trade union and a party, with overlapping, yet somewhat different goals and constituencies (see Chapter 7). A less radical example is the Serbian Resistance Movement (SPOT), as its party phase was shorter and less successful (see Chapter 2). Third, some groups have extremely close links with certain political parties, and by and large tie their faith to that of the parties in question. The examples from our chapters include SNM and HZDS/SNS, (some) Croat war veterans' groups and HDZ/HIP, as well as 'Impulse 99' and 'Thank You, Time To Go' and the parties of Four Coalition in the Czech Republic (see Chapter 8).

Regarding the relationship between political parties and civil society, two more points are worth emphasising. First, the type of previous

authoritarian regime appears to be an important determinant of the nature of the relationship in post-authoritarian societies, especially in the transition period. Since one of the defining characteristics of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe was an (almost) complete ban on political parties, it is likely that the distinction between the newly emerged parties, CSOs, and even the state, will be significantly blurred in the initial phases of democratisation. Indeed, the situation described by Darina Malová in her chapter on SNM in Slovakia, i.e. unclear boundaries and the active role of political parties in contentious politics, is far from unique in Eastern Europe; it appears to be a general regional pattern of interaction between political parties and civil society in the transition period.

Second, once political actors start to settle, say in the phase of consolidation, the dynamic of inclusion and exclusion, so aptly outlined by John Dryzek (1996), begins to take shape. Theoretically, political parties can dominate and control CSOs; alternatively, CSOs can dominate and control political parties. One can supersede the role of the other. Extrapolating from the chapters presented here, it is apparent that, in Eastern Europe, a process of politicisation of civil society has taken place, whereby political parties (attempt to) exercise more and more control over CSOs, which, in turn, are more and more apt to forge alliances with certain, usually like-minded, political parties. The result is not necessarily a complete inclusion of CSOs in the state, but clearly a significant curbing of their autonomy through a process of controlled incorporation into the networks organised by political parties.

One of the key reasons for this development may be the strong position of East European parties within the state. Political parties there have by and large been created within the state institutions, and they have been in a strong position to define the rules of the game under which the state (and thus political parties) operate (cf. van Biezen and Kopecký 2001; Lewis 2000). However, parties in Eastern Europe have also from the outset represented the newly emerged (democratic) system, rather than society. The drive to legitimise political parties at the grass roots may therefore be responsible for the attempt to co-opt organisations of civil society.

Civil/uncivil society

The often made, yet usually unclear and theoretically problematic distinction between 'civil' and 'uncivil' society has been one of the key themes addressed in this book. The chapters demonstrate on an empirical level that the reasons for the separation, and the subsequent exclusion of certain organisations from the sphere of civil society, seems to be the result of normative/personal rather than empirical/academic arguments.

One of the criteria to separate civil from uncivil society is the ideology of organisations. 'Uncivil' ideologies (most notably nationalism)³ are 'bad',

while civil society is 'good'. How weak, and relative, this argument is, can be shown by the world of difference that exists between the categorisations by (often similar) authors of relatively similar movements at different times. So, while the nationalist movement in Slovakia in 1990–2 is generally described as 'bad', and is excluded from 'real' civil society, similar organisations and same persons were included in the 'good' civil society in 1989.

This difference in classification does not reflect a change in the character of SNM. They fought for national independence and (their interpretation of) democracy in both struggles. Rather, it reflects the difference in 'enemy', and the perception of it by these authors. Thinking in simplistic antagonistic models, nationalists were 'good' when they opposed a 'bad' regime (communist Czechoslovakia). But they turned 'bad' when they started to oppose a 'good' regime (post-communist Czechoslovakia). And given that civil society is always 'good', this means that nationalism was one time part of civil society, and one time not.

Empirically, this obviously does not make any sense. As virtually all accounts of the anti-Communist 'revolutions' testify, they were in general as much about nationalism (national independence from the Soviet Union) as they were about democracy (anti-Communism). In short, nationalism was very much a part of civil society in 1989–90; in some cases it became even the dominant ideology, leading some scholars to talk about 'nationalist civil society' (Kuzmanić 1994). It was not surprising, then, that in post-communist times nationalist forces remained active in the civil societies of Eastern Europe (as they do in most other countries; cf. Chandhoke 2001). In some cases, nationalists thought they were still occupied (this included both minority and majority nationalists), while in others nationalists tried to sustain their position in a time that national independence was achieved and the vast majority of the people no longer cared for the nationalists' programme.

The strength of nationalist movements in the early 1990s is shown in various chapters. For example, SNM constituted by far the most active part of Slovak civil society in 1990–2 (see Chapter 4). While this was in opposition to a non-nationalist regime, in Serbia nationalist movements even mobilised against a nationalist regime. However, Florian Bieber's chapter also shows that nationalist groups can change, i.e. that 'uncivil' movements can become 'civil'. While SPOT started out as an ultra-nationalist group that pressured the Milošević regime into more anti-Albanian and pro-Serbian policies, it slowly but steadily developed into a relatively moderate counterweight to the nationalist regime, even establishing itself as the official interlocutor of the Kosovo Serbs for the international community.

Moreover, several chapters showed another reason why the distinction between civil and uncivil society appears problematic in practice: the existence of multiple activities of groups. This has most clearly been

demonstrated by the war veterans in Croatia and Samoobrona in Poland. While the political face of these movements/organisations may have appeared ideologically radical, populist and even extremist, it is difficult to overlook the fact that they also served their constituency (cf. Chambers and Kopstein 2001); for example, by providing financial and other support for bereaved families of deceased Croatian soldiers, i.e. valuable services that the state or other organisations either could not, or did not want to provide.

The complex relations of (un)civil society

Civil society and political systems

Though many authors stress civil society's independence from the state, both political and financial, and juxtapose them against each other, they do expect the state to provide a favourable environment for civil society, in legal, political, and often financial (tax benefits, subsidies) terms. I do not subscribe to the antithetical relationship between civil society and the state. For civil society to work well, it needs a functioning and critical, yet essentially supportive democratic state (see also Chandhoke 2001; Foley and Edwards 1998). As Thomas Carothers (1999–2000: 26) has argued: 'Nothing cripples civil society development like a weak and lethargic state'. This works less strictly the other way around (cf. Howard 2002b). Democracies can exist without strong civil societies (Merkel 2001), although they could also clearly profit from a functioning and critical, yet essentially supportive civil society.

The relationship between authoritarian regimes and civil society is more complex. As most communist countries proved, civil society hardly functions under a strict authoritarian (i.e. totalitarian) regime. However, if the authoritarian regime is not particularly repressive towards civil society, a fairly blossoming civil society can appear (Galston 2000; Booth and Richard 1998). The Communist Eastern bloc presented two, somewhat different examples of this. On the one hand, Poland provided an excellent example of an authoritarian regime that allowed for 'negative freedom', i.e. a (certain level of) freedom from repression of dissent (see Ekiert and Kubik 1999; Zuzowski 1993). Hungary had an even less repressive Communist regime, as the 'Alliance Policy' of the Kádár regime also allowed for a level of 'positive freedom', i.e. the freedom to organise associational life outside of the communist structures – as long as it was not explicitly anti-communist (see Seleny 1999).

However, in such cases of less repressive authoritarian regimes, sustaining civil society without a significant change of the political system seems unlikely. After all, 'in authoritarian states the struggle for civil society primarily demands the consolidation of a space where people in association with others can debate and contest their own versions of the political'

(Chandhoke 2001: 20). This is not to say that the change will inevitably be in a democratic direction. If civil society succeeds in its struggle 'against the state', the result will be at least a nominal democracy. However, if it fails, a change in a more or other authoritarian direction is highly likely (as various examples from Latin America testify).

In a recent comparative analysis of civil society in four East Central European countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia), Wolfgang Merkel concluded clearly surprised: 'Paradoxically, Slovakia seems, twelve years after the break-up of the Communist regimes, to have the most vibrant civil society. However, Slovak democracy is still the least consolidated among these new democracies in East-Central Europe' (2001: 110–11). However, the material from this study could extend this argument: it shows that nominal democracies with authoritarian tendencies, like Croatia under Tudjman and Slovakia under Mečiar (and possibly even former Yugoslavia under Milošević) seem to be particularly conducive to developing a strong, pro-democratic civil society. In both countries an almost similar pro-democratic, pro-vote campaign of various civil society groups significantly boasted electoral turnout and thereby helped replace the authoritarian leaders by more democratic ones (see Fisher 2000b; Bútora et al. 1999).

However, three important critical notes should be added. First, nominal democracies are not necessarily the same as non-democratic regimes. In fact, both the Mečiar and the Tudjman regimes never actively oppressed (oppositional) civil society organisations, though they obviously also did not offer particular support to them. Second, in both cases civil society developed only because of huge assistance (financial, technical, and personnel) from abroad. Third, similarly to the situation after the defeat of the communist regimes, the face of civil society changed fundamentally after the electoral victory – partly because of the decreased 'threat', partly because of the incorporation of key elements of civil society into the state – e.g. pro-vote movements made place for war veterans in Croatia (see Chapter 5).

(Un)civil society and democratisation

As much as we can doubt the negative impact from the organisations of 'uncivil society' on democratisation in the region, we can doubt the positive impact of the organisations of 'civil society'. Vladimíra Dvořáková's chapter shows the potential harmful effects of 'good intentions', by pointing to the disappointing campaigns against the political establishment of 'Impulse 99' and 'Thank You, Time To Go' in the Czech Republic. Other studies have shown that the results of the efforts of 'civil society' are negligible within the countries of origin, despite, and some even argue because of Western aid (e.g. McMahon 2001; Henderson 2000; Stubbs 1996).

This is most notably so because many of the NGOs so often hailed in

Western policy circles and academia, i.e. the pro-Western, liberal democratic groups, have few if any ties to the national grass roots, and communicate mainly if not exclusively with their international (i.e. Western) donors. So, rather than being part of an active, pro-democratic civil society in their own country, strengthening the process of democratisation back home, they are part of a 'virtual civil society' (Henderson 2000), which exists mainly in reports and boardrooms of major NGOs and governmental offices in the West. Moreover, in addition to communicating mainly with external sources (i.e. their donors in the West), they often also address the concerns of the foreign elites, rather than the grievances felt by the domestic population (cf. Howard 2002a). Or, in more Marxist terms, 'these appear to reflect, rather more, the concerns of a "new global professional middle class", than of oppressed groups and progressive social movements' (Stubbs 1996:370).

In many ways, then, 'uncivil movements', like the ones studied in this volume, are more authentic representatives of civil society in post-communist Europe. Not only do they indeed fill the space between the household and the (national) state; they also play an important role in the process of democratisation, be it directly or indirectly (by provoking 'civil' movements to respond to their challenge). Moreover, unlike many prominent 'civil' organisations in Eastern Europe, which are elite-driven NGOs detached from society, many 'uncivil' organisations are true social movements, i.e. involved in grass-roots supported contentious politics (cf. Tarrow 2002). Like 'civil' groups, they can at times be part of 'advocacy networks'; for example, the war veteran organisations under the Tudjman regime or the various Slovak nationalist groups and NGOs (Matica Slovenská) under the Mečiar regimes (see Fisher and Malová respectively).

A similar misunderstanding prevails over the role of contentious politics during the process of democratisation in general, and democratic consolidation in particular. Theories of democratic consolidation are, in general, strongly predisposed to treat high levels of contentious politics with a high degree of scepticism, because its occurrence could mean a significant challenge to the fragile, newly drawn 'rules of the game'.[4] However, one could also argue that, in case of non-violent contentious politics, it should be seen rather as an expression of acceptance of these rules. After all, various forms of non-violent protest belong to the repertoire of 'voice' that the democratic citizen has at its disposal to communicate with the political elite (cf. Szabó 1996).

Civil society and the legacies of the past

Organisational legacy

Bert Klandermans has postulated: 'Interpreting grievances and raising expectations of success are the core of the social construction of protest'

(1989: 122). The best examples of this are the various national 'revolutions' that swept Eastern Europe in the 1989-91 period. Their legacy is often highly visible in the contentious politics of the post-communist period, as was also noted by Grzegorz Ekiert and Jan Kubik (1999: 22) in their study of contentious politics in post-communist Poland: 'the legacy of this contentiousness under state socialism had a significant impact on the early phase of democratic consolidation (1989-93)'.

First of all, almost all groups link their grievances to the unfulfilled expectations of that period – this can be best seen in the rhetoric of the 'stolen revolution' (see Mudde 2001; cf. Howard 2002a). In the cases under study here, probably the closest examples of this sentiment are the 'Impulse 99' and Thank You, Time to Go movements in the Czech Republic, who very literally expressed this view (see Dvořáková). However, similar sentiments were present in the protests of the Ukrainian miners, of the Polish farmers, and of the Slovak nationalists as well (see Mykhnenko, Krok-Paszkowska, and Malová (this volume) respectively). Though different groups often interpreted the 'ideals of the revolution' differently, they all claimed that the post-communist elites had 'stolen' the revolution by not living up to its expectations. In fact, this is a more general post-revolutionary phenomenon; Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter have argued that 'the disenchantment that [the popular upsurge] leaves behind is a persistent problem for the ensuing consolidation of political democracy' (1986: 56; see also Dvořáková (this volume)).

Second, one can clearly see a 'legacy of symbols' in the contentious politics in some countries. That is, different countries have different traditions of political protest. Poland, for example, has a history of mass political protest, with the anti-communist trade union Solidarity as an almost mythical ideal type. Indeed, Ekiert and Kubik describe Poland as 'the only [Communist] country where mass protest became a frequent way of exerting political pressure and defending collective interests' (1999: 21). As Ania Krok-Paszkowska has shown, post-communist groups like Samoobrona refer to the legacy of Solidarity, using their symbols and characteristics in their actions and rhetoric. Moreover, both the choice for (at times violent) radical forms of contentious politics and the lenient reactions to these by the (former) Solidarity government, are also clearly influenced by the legacy of Solidarity (see also Seleny 1999).[5]

The resonance of symbols is possibly even stronger in the Czech Republic, where mass demonstrations at Prague's Wenceslas Square, with songs and Czech flags, have become the *modus operandi* of 'pro-democratic' protest, as well as of various forms of 'extremist protest'. 'Thank You, Time To Go', for example, put its demonstrations therewith clearly in line with the Velvet Revolution of 1989 and the Prague Spring of 1968. Moreover, 'Impulse 99', with its internal organisation around policy sections and the pivotal role of spokespersons, was almost a copy of the equally famous model of intellectual dissidence, *Charta 77*.

Third, there has been a certain level of organisational continuity within civil society. Some of the groups that already existed under the communists have played an important role within post-communist civil society, either revamped or not. In the chapters this is most notably shown in the cases of Matica Slovenská, which constituted the core of SNM (see Malová), and the Ukrainian miners (see Mykhnenko). Other examples in Eastern Europe include many trade unions, environmental groups, and organisations of ethnic minorities and women. They had a comparative advantage over new CSOs in the early 1990s, due to their experience and their financial and organisational resources. Interestingly, organisational continuity was weak among youth organisations (Ekiert and Kubik 1999), possibly because of their particularly strong link with the communist regime. This factor may very well explain the success of alternative youth subcultures like the skinheads, who filled the void left by the demise of the massive communist youth structure (see Kürti (this volume)).

Finally, as emphasised by Malová, Slovakia shows the legacy of small, local protests, dating back to the pre-communist period of state and nation-building. This is important to note, because it may shed light on the prevailing nature of civil society in Eastern Europe; i.e. not that it is necessarily non-existent, but that it is largely local and small-scale. This situation also partly stems from the legacy of communist regimes, where friendship and neighbourhood networks represented more meaningful forms of association than the politicised and controlled mass organisations. In various countries, national (mass) mobilisation is therefore reserved for times of crisis, opposition to the regime or, as in Croatia and Slovakia, critical elections. More 'day-to-day' affairs, particularly involving socio-economic and cultural demands, are dealt with at the local or regional level. This could also be seen in the case of the Ukrainian miners, whose great variety of contentious actions remained by and large limited to the Donbas area (see Chapter 6).

Ideological legacies

The antithetical relationship between civil society and the state, central in the conception of Antonio Gramsci and so dominant in the writings of key East European dissidents (e.g. Havel, Konrád) is still very influential in both the writing on, and the beliefs of activists within civil society in post-communist Europe. In that, many contemporary CSOs do exactly the same as their historic predecessors: they distrust and oppose the state in general, and (party) political elites in particular. Some problematic consequences of this legacy for the development of civil society are addressed clearly and convincingly in Dvořáková's chapter. However, the anti-statism also puts several CSOs, which might otherwise be interpreted in a different way (i.e. 'civil' and 'uncivil'), in the same basket. For example,

why are anti-elite and anti-statist positions of groups like 'Impulse 99' and 'Thank You, Time To Go' largely considered positive for democratisation, while very similar positions of groups like Samoobrana are deemed to be detrimental to it?

Another ideological legacy of the communist period, which has both ideological and behavioural effects, is that of militarism. Although communist regimes officially preached world peace, and heavily supported the peace movement in the West, their own societies were instilled with a militaristic outlook. This was particularly the case with young people, who were socialised in strict hierarchical, almost paramilitary, organisations like the Pioneers and the various national, Komsomol-like youth groups. As László Kürti has argued, this has created a fertile breeding ground for the skinheads in Hungary, whose martialistic bonding rituals perfectly fit the value structures of the post-communist youth (that were socialised during communism). Similar observations have been made for other East European countries. For example, Hans Brinks has argued that 'for some young people it had turned out to be only a short step from a *Wehrsportakiade* to a paramilitary *Wehrsportgruppe*' in post-communist East Germany (2000: 49).[6]

The cyclical nature of civil society mobilisation

Most literature on civil society focuses purely on longevity and stability, i.e. the number of NGOs or of their membership. As discussed by Kopecký, this might lead us to see both more and less civil society than there actually is. Most NGOs in post-communist Europe are cadre organisations with no grass-roots support whatsoever. Their members are generally full-time employees, for whom their work is a job rather than a calling. In sharp contrast, many of the 'uncivil' movements do represent and involve parts of society, though in a more fluid and *ad hoc* manner. However, this is not much different from the way in which 'civil society' mobilised in 1989 against the communist regimes; it is possibly also not much different from mobilisation strategies of CSOs in contemporary Western Europe.

With the notable exception of Poland, most mass demonstrations in communist Eastern Europe were at best loosely organised, involving few if any CSOs. Indeed, often the key organisation involved was the youth organisation of the communist party (see Chapter 8). Also, the 'cycle of contention' was generally rather short (with the obvious exception of Poland), spanning between less than a week to a few months (cf. Merkel 2001). As John Nagle and Alison Mahr have argued: 'The largest demonstrations in the autumn of 1989 were grand symbolism, but the anti-communist liberation movements were gone within a year or two, leaving little organizational legacy' (1999: 216). In short, the civil society that so heroically 'defeated' communism, and was deservedly praised by most

scholars in the field, was not much different from the civil society today, which is so often criticised for being weak or even absent.

As Dryzek perceptively noted, the mobilisation of 'civil society' against the state was followed by the inclusion of civil society into the state. As a consequence, he stated, civil society was left severely weakened. Though partly true, this provides a too limited, homogeneous view of civil society. Not the whole civil society was left weakened by the incorporation of some of its former leading members, but only a section. Indeed, the one section that most scholars focus on exclusively is the 'pro-democratic' one. But while that section was left weakened by its leaders' inclusion in the state, other sections used the vacant space to (again) start mobilising (cf. Szabó 1995). A good example is SNM, which organised and mobilised in much the same way as the anti-communist groups and individuals had done (see Chapter 4). In a similar vein, after (and because of) the incorporation of SNM into the Slovak state, particularly under the third Mečiar government (1994–8), a new 'pro-democratic' civil society started mobilising, which in 1998 led to the successful pro-vote campaign and the consequent victory of the opposition parties (see Bútora *et al* 1999).

Ekiert and Kubik have argued that 'within the relatively open political space created by the old regime's collapse, popular protest should contribute to the process of defining the public domain and remaking the boundaries between state and society' (1999: 11). This painstaking process can be clearly observed in the actions of, most notably, SNM and the Croatian war veterans. In both cases the state initially absorbed (civil) society, i.e. when sympathetic governments were ruling (HZDS-SNS and HDZ respectively). After the fall of these governments, the relationship between the state and the movements was redrawn, which again led to contentious politics, and probably again to renegotiations – after all, democracy is an ongoing process.

This is not to say that history is a struggle of 'civil society' against 'uncivil society', with periodic alternations of power. Civil society is not one homogeneous entity, but rather a heterogeneous sphere in which various groups exist and at times mobilise; sometimes together, sometimes apart, sometimes against the state, sometimes alone against each other. In general, successful mobilisation of one group/network is followed by its demobilisation (and possibly the inclusion of its leaders into the state). This does not mean the disappearance of civil society as a whole, but the (often temporary) demobilisation of a section of civil society. Various other sections of civil society will remain hardly touched by these events, or, in some cases, will actually become activated by it!

Finally, it should be stressed that the implosion of the 'pro-democratic' civil society organisations after 1989 (or after 1998 in Slovakia and 1999 in Croatia for that matter) has to do less with the periodic alternations of power than with the character of mobilisation of many CSOs in Eastern Europe. I have noted earlier the strong anti-statist orientation of many

groups. However, equally important is their reactive rather than pro-active character (cf. Tilly 1978). The basic form of contentious politics was resistance rather than protest (cf. Ekiert and Kubik 1999). Incidentally, this applies also to many of the movements studied in this book, including both the 'uncivil' (e.g. the Ukrainian miners, SPOT, and Samoobrona) and the 'civil' (e.g. 'Impulse 99' and 'Thank You, Time To Go'). In contrast, SNM and the skinhead movement are examples of protest, i.e. proactive mobilisation.

Conclusion

As expressed in the Preface, this book is as much a study of the 'dark side' of civil society in post-communist Europe, as it is a challenge to the bulk of recent literature on civil society (in the region in particular). In the words of Neera Chandhoke, 'what is being suggested here is that our *normative expectations* about the sphere of civil society should not derange our analysis of *actually existing civil societies*' (2001: 5). We believe that the chapters in the book have proven the need to readjust the conceptual understanding and the empirical study of civil society in general, and in post-communist Europe in particular. I suggest that this should include (at least) these four points.

First, the concept of civil society – roughly defined as organised collective activities that are not part of the household, the market (or more general economic production), and the state – should be seen as a heuristic device (cf. Chandhoke 2001). In practice, groups of civil society will at times overlap with all other 'spheres'. Moreover, civil society is itself hugely diverse and heterogeneous, including a plethora of different and sometimes opposed agents. Hence, it is not useful as a unitary concept in empirical research; i.e. statements like 'an active civil society is good for democracy' are invalid, as it depends on which groups *within* civil society dominate.

Second, the separation between 'civil society' and 'uncivil society' makes sense only in a normative framework, and then exclusively with uncivil society defined as a sub-set of civil society. In empirical research, particularly of a comparative nature, the distinction obscures more than it highlights. As various chapters have showed, CSOs are often difficult to classify as 'civil' or 'uncivil', as their goals and actions are highly influenced by their environment. They perform multiple tasks, and they sometimes change character.

Third, there is no straightforward relation between the ideology of CSOs and their effect on democracy – i.e. 'civil' movements are not by definition good for democracy/democratisation, and 'uncivil' movements are not by definition bad for democracy/democratisation. Again, this depends to a large extent on the interaction between CSOs and their environment, including both 'the state' and other CSOs.

Fourth, and consequently, 'uncivil' movements and contentious politics should be included in the study of civil society (in post-communist Europe). Both form an important part of associational life, and play an important role in the process of democratisation as well as democratic consolidation in Eastern Europe (and obviously outside it). Though it is slightly exaggerated to claim that "mass protests" are an everyday part of life in the new democracies of East Central Europe' (Szabó 1995: 495), let alone of Eastern Europe more generally, there clearly is more to civil society than just the 'pro-democratic' NGOs that most scholars focus on. It is our hope that this volume has raised both an interest, and some pertaining, questions, for the further empirical study of post-communist civil society more broadly defined.

Notes

1 Marc Morjé Howard (2002b) provides an exceptionally intelligent and lucid discussion of the different boundaries and relationships between the 'five arenas of democratic consolidation' as indentified by Linz and Stepan (1996).

2 This is far from unique to post-communist Europe, as Klaus von Beyme clarifies: 'Most parties in the West sprang from social movements and the borderlines between groups and parties remained blurred' (2001: 148).

3 The general argument applies to all 'uncivil' ideologies, though I focus here primarily on nationalism, as this is the most relevant in the post-communist context.

4 A more balanced position is put forward by Anna Seleny, who argues that 'it is not hard to imagine that chronically high levels of mass mobilization could prove destabilizing for the regime – especially if many citizens continue to regard such activity as a *substitute* for the formal channels of democratic politics' (1999: 515–16).

5 Robert Zuzowski (1993) has argued that Poland has an even longer tradition of political protest and state acceptance, dating back to the November Uprising of 1830 if not earlier.

6 The *Wehrspartakiade* were large-scale sporting manifestations in the German Democratic Republic, while *Wehrsportgruppen* are militant, extreme right groups that have emerged in post-communist east Germany (based on the infamous, West German *Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann*, which was banned in 1980).

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