

ANDRZEJ KORBONSKI

The Prospects for Change in Eastern Europe

Writing some ten years ago about the changing political situation in the Soviet Union, Allen Kassof made the astute observation, "Although liberalization tells something about where the Soviet system has come from, it does not say very much about where it is going. To say that the system is being liberalized is like walking away backward from a receding reference point, a procedure that gives too little information about what lies on the road ahead."¹ It is clear that this statement applies with even greater force to Eastern Europe—even if we were to substitute "change" for "liberalization." Anyone reckless enough to write about the prospects for change in Eastern Europe is faced with an almost impossible task, certainly a more difficult one than for the Soviet Union, or for that matter China, where at least there is, or was, a single reference point—be it Stalinism or Maoism, totalitarianism or the "administered society."²

No such reference point exists for Eastern Europe in the early 1970s. In fact, it may be presumptuous even to consider the area as a single entity in view of its steadily progressing differentiation and fragmentation. Just as one would not, most likely, discuss in the same breath changes in Western Europe which embraced Austria, Sweden, and Spain, to use Eastern Europe as a unified concept that included Albania, East Germany, and Yugoslavia would be hard to justify. By now it is fairly obvious that the differences between the Communist and non-Communist countries in Europe tend often to be smaller than similar differences between the Communist countries themselves. In the final analysis a good case could be made for treating some Communist and non-Communist countries together rather than separately. Thus a discussion of future developments in the Balkans, in Mitteleuropa, or

1. Allen Kassof, "The Administered Society: Totalitarianism Without Terror," *World Politics*, 16, no. 4 (July 1964): 561.

2. For a perceptive discussion of pitfalls in analyzing and predicting Soviet political developments see Alexander Dallin, "Bias and Blunders in American Studies on the USSR," *Slavic Review*, 32, no. 3 (September 1973): 560-76.

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in the Balkan *and* Iberian Peninsulas might well make more sense than the present attempt, which focuses on Communist Europe alone.

Perhaps this is a good illustration of a curious inertia if not conservatism of the specialists in the field of Communist studies who stubbornly and occasionally even desperately cling to concepts, ideas, and models that have either outlived their usefulness or have proved unrealistic. Thus it took many years before the profession began to question the validity of the totalitarian model, despite the clear-cut signs that it was no longer very useful as an explanatory device, if it ever was. Similarly, Gordon Skilling's initial call in the wilderness to take a closer look at the emergence of pluralist tendencies in Communist societies remained without an echo for several years before others picked up the challenge. The widespread reluctance to take the Sino-Soviet conflict seriously was another example of professional conservatism. It may be that at least my generation, having grown up and matured in the shadow of Stalinism, has simply been brainwashed into believing in the immutability of Communist regimes and refuses to admit the possibility of significant changes in their character.

By now, presumably, all this is history, and today there is probably no one who still subscribes to the idea that while systems other than Communist can "change," "develop," or "modernize," the Communist societies remain unchanged, firmly ensconced in the "totalitarian," "mobilization," or "command" syndromes. Hence the reason for this paper, which will speculate on the prospects for change in the nine countries of Eastern Europe.

Anyone interested in analyzing the future of Communist Europe has several alternatives open to him. One approach might be to apply to East European politics the various theoretical concepts of political development or modernization usually associated with the names of Almond, Apter, Huntington, Powell, Pye, and Rustow. This is the path taken in recent years by Zvi Gitelman and several authors in the compendium edited by Chalmers Johnson.³ Another method would be to focus on some key component of the Communist systems, such as the ruling elite, bureaucracy, or interest groups, and to project its development into the future à la Skilling and Fleron.⁴ Still another possibility would be to draw an analogy between actual and potential developments in Eastern Europe and those in the Soviet Union and some non-Communist countries—both democratic and authoritarian—in the

3. Zvi Gitelman, "Beyond Leninism: Political Development in Eastern Europe," *Newsletter on Comparative Studies of Communism*, 5, no. 3 (1972): 18-43; Chalmers Johnson, ed., *Change in Communist Systems* (Stanford, 1970).

4. H. Gordon Skilling, "Group Conflict and Political Change," in Johnson, *Change in Communist Systems*, pp. 215-34; Frederic J. Fleron, Jr., "Toward a Reconceptualization of Political Change in the Soviet Union: The Political Leadership System," *Comparative Politics*, 1, no. 2 (1969): 228-44.

manner suggested by Bell, Brzezinski, and Croan.⁵ Finally, one may choose to follow Tucker and Meyer in focusing on political culture as the most significant systemic variable.⁶ Parenthetically, all these approaches have one thing in common: they deal essentially with endogenous variables and treat the exogenous factors as given. To make the analysis complete, a separate approach might concentrate on the changes in the international environment, including the Soviet-sponsored alliance system, and on their possible impact on the internal developments in Eastern Europe.

The decision to examine the multiple approaches to the study of change in Eastern Europe stems from the belief that there is not a single model or paradigm with sufficient explanatory and predictive power to enable us to reach some interesting conclusions about the future of the area. As pointed out by Inkeles, "There are those [models] which are more appropriate to one time or place than another. All have a piece of the truth, but it is rare that any *one* model is really adequate to the analysis of a richly complex concrete historical case."⁷ Thus, as Tucker suggests, "methodological pluralism" seems to be the correct underlying principle for the study of Eastern Europe.⁸ Moreover, the use of several approaches, each with its own hypothesis that may or may not be successfully tested, could be viewed as affording an additional check on the validity of the final conclusions emerging from the multipronged analysis.

The purpose of this paper then is to examine critically the various approaches mentioned above with the view of developing either a general hypothesis or a series of hypotheses regarding the prospects for change in Eastern Europe. For reasons of space, the analysis will be restricted to the problem of political change in the area, with economic and social developments to be discussed only marginally.

Perhaps the proper way to begin is to apply the familiar theoretical constructs of political development and modernization to the area as a whole.

5. Daniel Bell, "Technocracy and Politics," *Survey*, 16, no. 1 (Winter 1971): 1-24, and "The Post-Industrial Society: The Evolution of an Idea," *Survey*, 17, no. 2 (Spring 1971): 102-68; Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages* (New York, 1970); Melvin Croan, "Is Mexico the Future of East Europe: Institutional Adaptability and Political Change in Comparative Perspective," in Samuel P. Huntington and Clement H. Moore, eds., *Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society* (New York, 1970), pp. 451-83.

6. Robert C. Tucker, "Communism and Political Culture," *Newsletter on Comparative Studies of Communism*, 4, no. 3 (1971): 3-12; Alfred G. Meyer, "Communist Revolutions and Cultural Change," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 5, no. 4 (Winter 1972): 345-70.

7. Alex Inkeles, "Models and Issues in the Analysis of Soviet Society," *Survey*, no. 60 (July 1966), p. 3.

8. Robert C. Tucker, "On the Comparative Study of Communism," *World Politics*, 19, no. 2 (1967): 246.

This is not the place to deal with the problems of defining "development" and "modernization" or with the merits of the respective concepts: they have been ably analyzed in the literature, and the discussion is far from over.⁹ Another question not answered here is which of the currently accepted models and paradigms appears particularly appropriate for the study of change in Communist systems. It may well be that none of the methodological and theoretical approaches are suitable. Yet lest I be accused by my behaviorist brethren of practicing "political journalism," the use of the concepts chosen below appears *de rigueur*.

It is widely recognized today that although there is no consensus regarding the definition of "development" or "modernization," there is a fair amount of agreement on the essential "characteristics," "criteria," "requirements," and "challenges" of political development. The most prominent practitioners in the field seem to converge on the following key variables: *nation-building, state-building, participation, distribution, and subsystem autonomy*.¹⁰ Though it is obvious that these criteria are not mutually exclusive, at least when taken together they provide a fairly satisfactory idea of the essential attributes of political development and change. In the process, certain crises arise out of conflicts between the developmental variables. The generally accepted six crises of *identity, legitimacy, penetration, participation, integration, and distribution* have recently been supplemented by two critical equations, *social frustration* and *political instability*.¹¹

In the past, many specialists in the field of Soviet and East European studies tended to stay away from the application of these concepts to the study of Communist systems. The reasons for that indifference or neglect are clear enough. Besides the inherent conservatism of the profession, many of its members, especially the older generation of scholars, were educated in a more traditional fashion and had little use for "modern" methodology. Moreover, the prevailing conceptual confusion did not encourage research aimed at testing the various models and paradigms in the Communist context.

One happy exception is the recent highly interesting paper by Jan Triska and Paul Johnson, who conducted a spatial and longitudinal comparative analysis of political development and change in Eastern Europe utilizing the

9. For the latest contribution see Gabriel A. Almond, Scott C. Flanagan, and Robert J. Mundt, eds., *Crisis, Choice and Change* (Boston, 1973).

10. Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., *Comparative Politics* (Boston, 1966), pp. 35-37, 306-10; see also Samuel P. Huntington, "The Change to Change: Modernization, Development, and Politics," *Comparative Politics*, 3, no. 3 (April 1971): 312.

11. Lucien W. Pye, *Aspects of Political Development* (Boston, 1966), pp. 63-66, and Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, 1968), p. 55.

variables of subsystem autonomy, participation, and national autonomy.¹² The main value of the paper lies in the authors' ability to "operationalize" these variables and derive a series of correlations between them in order to predict future political developments in Eastern Europe, and to explain the reasons for systemic stability and change in the area. While one may quarrel with some of the authors' methods and with the paper's overall conclusion, there is little doubt that it represents an important step toward integrating Communist studies with the rest of the social sciences.

My purpose is much less ambitious. I intend simply to take another look at the different systemic variables and crises in an effort to speculate about their future course. This will be done in a purely intuitive fashion without any attempt at empirical investigation. The thrust of the discussion will be quite conventional and traditional, closely resembling what Huntington calls the "comparative history" approach.¹³

To begin with, it can be postulated that the process of nation-building was largely accomplished in most East European countries by the end of the 1960s.¹⁴ The significant exception is obviously Yugoslavia, where the recent trend has been toward national disintegration rather than integration. The outlook for the future of that country is not very bright, especially since the process of disintegration has been accompanied by a relatively high degree of participation and subsystem autonomy. In other words, of all the East European countries, Yugoslavia is the only one likely to be faced with a crisis of identity and integration, especially if the impending succession crisis is not resolved satisfactorily. Other East European countries that encountered difficulties in the process of nation-building seem to have overcome them either through political and economic concessions to the alienated minority (Czechoslovakia) or through skillful propaganda and manipulation (East Germany).

With regard to the process of state-building, all signs indicate that in the last twenty-five years the Communist regimes have largely succeeded in establishing new structures of authority, thereby expanding the regulatory and extractive capacity of their respective systems. To be sure, the process is still taking place emphasizing both the rationality and secularization as well as the efficiency of decision-making considerations at the expense of teleological ones. But it is only a matter of time before state-building in most of the countries is successfully achieved.¹⁵ Here again Yugoslavia is

12. Jan F. Triska and Paul M. Johnson, "Political Development and Political Change in Eastern Europe: A Comparative Study" (unpublished paper).

13. Huntington, "The Change to Change," pp. 311-13.

14. For a recent study see Kenneth Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development* (Berkeley, 1971).

15. For a somewhat different view see A. G. Meyer, "Authority in Communist

the only possible exception, since there has been some speculation whether the country can survive the crisis of authority in the event of a prolonged succession struggle. The threat of possible "Balkanization" can be avoided if the succession is settled quickly with the legitimization of a new leadership.

The distribution variable is likely to undergo changes in the course of the 1970s throughout most of the area. There is enough evidence to suggest that the East European regimes, having faced the crisis of distribution throughout nearly the entire period of their rule, have decided to solve it by allocating a greater share of their resources to consumption. Hence, in the foreseeable future at least, the area will not experience violent popular reaction to government economic policies, such as the Baltic Coast riots in Poland in December 1970.

The two other key dimensions of political development—participation and subsystem autonomy—are closely related to each other. The concept of participation is not easy to define. It is an umbrella concept which covers not only "democratic" participation in political activities but also totalitarian mobilization and a drive toward equality which stresses achievement over ascription¹⁶ as the criterion of political recruitment. It is in this area that we can anticipate major changes that will contribute to the three crises of participation, social frustration, and political instability. The intensity of the potential crises will depend largely on whether the other problems and crises (nation- and state-building, penetration, and distribution) have already been overcome or whether they were being dealt with simultaneously with the crisis of participation. There is little doubt that until now the problem of participation, however defined, has not been resolved. In some countries (Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia) the regimes have attempted to expand the scope of popular participation at various levels, but the progress has not been significant. The same applies to the drive for equality and for making achievement the basis for political recruitment and advancement. In the final analysis, Communist Party membership—a form of ascription—continues to be the chief criterion of both participation and recruitment.

What is the likelihood of a major change in this respect? One may hypothesize (1) that change, in the immediate future, will come less as a result of pressures from below and more as a by-product of the need of the various regimes to obtain expert advice and unbiased information, both indispensable for the running of a modern state, and (2) that the process may not necessarily lead to political instability. Both hypotheses basically disagree with

Political Systems," in Lewis J. Edinger, ed., *Political Leadership in Industrialized Societies* (New York, 1967), pp. 84–107, and Zvi Y. Gitelman, "Power and Authority in Eastern Europe," in Johnson, *Change in Communist Systems*, pp. 239–42, 246–59.

16. Pye, *Aspects of Political Development*, pp. 45–46.

Huntington, who sees a chain reaction linking social frustration (resulting from social mobilization) with political participation. The latter has to be enlarged in order to accommodate the demands of the mobilized and frustrated populace. Unless and until legitimate channels for participation are established and institutionalized, systemic instability will follow.¹⁷

It can be argued, however, that in Eastern Europe, at least until now, the frustration, alienation, or anomie produced by social mobilization and economic development were more concerned with distribution and welfare than with mobility and participation. One could, of course, point to Czechoslovakia in 1968 as a contrary example, but a good case can be made that in the remaining countries economic demands tended to take precedence over political desiderata. It is difficult to say how long it will take for the former to be satisfied. But it is an important point, since there is a correlation between the level of welfare and the character of the political system, as many scholars have noted. This means that sooner or later the achievement of a reasonable standard of living is likely to give rise to political demands which may eventually lead to political instability. As pointed out earlier, the Communist regimes are currently contributing to this process by stressing efficiency and rationality in governmental performance. Both can only be achieved by enlisting the support of "experts" rather than "reds." Hence participation is *ipso facto* being expanded, and achievement criteria emphasized.

The whole process is closely tied to the final variable in the developmental process—subsystem autonomy—often identified with structural differentiation and decentralization. Here again we can anticipate some changes. At present, subsystem autonomy in most of the countries manifests itself in the gradual implementation of economic reforms which include decentralization, and in the slow but unmistakable appearance of pluralistic tendencies throughout the area. Both have been discussed in the literature, and there is no need to repeat the various arguments.¹⁸ It is safe to assume that subsystem autonomy will increase in the immediate future. On the one hand, the growing complexity of the East European economies will of itself produce specialized groups that will hoard and monopolize expert knowledge. On the other hand, the respective governments will be forced to seek the advice

17. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, pp. 53–56.

18. For an interesting discussion of various aspects of economic reforms see Andrzej Brzeski, "Social Engineering and *Realpolitik* in Communist Economic Reorganization," and Gregory Grossman, "The Solidary Society: A Philosophical Issue in Communist Economic Reforms," in Gregory Grossman, ed., *Essays in Socialism and Planning in Honor of Carl Landauer* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970), pp. 148–211. See also Morris Bornstein, ed., *Plan and Market: Economic Reform in Eastern Europe* (New Haven, 1973), and David Lane and George Kolankiewicz, eds., *Social Groups in Polish Society* (London and New York, 1973).

of these groups, thus increasing their stature in society. This in turn will strengthen the groups by endowing them with a sense of identity that may lead to further demands for participation. A regime faced with the need for advice and information, as well as with a potential threat of political instability due to frustration and lack of opportunity for political participation, may in fact agree to grant increased autonomy to social, economic, and political structures acting as instruments of political institutionalization.¹⁹

Looking back at the preceding discussion it appears that with some exceptions the change in Eastern Europe will be brought about mainly by changes in the patterns and methods of political participation and subsystem autonomy. It may also be hypothesized that these changes are likely to be smooth rather than violent, because the different processes and challenges in the area are being resolved sequentially rather than simultaneously, thus avoiding the variety of crises caused by the convergence of several crises at once and the resulting inability of the regimes to deal with them.

This argument is not meant to imply that the changes are inevitable, that they are bound to occur in all countries in the area, or that they must follow the same path leading eventually to democracy. Even abstracting from the idiosyncratic character of Communist systems, there is always the possibility of "dysrhythmic development" and of "political decay."²⁰ However, it can be guessed that Eastern Europe in the immediate future is not likely to stagnate but will change in the direction of greater participation and structural differentiation.

Another way of predicting the future of Communist Eastern Europe is to compare the possible developmental path to be followed by the various countries with alternatives either to be faced or already experienced by other countries—Communist and non-Communist alike. In a sense the most logical basis for comparison is the Soviet Union, despite the many systemic and cultural differences between it and the rest of Eastern Europe. Attempting to evaluate the alternative paths of future Soviet political development, Zbigniew Brzezinski, one of the most astute observers and interpreters of the Soviet scene, suggested five such paths: *oligarchic petrification*, *pluralist evolution*, *technological adaptation*, *militant fundamentalism*, and *political disintegration*. His own feeling is that in the decade of the 1970s "the Soviet leadership will seek to strike a balance between the first and the third variants" and that "in the short run, development toward a pluralist, ideologically more tolerant system does not seem likely."²¹

19. For a discussion of the relation between participation and information see David E. Apter, *Choice and the Politics of Allocation* (New Haven, 1971), pp. 105–27.

20. C. S. Whitaker, Jr., "A Dysrhythmic Process of Political Change," *World Politics*, 19, no. 2 (1967): 190–217, and Samuel P. Huntington, "Political Development and Political Decay," *World Politics*, 17, no. 3 (1965): 386–430.

21. Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, p. 167.

Is Eastern Europe likely to replicate the pattern predicted for the Soviet Union? An answer may suggest itself by examining the various alternatives. Oligarchic petrification—defined as the retention of strict social controls by the ruling party with the help of dogmatic ideology and conservative bureaucracy, without major systemic innovations—is likely to be maintained by Albania, and in the short run possibly by Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia. The rest of the area is much more prone to move toward pluralist evolution of the sort identified with a change in the character of the party, along the lines of the Yugoslav model, and with the erosion of the traditional ideology. With this would come an increased activity of various economic and intellectual groups. Brzezinski feels that either a basic split in party leadership or, paradoxically, a “strong leader like Tito” would be required to impose pluralism on the reluctant bureaucracy.²²

Although this may be true for the USSR, recent experience shows that it does not necessarily apply to Eastern Europe. Admittedly, pluralist tendencies are still perceived by many party officials and ideologues as a major threat to the system, but it can be argued that in the face of economic stagnation and the resulting popular discontent, they are considered to be the lesser of two evils, especially if they can guarantee some measure of economic success. Moreover, the bureaucracy, traditionally a bastion of conservatism, is not as monolithic as we have been led to believe. In recent years it has been under increasing pressure from below, from the more pragmatic and better-educated younger members of the bureaucratic establishment.²³

The appearance of a major split in the top echelons of the party is both a symptom of economic and political malaise and a frequent cause of reforms which can go in either direction—toward liberalization and greater pluralism or toward repression and monism. Thus a serious split, although potentially helpful, is hardly a necessary and sufficient condition of pluralist evolution, especially at the present time, when by and large the Communist leadership in most of Eastern Europe appears to be more united than in the past. As regards strong leadership capable of pushing through certain drastic reforms, this is much less likely than in the late 1950s and 1960s. As Gregory Grossman suggested, “It would really take another Stalin to de-Stalinize successfully.”²⁴ True or ersatz charisma appears to be a thing of the past even in Yugoslavia, and with the possible exception of Rumania it is unlikely that it will be resurrected anywhere in the near future. The successful leaders such as Gierek, Honecker, and Kádár are middle-of-the-roaders, able to bal-

22. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

23. Zygmunt Bauman, “Twenty Years After: The Crisis of Soviet-Type Societies,” *Problems of Communism*, 20, no. 6 (November-December 1971): 45–53.

24. Comment made during the fall 1968 meeting of the Seminar on Comparative Study of Communist Societies at the University of California, Berkeley.

ance off the two extremist tendencies within their respective parties and to acquire some degree of genuine legitimacy by virtue of their commitment to, and emphasis on, modernization and consumerism.

Another alternative path that may be followed is that of technological adaptation, manifested in the ascendance of technocrats at the expense of ideologues and bureaucrats. It has been suggested that East Germany was the first Communist country in Eastern Europe to take that path and that the Gierek regime in Poland was also on the same road.²⁵ The problem with this alternative is that in addition to being difficult to define and "operationalize," it is also closely tied to the preceding one, that of pluralist evolution. In fact, it is hard to imagine a country choosing one without the other, at least in the short run. The emergence of pluralist tendencies in several East European countries was the direct result of the imperatives of economic modernization which required greater expertise, improved managerial skills, and more information. In other words, pluralism in its initial stage could easily be equated with the growing importance of technocracy. In the distant future pluralism may move beyond the narrow confines of technical and managerial expertise, but this is not likely to take place in the next decade or so.

If this reasoning is valid, then the pluralist evolution which may well appear in some of the countries in the area will be paralleled by technological adaptation. The timing as well as the direction and rate of change of both these processes will vary from country to country depending on many considerations (the intensity of socioeconomic crisis, the character of the ruling party and of its leadership, and so forth), but the probability of their eventual emergence appears quite high.

Brzezinski's final two variants—militant fundamentalism and political disintegration—do not seem to be relevant or applicable to Eastern Europe. The former, usually identified with Stalinism or Maoism, may continue to appeal to the Albanian leadership but hardly to anyone else, for obvious reasons. The alternative of political disintegration can be seriously entertained only for Yugoslavia after Tito's death. As suggested earlier, Yugoslavia is the only country in the area where the process of nation-building has not been accomplished successfully, and the process of state-building has not gone as far as in the other countries. Hence Tito's departure could bring about "internal paralysis in the ruling elite, the rising self-assertiveness of various key groups within it, splits in the armed forces, restiveness among the young people and the intellectuals, and open disaffection among the . . . nationalities,"²⁶ all of which add up to political and even national disintegration.

25. Peter Christian Ludz, *Parteielite im Wandel* (Cologne and Opladen, 1968), chap. 3 (pp. 153–258).

26. Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, p. 166.

Looking both back and ahead it can be speculated that at least during the remainder of the 1970s the majority of East European regimes will most likely follow a combined path of pluralist evolution and technological adaptation, thus diverging sharply from the USSR, which, according to Brzezinski, appears to aim at a synthesis of oligarchic petrification and technological adaptation.

By way of a footnote it ought to be mentioned that there is at least one other "model" of Soviet development, that of institutional pluralism, suggested by Jerry Hough, that could apply to both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.²⁷ If I understand it correctly, the model represents a combination of pluralism and technocracy in that it recognizes the existence of multiple interests in society which are mediated by the ruling elite with the help of experts. Although Hough makes a persuasive case for the adoption of his model, he may be somewhat too optimistic in his interpretation of recent Soviet developments, which means that his ideas are more applicable to Eastern Europe than to the Soviet polity.

Does all this mean that with the emphasis on technological adaptation, the next two decades will witness a gradual transformation of Eastern Europe into a post-industrial society? This seems to be the forecast of Daniel Bell, based on his analysis of changes in Western and Communist industrial societies.²⁸ The major changes, such as an industrial base of increasing complexity requiring sophisticated managerial skills, a modern occupational structure reflected in the growth of the technical intelligentsia, and a major expansion of government bureaucracy, are perhaps more pronounced in Eastern Europe than in the USSR, so that if Bell's prediction is valid for the latter it is even more applicable to the former. This does not mean, however, that Eastern Europe's transition to a post-industrial society is inevitable, or that if it is, it would necessarily follow the same course as other industrial countries. All that can be said is that the concept of post-industrial society as applicable to Eastern Europe does not conflict with the predictions based on the analysis of the previously discussed models and paradigms. It is interesting to note that in contrast to the Soviet Union, which has been strenuously denying the validity of the concepts of post-industrial society and of "convergence," in a number of East European countries there has been a good deal of concern, especially about the latter.²⁹

So much for trying to divine the future of Eastern Europe with reference

27. Jerry F. Hough, "The Soviet System: Petrification or Pluralism?" *Problems of Communism*, 21, no. 2 (March-April 1972): 27-29.

28. Bell, "The Post-Industrial Society," pp. 134-68.

29. Cyril E. Black, "Marxism and Modernization," *Slavic Review*, 29, no. 2 (June 1970): 182-86.

to similar attempts made for the Soviet Union. There is, however, another potentially fruitful approach to the problem of predicting the future of the area. I have in mind the possibility of using some of the models and paradigms developed for the study of nondemocratic *and* non-Communist polities generally known as “mobilization” or “revolutionary movement” regimes. One of the most stimulating efforts of this sort was recently made by Melvin Croan, who examined “the relevance of the Mexican political system as a model that might be approximated, if not actually imitated, by the East European party-regimes as they come to face up to the necessity of real institutional reform and accept the desirability of orderly political change.”³⁰ Croan feels that the key issues faced by the Mexican regime in the past, and to be encountered by Eastern Europe in the immediate future, are the perennial problems of the institutionalization and legitimization of political power in the hands of a single party, of popular participation in political processes, and of accommodation of competing interests. The conclusion that emerges is a familiar one: the “Mexican solution” for Eastern Europe is basically a function of the local leadership’s ability and willingness to find a compromise between the conflicting twin pressures of pluralism and the monopoly of power held by the Communist Party. Croan believes that an important condition for the successful solution of this dilemma would be the emergence in Eastern Europe of an “ideologically unencumbered, historically untainted ruling elite” who would be, as in Mexico, less power-hungry and opportunistic and more domestically oriented than their predecessors.³¹

It can be argued that this is already happening in several East European countries. The new generation of political leaders in East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Rumania appear to have relatively little use for ideology and even less for their party’s historical tradition. The disintegration of the monolith, the resurgence of nationalism, and the continuing international *détente* go hand in hand with greater concentration on domestic over foreign problems. It is perhaps too early to tell whether the new elite are any less opportunistic and power-hungry than the old. They are, however, above all realistic, and their apparent readiness to face the question of pluralist tendencies might be taken as proof that unlike the older generation, they are willing at least to consider the possibility of sharing power with other groups in society. Hence the “Mexican solution” for Eastern Europe appears plausible, and as such it does not contradict the hypotheses arrived at in the preceding section of this article.

Up to now the analysis of prospects for change in Eastern Europe has been conducted by using the generalized models and paradigms of political

30. Croan, “Is Mexico the Future of East Europe,” p. 453.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 479.

development and by comparing the sociopolitical processes in Eastern Europe with those in the Soviet Union and in the non-Communist mobilization regimes. All this may be seen as a "macro" approach, since either explicitly or implicitly the analysis has dealt with whole systems rather than their individual components. However, we may also take a "micro" approach to the problem of forecasting the future of Eastern Europe, by focusing on some key aspects of the political systems and by examining the potential impact of changes in these variables on East European societies. The variables or dimensions to be examined here are the *political cultures*, *political elites*, and *interest groups*.

In recent years there has been a revival of interest in the study of Communist political culture. The reasons seem to be, on the one hand, the continued fascination with the problem of "comparative communism," which increasingly tends to explain the differences between Communist societies by reference to their respective cultures, and, on the other hand, the dissatisfaction of some scholars with the state of methodology and theory in the field of Communist studies. The latter attitude has been most strongly articulated by Robert Tucker, who in a recent article suggested that instead of being treated as a "system," communism should be regarded as a "particular form of 'culture'—a political culture."⁸² This proposition was warmly seconded by Alfred Meyer, who called for a major research effort to focus on the comparison of Western and Communist political cultures.⁸³

Whatever the merits of these suggestions, our present purpose is a different one. We are above all interested in whether the existing political cultures in Eastern Europe are likely to have an influence on future political processes in the area. In view of the primitive state of knowledge of that phenomenon, the answer to this question must be couched in highly impressionistic terms.

By now most scholars would probably agree that despite considerable efforts either to destroy or to remake the traditional national cultures, the East European Communist regimes have not succeeded in completely eradicating them. In fact, it can be argued that after the intensive socialization and re-socialization campaigns during the Stalinist period, the ruling elites in most countries abandoned, for all practical purposes, the earlier attempts, and in some cases they even actively encouraged the revival of the old cultures. The arrival on the scene of the national Communist regimes first in Yugoslavia and then in Poland and Rumania, and more recently in East Germany, was accompanied by the emergence of an ideology representing a blend of new and old cultures and values. As time went on, the gap left

32. Tucker, "Communism and Political Culture," pp. 10–11.

33. Meyer, "Communist Revolutions and Cultural Change," pp. 368–70.

by the progressive erosion of Marxist ideology was gradually being filled by the new mix in which the traditional cultures were staging a dramatic comeback, in some cases aided by the party leadership.

The Ceaușescu regime in Rumania is today perhaps the best example of the synthesis of communism and nationalism, followed closely by the Polish and East German regimes. The appearance of the "Partisan" faction in Poland, culminating in the anti-Semitic excesses of 1968, testified to the considerable staying power of the less-attractive features of the Polish political culture, which managed to survive relatively unscathed the twenty years of Communist efforts to change them. The intensifying national conflict in Yugoslavia is another proof that, in Eastern Europe at least, the contest between communism and nationalism apparently is being resolved in favor of the latter.

The importance of the traditional political culture is likely to remain high in the immediate future, which means that national communism will continue to be the prevailing form of government. This trend may to some extent conflict with other sociopolitical tendencies such as pluralism and popular participation. With the single exception of Czechoslovakia, the traditional East European political cultures could hardly be characterized as favoring democracy. Hence the simultaneous convergence of pluralism, participation, and nationalism may lead to systemic instability. On the other hand, no such conflict is likely to occur if the East European polities move in the direction of technological adaptation, which tends to be value-neutral. In the preceding section I hypothesized that one of the possible paths to be followed by Eastern Europe might be a synthesis of pluralist evolution and technological adaptation. The persistence of nationalist political culture may either hinder or support this development—depending on the relative weights of the two tendencies. At this stage it is impossible to predict which of them will predominate.

The second systemic component to be investigated is the elites. Here again, in recent years there has been a significant increase in scholarly output analyzing the change in elite composition and character, its turnover and recruitment, and the relation between all these variables and the process of change in East European societies.³⁴ Whatever happens in the Communist systems as a whole or in their component parts, the ruling elite is bound to play a crucial role in regulating that process. Faced with the problem of speculating about the future of Eastern Europe, we are thus obliged to examine both the changes in the character and structure of the elites and their

34. R. Barry Farrell, ed., *Political Leadership in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Chicago, 1970); Carl Beck et al., *Comparative Communist Political Leadership* (New York, 1973).

potential impact on future developments in the area. For this purpose the concept of elites will be rather broadly defined to include not only the top political decision-makers but also the higher and middle-ranking echelons of party and government bureaucracy.

One of the fundamental axioms underlying our perception of Communist political systems has always been the strongly conservative character of Communist elites in general, and of bureaucratic elites in particular. In a sense this assumption was a necessary condition of our strong attachment to the totalitarian model, and its persistence was proved by its ability to survive the demise of totalitarianism as the analytical and explanatory device. Hence, even though in recent years Communist political systems are no longer described as totalitarian, but rather as "mobilization" or "command" systems, the notion that the deeply conservative elites are the major if not the sole obstacle to progress has remained unchallenged.

The question can be raised whether this assumption is valid today, or, for that matter, whether it always has been in the past. My inclination is to answer both questions in the negative. On the one hand, it can be argued in a somewhat simple-minded fashion that if bureaucratic and other elites have indeed been composed only of diehard conservatives, how could the various political and economic reforms in Eastern Europe have taken place in the last decade or so. On the other hand, my own relatively recent frequent encounters with members of the middle- and high-ranking elites in a number of East European countries convince me that the conventional wisdom that stresses the monolithic character of these elites is a myth and that in fact we are increasingly dealing with a heterogeneous group that is undergoing further differentiation with regard to age, education, and professional experience.

The next decade may well witness further expansion of the process of "circulation of elites" in the area. One of the reasons has already been suggested above: the growing realization by the top leadership that the strains and stresses of economic modernization and of political reconciliation and adaptation require a different kind of elite than the earlier processes of takeover, penetration, and mobilization did. In other words, the leaders in several East European countries have gradually become aware that the problems of the postmobilization stage, with its emphasis on reforms to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of systemic performance, could not be successfully solved by the same elites who had created the "command" system in the first place. This was especially true of the bureaucracy, which in some cases may have tacitly accepted the various economic reforms only to sabotage their subsequent implementation.³⁵ It is a well-known fact of Communist politics

35. Personal interviews in Prague in the spring of 1967.

that there is usually a rather lengthy time-lag between a major reshuffle at the top and a comparable change in the middle ranks of the party and bureaucracy. The reforms approved by a new leadership have to be administered by persons who often owe their allegiance to the former rulers. In theory, a reform-minded leadership often faces the difficult choice of either abandoning or postponing the reforms, or of engaging in a major purge of the middle-ranking apparatus which is bound to be lengthy and difficult. In practice, the regimes tend to compromise by reducing the scope of both the reforms and the purges.

In the most recent period, however, there are indications that the reformist regimes, such as those of Gierek in Poland and Honecker in East Germany, are accelerating and expanding the reforms in the apparent belief that bureaucratic resistance and inertia can be overcome by an implicit or explicit threat of comprehensive purges. This process is likely to continue, albeit cautiously and slowly, throughout the seventies.

The other major cause of bureaucratic elite turnover may well lie in the conflict between generations. Eastern Europe today is one of the "youngest" areas of the world, with professionally active persons accounting for a substantial share of the total population. This situation will eventually change, but in the short run, at least, young people in search of jobs are likely to exert considerable pressure not only on the economy but also in the political arena. This kind of pressure is often hard to resist, and in the case of a regime bent upon reform-making it may not be resisted but in fact welcomed. This appears to be the trend in Poland and East Germany since the respective changes in top leadership there in 1970 and 1971. Thus in the immediate future we may expect a continuing rejuvenation of elites throughout most of the area.

It should be stressed, however, that the elite turnover will not necessarily result in a democratization of East European politics. The new elites are likely to be younger, better educated, and more pragmatic and efficiency-minded than their predecessors. They are also likely to be more nationalistic and more deeply steeped in the traditional culture of their societies. None of these characteristics guarantee that they will also be more democratic. On the contrary, the traditional East European political culture always contained an antidemocratic bias, which I suspect has not been significantly diminished over the years. Although not necessarily inclined toward democracy, the new elites may well be more liberal than the old ones in the sense of favoring pluralist evolution and a somewhat greater participation by selected groups, in the name of higher efficiency of the system.

In a perceptive analysis of the elite crisis in the Communist systems, Zygmunt Bauman concludes that it is impossible to predict how the conflict

among elite groups will be resolved in the future.³⁶ Bauman believes that the East European countries are subject to elite cycles which begin to make themselves felt roughly twenty years after the imposition of Soviet-type communism in the area. The three competing elites are the "old guard," the "new guard," and the young technocrats, and their conflict can be resolved in three ways which closely resemble the alternatives suggested by Brzezinski—oligarchic petrification, pluralist evolution, and technological adaptation. Unlike Brzezinski, however, Bauman refuses to forecast the outcome of the struggle and argues that, in the immediate future at least, the elites currently in power are likely to stall and engage in half-measures to delay resolution of the conflict. I tend to disagree, in the belief that the various socioeconomic pressures make an early resolution of the conflict imperative.

The third and final systemic variable to be discussed here is pluralism. After the long hiatus that followed Skilling's seminal article, there has been a veritable outburst of scholarly works on different aspects of this particular process, and there is no need to recapitulate the various arguments.³⁷ There seems to be a high degree of consensus that pluralist tendencies are nowadays part and parcel of Communist systems, and the only disagreement concerns the meaning of the term. My own impression is that we have been so pre-occupied with definitions that we may have lost sight of some very interesting developments in this field. As stated earlier, I also expect pluralist evolution in Eastern Europe to continue in the immediate future.

Thus far the discussion of pluralist tendencies has been focused almost entirely on the growing visibility and importance of various managerial and technical groups that owed their advancement to the imperatives of modernization. The argument is a familiar one and does not require further elaboration. My purpose here is to speculate on the future of two key groups who may greatly affect the course of events in the area—the workers and the intellectuals.

The question may be asked whether the workers—the industrial labor—can properly be considered an interest group in the conventional sense. The answer is that instead of discussing the working class as a whole, we will focus on the labor unions as representing, formally at least, the interests and aspirations of the workers. Throughout most of the Communist rule in Eastern Europe, the unions functioned as obedient tools of the regime by acting out their roles as the classic "transmission belts." The workers themselves remained relatively quiescent except for a few occasions, such as the

36. Bauman, "Twenty Years After," p. 53.

37. For a listing of recent studies see T. H. Rigby, "'Totalitarianism' and Change in Communist Systems," *Comparative Politics*, 4, no. 3 (April 1972): 440.

Hungarian and Polish upheavals of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968, and most recently the explosion on the Baltic Coast of Poland in December 1970.

Will the East European working class remain passive or will it begin to make increasing demands on the respective regimes? Will the unions transform themselves into active pressure groups articulating the workers interests? Neither question is easy to answer. Potentially the most crucial element in this matrix is the attitudes and behavior of the "new working class." It is somewhat of a misnomer, since an important segment is not really "new," consisting as it does of the millions of men and women who entered industrial and other nonagricultural employment during the last twenty years. However, it appears that this particular group, composed mostly of former peasants, has largely shed its previous values, traditions, and attitudes, and has acquired the characteristics usually associated with a modern industrial working class. The synthesis of socialization, education, and urbanization has left its mark, and although the links between the factory and the village have not entirely disappeared, the peasant heritage has slowly given way to modern industrial and urban culture. The other segment of the "new industrial class" was in fact new, having been recruited in the late sixties and early seventies from among the young people born and brought up in the urban environment, who did not have to go through the painful process of acculturation.

It can be argued that the East European regimes succeeded beyond expectations in creating the new proletariat, who were presumed to provide strong support for the system which, after all, was responsible for the workers' privileged status. However, the behavior of Czechoslovak and Polish workers in 1968 and 1970 reveals that support to be at best problematical. In fact, the old adage about the Communist systems creating their own gravediggers may not be entirely apocryphal, because the new proletariat may at some point begin to take seriously the perennial ideological pronouncements about their leading position in society and begin to put pressure on the leadership to fulfill the party's promises.

This reasoning cannot, of course, be carried too far. It would be a mistake to assume that the potential growing activism of the working class is likely to augur an era of greater liberalization and democratization. In the end, the attitudes of the East European working class may not be all that different from the attitudes of French workers in May 1968 or of American "hard hats" in the latter stages of the Vietnam War—when the workers essentially sided with the respective governments against the intelligentsia and students demanding political and other reforms. The evidence coming from Eastern Europe is mixed. On the one hand, there is the example of the Warsaw workers who remained at best indifferent during the events of March 1968,

providing a living proof of continued deep social cleavages and conflicts in Poland which ultimately stymied the formation of a united front against the regime. On the other hand, the post-invasion collaboration between Prague workers and students in the fall of 1968, aimed at preserving some of the freedoms gained during the preceding period, is a testimony that such conflicts can be bridged in a moment of crisis.

Whether the new working class will become more militant in the future and, if so, which direction it will go will largely depend on the Communist leadership's willingness to recognize the problem, and on its ability to deal with it. The East European regimes have recently been made fully aware of the potentially explosive nature of workers' dissatisfaction, as demonstrated by the area-wide reverberations of the December 1970 riots in Poland.³⁸ The ruling elites have several options in trying to cope with actual or potential grievances. The obvious one is to raise the living standard of the workers, which can be accomplished in a variety of ways—by freezing the retail prices, raising wages, reducing norms and working hours, and so forth. Another option is to move in the direction of more genuine workers' self-government à la Yugoslavia. The regimes can also try to distract the workers from their own concerns by encouraging traditional nationalist and even chauvinist tendencies, and ultimately by implying the threat of possible foreign intervention à la Rumania. There is no reason why all these alternatives could not be pursued simultaneously, depending on the circumstances. Whatever path is chosen, there are signs that the problem of dealing with the new proletariat will occupy the attention of East European policy-makers in the near future.

If the regimes succeed in coming to terms with the workers, they will find it much easier to deal with the other important group—the intellectuals, or the “creative intelligentsia.” Space does not permit a full discussion of the relationship between the ruling and the intellectual elites. It may be hypothesized, however, that this relationship may well become increasingly antagonistic, especially as perceived by the intellectuals, who may find themselves intensifying their criticism of the system. The regimes can neutralize intellectual dissent in a number of ways: by improving the economic position and social status of the intellectuals; by re-emphasizing traditional national cultures and values; and by relaxing censorship, lowering barriers on foreign travel, and the like.

Future Communist policy in this particular area will most likely include the last element. My feeling is that the ruling elites in a number of East European countries will in fact permit a somewhat higher level of criticism and dissent than in the past.³⁹ Contrary to the generally accepted interpreta-

38. Personal interviews in Eastern Europe in the summer of 1971.

39. One example of a more liberal attitude in this respect was provided recently

tion of the increasingly more visible intellectual dissent in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, I am prepared to argue that it is a sign of strength rather than of weakness of the respective regimes. In the past, the paranoid and insecure elites were determined to stifle any signs of criticism as threatening the foundations of the system. But today some of the East European regimes appear to be much more secure and confident and hence more willing to tolerate dissent, which they may consider a kind of necessary safety valve. In fact, a leadership which, having chosen the path of pluralist evolution and technological adaptation, has succeeded also in gaining the support of the new proletariat may attempt to gain at least a modicum of genuine legitimacy by enlisting and cultivating also the support of the intellectuals.

The entire discussion so far has centered on East European internal problems and has treated foreign influences as a parameter. Such an analysis has the virtue of greater simplicity. Moreover, the various theoretical models, as well as the purely intuitive methods used to examine the prospects for change in the area, tend to leave out the exogenous variables. But such a procedure is highly unrealistic, especially in the case of Eastern Europe. No sensible predictions can be made without taking into account the attitudes of the Soviet Union—still the dominant power in that part of the world. In fact, as Triska and Johnson argued recently, “The most significant variable in explaining political system stability and change in Eastern Europe is thus Soviet security. It is the most important of all causal sequences of change, the most persistent system destabilizer, and the most reliable predictor of the trend of system change.”⁴⁰ Similarly, in my own effort to come up with a paradigm of liberalization in Eastern Europe I added an exogenous variable which was missing from the original version.⁴¹

Hence I fully agree that the inclusion of “outside” variables would greatly strengthen any attempt to forecast changes in Eastern Europe. I am also persuaded that the whole problem of external influences deserves a separate treatment of its own which simply cannot be undertaken here, if only for reasons of space. Suffice it to say that I consider it a serious omission which weakens the overall hypothesis emerging from the present discussion. This hypothesis is that at least during the next decade or so most East European

by the Gierek regime, which apparently lifted censorship from two Polish publications—*Trybuna Ludu*, the party's daily organ, and *Polityka*, a well-known political weekly. Also the regime's new policy of granting exit visas to intellectuals critical of it may be interpreted as a step in the same direction.

40. Triska and Johnson, “Political Development,” p. 46.

41. Andrzej Korbonski, “Comparing Liberalization Processes in Eastern Europe: A Preliminary Analysis,” *Comparative Politics*, 4, no. 2 (January 1972): 231–49, and “Liberalization in Eastern Europe: A Comparative View” (unpublished paper).

countries will undergo a series of changes on various fronts. They are likely to be subjected to pressures for greater *participation* and *subsystem autonomy* as a result of which they may move in the direction of both *pluralist evolution* and *technological adaptation*. This process of transition, which ultimately may bring Eastern Europe to the model of a "reconciliation" system à la Mexico, is likely to be accompanied by a renewed emphasis on traditional national cultures, by significant shifts in the composition and character of the ruling elites, and by the growing importance of the "new working class." The changes are likely to be accomplished smoothly rather than violently without threatening the stability of the respective systems, as the ruling elites, confident in their ability to cope with the various crises, strive to acquire genuine legitimacy by relaxing gradually some of the social and political controls.⁴²

Needless to say, my forecast is accompanied by standard caveats, making the probability of the various changes actually taking place basically undetermined. Nevertheless, the entire paradigm does not appear wildly unrealistic and unreasonable, and time will tell whether the prediction had some validity.

Before closing, a word about methodology and the agenda for future research. As I stated at the outset, this was an exercise in "futurology" conducted with the aid of both the generally accepted models and paradigms of political development and modernization and the more traditional and intuitive methods of historical and comparative analysis. It appears that both approaches yielded results that were not contradictory and which, in fact, tended to reinforce each other.

Much work still needs to be done in the general area of political change in Eastern Europe. We still do not know enough about the various processes at work in individual countries, and we need to expand our factual base. Once the empty boxes are filled, it may be possible to make some valid generalizations by comparing the experience of the various countries, with the help of some common paradigm based on precise definitions of individual variables.⁴³ Finally, as Montias suggested recently, a parallel effort should be made to correct the "almost ubiquitous failure to test hypotheses against the available data."⁴⁴ With this behind, the discussion of changes in Eastern Europe is bound to become even more interesting and intellectually rewarding.

42. For a different view see Gitelman, "Beyond Leninism," pp. 28-29.

43. One such paradigm is suggested by Huntington in his article "The Change to Change," p. 316.

44. J. M. Montias, "Modernization in Communist Countries: Some Questions of Methodology," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 5, no. 4 (1972): 413.