

Theme 3

Post-Communist Development of Political Parties & Oppositions

ERIC CHENOWETH

We introduce in this discussion perhaps one of the more important themes relating to the weakness of democratic transition throughout the post-communist region. The presentation is by **Arkady Dubnov**, a veteran independent journalist from the Russian Federation who in the early 1990s was deputy editor of *Democratic Russia*. There are two respondents, **Gábor Demszky**, a former Hungarian dissident and the former mayor of Budapest from 1990 to 2010, and **Isa Gambar**, the former chairman of Musavat, the main opposition party in Azerbaijan.

Presentation

The Tragedy of Failure & Political Parties in Russia

by **Arkady Dubnov**

Nearly twenty-five years ago, in 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed and democracy won its place in Russia. Today, we can see that this is no more than a myth. In fact, the creation of the Russian Federation was not the result of an ideological fight but simply the result of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Yuri Levada, a Russian sociologist, wrote that Soviet ideology was not strong enough to save the system from collapse and that this ideology died with the empire. This, too, is a myth. The Russian Federation is the only country other than Belarus where decommunization did not take place at all. And so we now go back to a mindset that rehabilitates the Soviet system and Soviet values, the most important of which is that the state is more important than the individual. The secret police and security services have not changed their oppressive nature. Their principal aim is unchanged: it is to maintain the regime, not to safeguard democratic institutions. Media are now functioning like the old Soviet propaganda machine.

Another illusion was that Russia adopted a free market economy. The planned economy continues to exist and the nomenklatura continues to

operate according to the old Soviet hierarchy. The new system has legalized the redistribution of private property and as a result the old nomenklatura now owns most property. Post-Soviet political parties are also in the hands of the former nomenklatura. One can see this extend to Crimea, where the state bureaucracy is restructuring to incorporate officials from one nomenklatura party to another, from the Party of Regions of Ukraine into the United Party of Russia.

Does all of this mean that pluralism and democratic processes were doomed to failure? There are differences of opinion here. I believe there was a possibility of following a democratic path. In 1991, we established the *Democratic Russia* newspaper from scratch and I was the deputy editor-in-chief. The newspaper ultimately went bankrupt but it showed that something was possible. I believe that if Yegor Gaidar's government had received political and financial support from the West on the scale of the assistance Germany and Europe received after World War II through the Marshall Plan, there would have been a chance for democratic change. But the West did not trust Boris Yeltsin because he had opposed and deposed Gorbachev and the West felt grateful to Gorbachev for the fall of the Iron Curtain and the reunification of Germany.

History is much more complex than just human interrelationships—we can see it also looking at the example of Ukraine. The failure of Russian democrats in the early 1990s—apart from their own mistakes—is also due partly to the euphoria of the West and the US. They believed that they had won the Cold War and were not interested in policies that would establish a strong Russia.

The tragedy of democracy's failure in Russia could be seen twenty-one years ago in the events of October 1993, the attack on parliament. What took place in Moscow was in fact a civil war. Absent the timely assistance from the West that Russia needed, the country had headed towards an economic collapse. And Yeltsin, by his own mindset, was not ready for compromise. That is why he had to fight against the attempted Red-Brown coup d'état; everybody remembers the tanks in those days attacking the parliament building. This tragedy became a personal one for Yeltsin. I used to speak with him in those days, both as a journalist and a human rights defender, and it was clear that after those days Yeltsin changed from any democratic orientation.

Another historical marker in the failure of Russian democracy was the presidential election in 1996. The leader of the Communist Party, Gennadi Zyuganov, would have won the elections if the results had not been falsified to ensure Yeltsin's victory. From this point on, the oligarchs took advantage of Yeltsin's weakened position and brought Putin to power.

Today, as before, the role of political parties in Russia is quite weak. There is not a real tradition of political pluralism in the country and it was unrealistic to think this could be achieved in the late 1980s or early 1990s. With Putin's United Russia Party, the "party of power" was recreated. Former prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin used to joke that whatever party you created in Russia would be the Communist Party. Today, however, Russia resembles more Tsarist Russia in that democratic institutions like political parties are only a façade; they are fake institutions. Some officials think that the return to Tsarist monarchy is just waiting for the right time.

As regards any political opposition, this word should be in quotation marks. All the "opposition" parties are single-personality parties based on their leader: Zyuganov's Communist Party, Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), even Yavlinsky's Democratic Party, known as "Apple."¹ There are differences among these parties, but they are all based on the character of the leader. The Communist Party would dissolve without Zyuganov; the same for Yabloko without Yavlinsky. Regardless, they exist in the political context where the United Russia Party is dominant.

The people who are aged 45 and over are the most likely to vote in elections, out of habit, and they are the most conformist. For these voters, the nation and the United Russia Party are one and the same. People are not interested in the party's platform or agenda. They focus only on the party's leaders in both presidential and parliamentary elections.

Of course, the State Duma, or parliament, plays only a technical role and the Kremlin regards it as part of the state administration. The role of the parties like the United Russia Party and the controlled opposition is to implement the policies of the executive branch, of the state.

We can see devolution of Russia in all directions. The country is moving towards autarchy as the outside world further isolates Russia. Its technological development has devolved. The country operates on the basis of legal nihilism and is ruled by force and violence. The result is clear. A few numbers: between 2008 and 2011, forty thousand people left Russia; in 2012, 122,000 left; in 2013, 186,000. We will see higher numbers.

The post-Crimean Russia is a country with serious vulnerabilities and disadvantages. Unfortunately, the West still focuses on Russia's leaders and not on the society and the nation. It is another example of the tragic clash of values of principles and practices as mentioned yesterday. Our colleagues who took the floor—Viačorka, Haindrava—stated their belief that decades are needed to pass before Russia is ripe for the changes that we hoped for in the early 1990s. If the West continues its policies, I agree.

¹ The Democratic Party of Russia is generally referred to as "Yabloko," or Yavlinski's bloc, which in Russian means "apple." — Editor's Note.

Responses

Gábor Demszky

I have to emphasize that I am not an analyst or political scientist. My perspective is developed from my involvement in politics and what I am doing now is totally different from what I did for 30 years. I was first of all an underground publisher for ten years. I published literature that was banned in Hungary. Then, between 1990 and 2010, I was the elected mayor of Budapest. I won five elections. In 2010, however, I got out of politics.

Regarding political party development in Hungary, I begin in the old times before 1990. We had only a democratic opposition, as it was called then. One could describe it as anti-communist and mostly liberal or radical in outlook. It was organizing a “flying university,” local independent organizations, like an initiative I founded to help the poor, and published samizdat. I was a leader in that democratic opposition. The guys who are now in power from the Fidesz party were at that time students of the “flying university,” the students of my opposition friends.

At the same time, there was a grouping that could be described as nationalist—not conservative but nationalist. They were mostly writers, some very well known, but they always said that they were neither in opposition nor anti-communist. In their view, there were good nationalist-oriented communists with whom they could cooperate. The main difference between the two groups was that we in the democratic opposition were outside the system, generally unemployed and on the margins, while the nationalist writers were mainly insiders working within the system, whose works could be published or performed in the theater and so on. In 1985, we organized a conference with the most famous nationalist writers as well as with reform economists, who were closer to us but working in state research institutions and not marginalized like the democratic opposition. We had a very interesting discussion but it did not unite us.

From these groupings, the first non-communist political parties were formed. In 1989, we in the older democratic opposition formed a liberal party, the Alliance of Free Democrats (SzDSz) and the younger activists started the Federation of Young Democrats, or Fidesz. A little earlier, the nationalist writers and their allies in educational institutions formed the Hungarian Democratic Forum, or MDF. Several historical parties were also reestablished, like the Smallholders, Christian Democratic, and Social Democratic parties, led by people we had not heard of before and who, we thought later, were likely manipulated by the secret police.

The liberal party, the Alliance of Free Democrats, gained strength due to the referendum it organized in November 1989 on the party-state. The referendum had four questions: whether Socialist Party structures, or cells, should be allowed in workplaces; whether the Socialist Party should own assets; whether the Workers' Guard, the factory-based militia, should continue to exist; and lastly on whether there should be a direct or indirect vote for president. Ninety-five percent of those who cast ballots voted "No" to the first three questions against the party-state system and a large majority voted "No" to direct presidential elections. The last question was a vote against the possibility of a strong communist leader assuming a dominant position in power. (At the time, Imre Pozsgay, the Socialist Party chairman, was likely to win such a position; he is now an adviser to Viktor Orbán.) The referendum results were a large and decisive anti-communist vote. With their ballots, people were choosing capitalism and democracy.

But despite that large victory, we lost the first free elections in the spring of 1990. The MDF and historical parties won a majority of seats in parliament while the liberal parties, SzDSz and Fidesz, and the Socialists were all put in opposition. József Antall, the leader of the MDF who became Hungary's first post-communist prime minister, accepted the existing constitution and also understood and accepted that he had an opposition that was strong in a lot of large cities. On some issues, he led mainly by consensus and there was an agreement among all the parties to privatize property and to establish a capitalist system allowing foreign investment. It was an historic compromise that lasted from 1990 to 1994 and that put Hungary on the path to change.

Unfortunately, this agreement broke down in the so-called "media war" that began over who should head the state television and radio. The nationalists thought that they should be the main influence in the state-owned media and the struggle alienated a lot of voters. Partly as a result of this struggle, the nationalist MDF lost the election in 1994 and the post-communist Socialist Party won an absolute majority of seats in parliament. Despite winning a majority, the Socialists invited the SzDSz to enter into coalition and it was here that we were very unclever. It was a fundamental mistake to join the government. At that point, Fidesz became the largest opposition party and took a radical liberal position against "us," now united with the Socialists. But from this position, Fidesz turned quickly to the right to supplant the MDF as the conservative nationalist party. In 1998, Fidesz won the elections and ruled for four years. I, myself, throughout this period, was always the mayor of Budapest, winning a large majority in elections as the SzDSz candidate.

In 2002, Fidesz lost the elections, and again in 2006, mainly due to the more liberal vote in Budapest. For eight years, there was again a

Socialist-Liberal government and it did not function well at all. It governed during two huge economic crises during which time the term liberal became a stigma, associated with multinational companies and foreign banks that were seen as taking advantage. A very strong propaganda campaign was waged against the liberals. Fidesz also used the politics of memory to re-analyze the past, especially the 1956 Revolution, and assumed the position of a radical anti-communist party. Slowly, an economic populist, nationalist ideology took hold.

Fidesz gained power in the 2010 elections in a landslide, securing more than two-thirds of parliamentary seats and ousting the unpopular Socialist Party that hasn't managed to rebound since.

This time, Fidesz prepared for when it came to power. Within months of the 2010 election victory, using its two-thirds majority, Fidesz put forward a number of laws. The first was the Law on Media. In effect, it allowed Fidesz and its allies to gain a near-monopoly over the media. Today, Fidesz supporters own 85 percent to 90 percent of the media. The law also effectively ex-communicated smaller religious groups, so to speak, because they lost national subsidies for their media. Generally since taking office, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has curtailed democratic values by systematically limiting freedom of press and religion, weakening the system of checks and balances, and disregarding the rule of law.

What's most disturbing is how direct Orbán has been in his plot to centralize power. He is not hiding behind flowery rhetoric about "freedom," Orbán has explicitly announced that he plans to build an "illiberal state" modeled after Russia and other authoritarian states.² So far, his plan has proven fruitful: in April 2014, the Fidesz-Civic Union again won a two-thirds supermajority in Parliament. This was due in part to new election laws that international observers have said disfavor the opposition through gerrymandering and lowering the requirements for parties to appear on the ballot, thereby splitting the anti-government vote.³

Now, Hungary's orientation towards Europe has been put in question. The Speaker of the National Assembly, László Kövér, even said that if Brussels goes on resembling Moscow, it would be worthwhile to consider breaking from the European Union. Such a divorce would be an economic disaster, since 6.3 percent of Hungary's GDP comes from European

² See, news reports on the speech in Romania where Orbán announced his plan, for example "Orbán Says He Seeks to End to Liberal Democracy in Hungary," by Zoltan Simon, Bloomberg News, July 28, 2014). — Author's Note.

³ See "Hungary Elections: Four More Years," *Economist*, April 5, 2014. — Author's Note.

taxpayers, while 95 percent of Hungarian public investments are at least partially financed from Brussels.⁴

In general, we describe what has developed using the term “the Hungarian octopus,” a post-communist mafia state. Indeed, corruption has always been a problem in Hungary, but never before has it been practiced in such an obvious fashion as of late. Some politicians now even embrace it as a patriotic quality.

The international community is no longer staying silent. Both the United States and the European Union are starting to realize that a new Cold War is brewing right in their own backyard. President Obama publicly condemned Hungary for its harassment of NGOs in September and the US government banned six Hungarians implicated in corruption charges from entering the country. The national tax authority has gained a seedy reputation in recent years, having been accused of turning a blind eye to VAT fraud committed by government cronies and of bribing American companies with tax breaks in return for funding policy papers that favor Orbán’s administration.

So we are going back, not just in Russia, but now also in Hungary. Again we are in a situation where we are in opposition not to a government but to a system, where it is not possible to change the government by elections but one must organize opposition by other means.

Isa Gambar

I will speak about the party that I represented for twenty-two years. The Musavat Party is the oldest party in Azerbaijan. It was established initially in 1911, so we celebrate more than 100 years of existence. In 1918, the Musavat Party was the main political force that established the Republic of Azerbaijan and it governed the country for two years. It was the first and at that time the only democratic country in the Islamic world. Musavat initiated many reforms and legislation, including granting universal suffrage and the right to vote for women, ahead of many European countries. And it should be noted that while women were having to struggle for universal suffrage in Europe and the US, the male leadership of Musavat took this initiative in Azerbaijan: men fought for the rights of women to vote.

Russia recaptured Azerbaijan in 1920, this time under the banner of Bolshevism and the Red Army. Thousands of members of Musavat were liquidated in the work and prison camps of Lenin and Stalin. The book of Oleg Volkov describes the dignified behavior of Musavat prisoners in the Solovki prison camp. We tried to fight in an underground movement

⁴ See the EU Commission’s Hungary country page (http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mycountry/HU/index_en.cfm). — Author’s Note.

against the Bolshevik Party, even after the Stalin purges and the adoption of the 1937 Penal Code, but most of the activities were carried out in exile abroad by Musavat's founder, Mammed Amin Rasulzade, who left after being imprisoned and internally exiled. After being pressured by the Turkish government to stop his anti-Bolshevik activities, Rasulzade left Istanbul in 1929 and organized activities in Warsaw, Paris, and Bucharest, where he played an important role in establishing both anti-Bolshevik and anti-Fascist blocs in Europe. After the war, he returned to Turkey and continued the party's activities.

The ideas of the Musavat party were spread again in the '60s, in an underground movement, when activists sought to rebuild the party inside the country, with support from the outside party. As a result, when the Azerbaijan Popular Front was created to press for Azerbaijan's independence, the Front recognized the original program of Musavat as the basis for the independence platform. There were different organizations represented in this movement, including social democrats, national democrats, and even the Islamic Party, although these do not have strong followings today. During the late *perestroika* period, the leaders of the Musavat party in exile in Turkey communicated with us in the democratic movement encouraging us to formally reestablish the party in Azerbaijan. We did this in 1992 and it has been operating in Azerbaijan ever since. So there was a clear thread of continuous existence.

Let me focus on a few issues. I agree with Mr. Dubnov that Russia has not dealt with its history and unfortunately Stalinist sentiments are re-emerging. But I would argue that the collapse of the Soviet Union *was* the result of an ideological struggle, one between liberalism and Bolshevism. In Azerbaijan, liberalism, represented by Musavat, fought against Bolshevism for 100 years. The Musavat Party fought continuously for people's freedom and the independence of our nation, in that order. Mammed Amin Rasulzade, Musavat's founder, articulated an ideology more than 100 years ago that placed the rights of the individual first, ahead of the rights of the state or nation. The fight against Russian and Azerbaijani Bolshevism was continuous and always related to this liberal idea. But national independence was also important in counteracting Azerbaijani Bolshevism, which of course, tied the fate of the country to Russian Bolshevism.

While many people in Russia (and elsewhere) consider Musavat to be a nationalist party, this means simply that Musavat supports national independence, which of course remains important to us today. But more than 100 years ago, the Musavat Party promoted ideas of liberalism and this is our heritage. The 1918 constitution relied on the concept of citizenship, regardless of national origin, ethnicity, or religion. And this is our policy today. I remember also Chernomyrdin saying that "whatever party we

establish will be the Communist Party.” We, however, were determined that the Musavat Party *not* resemble the Communist Party. We have succeeded.

For example, at its Congress this year, we abided by new statutes limiting the number of terms of the chairman, and so I did not run. I also did not formally endorse any successor. This is extremely important in Azerbaijan. Ilham Aliyev introduced in 2009 a referendum specifically removing the two-term limit on the president’s office so that he could win a third term. We therefore introduced this term limit within the party. At the congress, four candidates ran for the office of chairman, with two candidates having a serious chance to win. In the second round, the vote was 54-46 percent, which demonstrates a party structure that follows democratic procedures. In conditions of dictatorship, Musavat is insisting on being a *democratic* party. This is one reason why we are the leading opposition party in Azerbaijan that continues to have a large support in society. In normal conditions, in a free and fair election, Musavat would win. I assert this based on alternative vote counting and exit polls in prior elections as well as the results of many opinion polls. I would be happy to see free and fair elections in our country to see if I am right.

The crux of the matter is that in Russia there is a different notion of what democracy means. In Russia, people view democrats as having caused the collapse of the Soviet Union and the economic collapse in Russia. In Azerbaijan, democratic parties are seen as the leading force for achieving independence. It is why democratic movements in Azerbaijan, Moldova, Georgia, or the Baltic States are seen in a positive light. Also, during our year in power, people saw that we fought against corruption, while the Aliyev regime has raised corruption to its highest levels and no one is held accountable for it.

Let me turn though to the role of international factors on political parties and opposition in Azerbaijan. These are firstly related to the direct negative influence of Moscow. I am not being original here when I say that the current situation in Azerbaijan is the result of the Kremlin’s policies. For one, the frozen conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh was created by Moscow and it is Moscow that did not and does not allow this problem to be solved. There is a joke in Russia that any post-Soviet states that want to stay independent must pay a tax, a real-estate tax of 20-30 percent. Georgia has paid with Abkhazia and South Ossetia; Moldova pays with Transdnierster; now Ukraine pays with Crimea and possibly eastern territories. It is not a singular phenomenon. Moscow also participated in the military coup in 1993 that caused the collapse of our democratic government. Thereafter, Russia sent special “electoral” teams to support the dictatorship’s elections to counteract the OSCE and Western observers.

The West should have an interest in the spread of democracy in Azerbaijan and other countries of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States).⁵ We understood this. I agree with Mr. Haindrava's comments yesterday citing the mistakes of the West. We are not fighting for anything special from the West. We are fighting to be considered in the West's interest because we believe that democracy is not a mere word. The spread of democracy is a pragmatic self-interest of the West. So, when the West commits these mistakes, it is to the West's detriment as well as our own.

Specifically, I wish to discuss the Western approach to supporting democratic institutions in post-Soviet societies. Western donor organizations support media and NGOs but ignore political parties. I am happy that the European Parliament gave the Sakharov Award to one of our NGO leaders who is a political prisoner [Leyla Yunus] or if other awards go to prisoners who are journalists and NGO activists. But political activists are ignored. Do they not deserve support? Arif Hajili was imprisoned twice, once for 1½ years and once for 2 years. Two of Musavat's leaders are now imprisoned. Journalists are courageous and deserve grants and awards. But they earn a living from this work. Opposition political activists lose everything, including their jobs. Their families lose everything for them to be active in politics. Perhaps this Western preference for supporting media is that journalists, unlike political activists, are not aiming for political power. The fight for power is seen somehow as less than honorable. It is an odd preference for democracy promoters. They should know that the fight for power in authoritarian countries is heroic and the authoritarian governments treat political activists as traitors. Western leaders do not conceive of how difficult the situation is for our political activists.

Mr. Dubnov reminded us that in Russia in 1996, Zyuganov would likely have won were it not for falsifying the vote. I would ask him, though, what would have happened if Zyuganov had been allowed to win. We know in Poland that after Lech Wałęsa, Aleksandr Kwasniewski, the leader of the post-communist party, won the presidential elections and then Poland became a member of NATO and we saw a succession by leaders of other parties. Russia is not the same as Poland, though.

⁵ The Commonwealth of Independent States was established as a successor "entity" to the Soviet Union as part of the Belavezha Accords, named after the location of the state dacha where the leaders of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine formally declared the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Eight other newly independent states joined the CIS in 1992 and Georgia joined in 1993. Georgia withdrew, however, following the war with Russia in 2008 and Ukraine left in 2014. The CIS currently comprises nine full members (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) and one associate member (Turkmenistan). — Editor's Note.

Discussion

ARKADY DUBNOV

Mr. Gambar poses a very interesting question. What would have happened had Zyuganov become leader of Russia? There was a joke at that time. “Question: What is Zyuganov’s worst nightmare? Answer: That he becomes president.” Politics in Russia is a business. The “opposition” politicians were not and are not contesting for power. They felt and still feel quite comfortable in the situation of systemic opposition and they are provided with this comfortable position by a core electorate, groups of voters characterized by conformism.

If Zyuganov had achieved power, it would have been quite evident quickly that the communists he represented were not capable of managing the economy in today’s world. They might have had political support for their economic policies but these would have driven the country to an even bigger economic crisis than what we had in the 1990s. Perhaps some of you know Sergey Glazyev. He is a current political adviser to the president but before was an adviser to Zyuganov. He proposed then to print more roubles and to use them to buy American currency so that the US economy would collapse. This is the level of thinking of economics of these politicians. I do not think, therefore, that Zyuganov’s victory would have resembled the Polish outcome with Kwasniewski, who represented a completely different communist group. In Russia, it would have ended in nightmare or bloodshed. It was a compromise of the democratic process in 1996 to ensure Yeltsin’s victory, but there was an unfortunate dilemma.

SERGEY DUVANOV

The speakers offered us an analytical overview of the situation but we did not hear much about the reasons why. Why are things as they are now? I did not see the reasons why we find ourselves in this situation, in this place. We were asked to look at where we are after this twenty-five-year period. It is only when we answer this question that we can answer the question of what is to be next. Unlike Georgia, some of us are at the starting point; some of us have even gone backwards. What is next? We have worked for twenty-five years only to lose to our ideological opponents. We need to talk about this to discuss how we are going to work tomorrow.

IVLIAN HAINDRAVA

I do not believe we came here with the hope of finding out one answer. What is to be done in Georgia is one thing, in Kazakhstan another, and another still in the Baltic States. In that regard, we all speak and discuss interesting ideas here; perhaps they will develop into more concrete proposals.

I would like to commend Arkady Dubnov and Mr. Gambar for their comments. Here one could see the difference first between how it was seen from the imperial center and how it was seen from the colonies. In Moscow, they saw developments as the collapse of empire. In the colonies, they saw events as a fight for independence. Interestingly, the communists regained power in the colonies, but not in Russia, in the center; rather the communists accused Yelstin of letting the great empire collapse.

What happened and what happens today in Russia effects the remaining neighboring states, both the former republics and the other states of the region, but also with global consequences. In Russia, as Arkady describes, there was an ideological vacuum. When the Soviet Union collapsed, nothing replaced the former ideology. Alexandr Dugin's Eurasianist idea existed before him but he has turned this into an official ideology, whether we like it or not. It is natural to fill a political void with a conservative, nationalist ideology. Putin's conservatism, however, differs from English conservatism, which tends inward, away from the European Union. Putin's conservatism joins together Soviet and Russian imperialism.

As this ideology is being advanced so quickly, I can hardly predict its future. But as far as the Russian world is concerned, it is being transformed into a clear and evident challenge to the democratic world as an anti-liberal and anti-democratic ideology with global consequences. If it remained local, that would be one thing, but this phenomenon extends farther. It is not simple. Note that while presenting his idea of the Eurasian Economic Community, Putin said it was an historic decision for all countries of the post-Soviet region. I stress *all*.

In Georgia, we considered the concerns of the Baltic States towards Russian expansion and imperial attitudes with some irony. "Why do you worry so much? You are members of NATO after all, not like us." But I believe now that the threats are real for the Baltic States. Georgia didn't manage to join NATO but it is moving to the West as part of a national consensus—a rare occurrence in Georgia. Our message to our partners in the West, "Don't leave us alone with this threat." Article 5 does not apply to us, but please don't leave us alone to face this threat.

TUNNE KELAM

These were very interesting presentations and I have two questions to the presenters. My first question is to Gábor Demszky. You said that we need to have a change from the present system in Hungary. But with whom and relying on what principles? The most popular comment this morning was Chernomyrdin's quip that the communist spirit would survive in all new political parties. The Hungarian liberals were not free from that spirit. As you said, they made the fundamental mistake two times to join with

the nomenklatura party. It reminds me of the famous last scene of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* when the pigs stood on their hind legs and all the animals could see that there would not be any difference between pigs and humans. So my question is what would have been the alternative path? Was there a better option?

For Arkady: you said that decades will pass before Russia is ripe for reforms. But is there a chance to speed up developments? Lilia Shevtsova commented ten years ago that in Russia they were pretending to have democracy while in the West people were pretending to believe in Moscow's pretending. Putin doesn't have to pretend anymore. But is there anything more positive in the development of Russia? Is there any maturation towards democracy?

I wanted to ask also a question on the issue of a Marshall Plan. It was an intriguing idea for all of us and is even today. The Marshall Plan is a fundamental example of solidarity for getting out of crisis. But how could such a Marshall Plan have been offered? To whom would it have been channeled? Yes, it is true that the West did not trust Yelstin and his corrupt entourage. But the Baltic States, too, were not offered a Marshall Plan. The difference was that in the Baltics, new parties, new freedom movements developed on their own, of their own initiative, and developed relationships with Western funding partners. This means first they developed grass-roots level relations and mutual trust, which was followed by economic assistance. The important thing is you need both sides to be ready: the Western side must be prepared to offer assistance, but the other side must be ready to use it in the interests of their democracy, not simply as a chance to grab money.

GÁBOR DEMSZKY

Your question is an important one. I think that now we are in a very similar situation as in the time before 1990. There were different opposition groupings that disagreed with each other, there was a lot of heterogeneity, but in the democratic opposition they all agreed that they opposed communism and we needed to change the system. And we need this agreement today that we are against a new system that is also illegitimate and we must change this system. For me, I think there is no other path than to return to the old, liberal, European, democratic principles.

In general, I would like to see more people in the street and less articles by intellectuals about how they differ from one another. I would like to see more agreement on the objective that we need European, liberal democracy and that Europe is where we belong.

ARKADY DUBNOV

Mr. Kelam asks a question that is hard to answer, but I will try. Today, I saw on Facebook something that I thought must be a historical joke. Two hundred peacekeepers from Germany will be sent to southern and eastern Ukraine to monitor the truce between the separatists (that include Russian troops) and Ukrainian forces. Seventy years after the victory over Nazi Germany, German troops are now peacekeepers among the past war's victors who are now at war with each other.

Friday, there was an investment forum. The former minister of economy under Putin, German Gref, who is now a head of a private bank, criticized Putin's economic policy and he likened the current situation to the old communist old boys' network. He publicly criticized Putin. Perhaps, it initiates the revolt of the economic elites in Russia. The fact that there was coverage in print and broadcast media is a positive sign. What it will lead to is not clear.

Certainly, we don't need a Marshall Plan today. Russia offers its own Marshall Plan, first with its military. In Belarus, Russia sustains the Lukashenka regime in power thanks to its economic policies and with its military bases. Russia now does not need a Marshall Plan. Russia has to restore the position of the middle class and for that a different fiscal and economic policy is needed to promote small and medium-sized enterprises and to have the interests of the middle class represented. This is lost now due to Putin's policies.

That is why it is extremely important to strike a balance on the sanctions against Russia, distinguishing between those sanctions targeted against Putin and those against any economic elites who revolt. If we increase sanctions, it may be detrimental. Mr. Landsbergis said it earlier: Russia is a country with an imperial mindset. People react to economic difficulties by responding positively to the Kremlin's propaganda to support the greatness of Russia. Russians are proud of their country. They may face serious difficulties but they want to feel part of a great power that others are afraid of. So, we have to think about withdrawing sanctions to prevent this mindset. Such pressure over the long term may end up in tragedy.

Let me return to the role of Germany in this situation. Its role is huge. It behaves in a very strict way and then it conducts a policy based on a fear of withdrawal of energy supplies. Germany is dependent on gas and oil supplies supplied from Russia through its pipelines. Putin understands this very well and uses it. To find a balance between a policy of principles and pragmatism will be difficult.

VINCUK VIAČORKA

Sergey asked a vital question. But Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin has clarified this question. He recreates the totalitarian imperialist challenge that existed from before twenty-five years ago. Some of us thought this had disappeared, but now we can see this totalitarian imperialist threat has reemerged. Putin made it clear when he said that the major geopolitical tragedy of the twentieth century was the collapse of the Soviet Union. And he has been consistent in his policy to reverse this so-called tragedy, this so-called catastrophe, in the twenty-first century, by shedding the blood of his own nation and the blood of other nations. I was struck by the news from the Pskov oblast that widows of these poor soldiers who were killed—and I say poor because they are being forced to fight for this idea—that these widows agreed that the graves of their husbands would be anonymous. They betray the memories of their own husbands, the most basic violation of morality, for this imperial idea.

Putin has achieved what he wanted to achieve: between seventy and ninety percent of Russians support Putin and Putinism. Arkady Dubnov is an exception of his generation and possibly of generations to come. And so we are forced to confront again this primary challenge. It should sober us. Vytautas Landsbergis says we must accept the West as it is. In this case, however, we must realize that this is a West made up of all Chamberlains and no Churchills. While Western Europe takes an appeasement attitude, we in Central and Eastern Europe are bordering this threat. It is Ukraine which stands for European values right now.

In my view, we must go back to the idea of mass political and social movements to face this challenge. The Ukrainian revolution of values and decency has shown it. The people were at the forefront. Politicians were following, in the back.

SMARANDA ENACHE

Founder and Director, Liga Pro Europa

I would like to add the perspective of Romania to try to answer the question of how democratic are political parties in Central and Eastern Europe.

Before December 1989, Romania had one political party, the Romanian Communist Party, whose last leader for twenty-five years was Nicolai Ceaușescu. All other political parties were repressed and their leaders and activists spent long periods of time in prison. During the December 1989 revolution, ordinary people came out against the regime but so also did the second rank communist leaders, those who were seen during Ceaușescu's time as possible opponents of Ceaușescu, the "more

liberal” communists who organized the National Salvation Front led by Ion Iliescu. Their idea was to appeal to all non-communist opponents of the regime to join this Front. They didn’t succeed in this goal. As early as January 1990, leaders of three historical parties, persons who had been imprisoned for decades during the communist regime, re-established these parties, namely the National Peasant Party, National Liberal Party, and Social Democratic Party. A new party was created representing the Hungarian minority, the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR).

No new party was created from the dissident intellectuals, many of whom in fact were semi-dissidents who accommodated somewhat to the Communist regime. Instead, the dissidents formed movements like the Civic Alliance and other professional organizations. The National Salvation Front of Iliescu also encouraged the creation of extremist nationalist parties, like the Greater Romanian Party. Working in coalition with these extremist parties, the NSF tried to eliminate the historical parties and crushed student demonstrations in June 1990 in Bucharest because the students backed the historical parties.

In 1992, the National Salvation Front, part of which later renamed itself the Social Democratic Party of Romania, won the national elections and held power from 1992 to 1996. This party represented the national communists from the Ceaușescu period. At that point, the three historical parties, the UDMR, the Civic Alliance, and other civic movements came together in a coalition and they won the 1996 elections under the banner of the Democratic Convention. The first non-communist president, Emil Constantinescu, was also elected. But already, in the period of 1992–96, the communists had succeeded in confiscating the Romanian economy by becoming the new bankers and capitalists and they also succeeded in re-constituting the security services. So during the four years the democratic forces were in power, they could not control either the economy or the security services. It was a period of high inflation and economic decline. Not surprisingly, in 2000, the former communists, under the new name Social Democratic Party, won again the parliamentary and presidential elections.

From that time, they reinforced their control over the old structures of the Romanian economy, appropriated the program and the language of the historical parties and civic movements, and then went about undermining and destroying one after another the historical parties. In the case, of the Social Democratic Party, the former communists simply absorbed it. The other main historical parties were infiltrated and financed by former communists and became derivative branches of a common tree. They all utilize very well the language of democracy and display loyalty to Euro-Atlantic institutions, but within the country these parties have corrupted the values and principles of democracy, human rights, and human dignity.

Today there is not one single party in the Romanian parliament that is fully loyal to the principles of the anti-totalitarian and anti-communist movements that brought the people to the streets of Bucharest and so many other cities in December 1989 and in 1990.

We know that political parties are key to democracy. If the loyalty of political parties to democratic principles is a function of circumstance or just a façade, what will happen if Romania has close to its borders an aggressive Russia that, let us say, offers the return of Bessarabia to Romania, to feed or nourish the ideas of Greater Romania. Unfortunately, there is no perspective for new parties. The law on parties in Romania is, next to that of the Russian Federation, the least democratic or liberal in Europe. One needs 25,000 signatures coming from all 41 counties to register a national party. There is no possibility to register any local or regional party. There is no prospect for the time being of registering a new party to continue the principles of the December 1989 anti-communist appraisal and to be loyal to the authentic ideas of democracy. So, we have “democratic” parties without democratic politicians.

MILJENKO DERETA

We did not speak very much about the internal structure of political parties. I think it is an important matter. I find the example of the change of leadership in the Musavat party described by Mr. Gambar a very good and mature one. In Serbia, the leaders of the political parties are still the same as in the 1990s. And when there are internal elections it is very characteristic for them to result in party disintegration and a split of the party.

As you know, Yugoslavia had a different history than Russia and an important aspect of its development was that national communist parties formed in each of the republics under the umbrella of the League of Communist Parties of Yugoslavia. This created an intense dialogue among communist parties that resulted in more intra-party pluralism than the current multi-party system in Serbia or other post-Yugoslav countries. But in the late 1970s there was also the introduction of an ethnic or national aspect into their political party programs and this became the basis of the tragedy of civil war. When a multi-party political system was introduced, those who formed the new parties did not have any political program. The only political program to speak of was nationalist. They did not know anything else to do. And there was an atmosphere of vengeance among the different national communists that was easily transformed to start wars. The old communist party became the basis for introducing independence. The leading communist figure in Slovenia was the first president of independent Slovenia.

There was also disintegration in society. It is now very hard to say who political parties represent. Do they represent the workers? Which workers? Thus, it is less a question as to what constituencies the parties represent than it is the question of who controls the political parties. In Serbia, it is not the former communists who control the parties but the former secret services. It is the secret services that came to power to run the parties. It is very hard now in Serbia. The former communists, dominated by the secret services, are now in power, without any political program except nationalism. I fear this will result in more tragedy.

What was very tragic for the development of the whole region was the perception of the left as communist, or former communist. The democratic left option does not exist in the Balkans or elsewhere. If you place yourself on the left, you are considered a communist. We know this is not true, but without an alternative political offer to the workers, you will not have a real stable democratic political system. In that sense, we did not see the positive political changes we expected because there is still an authoritarian approach to how to run the country without any care of the needs of citizens.

TATIANA VAKSBERG

Independent journalist

I am speaking one day before the Bulgarian parliamentary elections; I will vote here in Warsaw at the embassy. But after Sunday we expect more or less the same. The elections will likely be won by a party that describes itself as center-right, led by a man named Boiko Borisov. He is a graduate of the Academy of the Ministry of the Interior and was a bodyguard of Todor Zhivkov, the former communist leader for 27 years, as well as for King Simeon II, the Bulgarian tsar, after he returned to Bulgaria. This biography shows the whole problem of the Bulgarian transition. How is it possible for someone to be the bodyguard of two opposite political tendencies, the communist leader and the tsar exiled by the communists, and then become leader of the most successful Bulgarian political party? Boiko Borisov's party is poised to win again tomorrow for the third time. He is a person with high popularity among Bulgarians. No other political party has won successive elections for parliament.

What happened to political parties in Bulgaria? Until 2001, we had a relatively stable political system with two major parties, the Socialist Party, the renamed former communist party, and the Union of Democratic Forces, a coalition of several political groups similar to the Democratic Convention in Romania. The UDF had one stable period of governance, between 1997 and 2001, with a government led by Ivan Kostov. This anti-communist coalition came to power after a very dramatic period in

Bulgaria. There had been two years of political and economic instability, hyper-inflation, and high unemployment and poverty. Several reforms were begun at that time, but the most important of them, like pension and health care reform, were never completed and remain uncompleted until today.

In 2001, Simeon II, declared that he wanted to rule Bulgaria again. In fact, he had been the titular ruler in exile until the fall of communism and in 2001 he decided he wanted to return to the country. He had a huge support among Bulgarians although he never articulated any political platform. He said he wanted to change the political system because it did not work. When asked what he would do, he said he would decide when he was in power. It was his answer to many questions. He would say he would improve the lives of Bulgarian citizens but when asked how, he would say he would learn how when he was elected and began to govern.

The party he created was an eponymous one called National Movement—Simeon II. It is the only political party I know of that was given its political orientation by a news agency. Simeon II never ascribed any political orientation to the party but Reuters, presuming it had to be rightist, called it such, so the party started to assume a rightist label. During the four years of Simeon II's rule, Mr. Borisov became the most important figure in the security services. He later was elected mayor of Sofia. After that, he became prime minister.

Smaranda Enache described how in Romania there were so-called democratic parties but not democratic leaders. But I would say that if we speak about parties represented in the parliament we do not have democratic parties at all. We have parties that have no comment in the face of an economic crisis as large as in Ukraine. They have no position on the economic crisis. Existing political parties are simply a gateway for criminals to enter executive and legislative branches of power and gain greater and greater sway. A commentator on one news site made the observation that what we need to change is not only Bulgarian politicians but also the people who vote for Bulgarian politicians.

PETRUŠKA ŠUSTROVÁ
Independent journalist

In the Czech Republic, we have a few stable parties. The most stable is the Communist Party, which is the biggest in size and has received between 12 and 19 percent of the vote since 1991. It had the third most votes, with 15 percent, in the most recent election in October 2013. It is very active in public life. It says it does not want to return to the old system, but

it is impossible to make a coalition with it, since many people still don't like communists and they are rather old.

Up until 2000, there were some stable parties, such as the Christian Democrats, but they served only one or two terms. In the last decade, new parties are appearing without any clear agenda. They are generally populist, as in other countries, and are generally based on an anti-corruption platform, corruption being a persistent problem in Czech public life. When you form a new political party, you declare yourself against corruption and for transparency, open access to information, and so on. It does not matter if you are right wing or left wing. Of course, corruption is a problem throughout the West, but there is a general idea that it is not good to steal and corruption generally is punished. In our region, it is not.

Czech political parties are generally democratic. Some of you were in Prague last week during the campaign for local elections. There were many candidates and I have no idea about the agenda of most of them. The people vote mainly on the basis of the candidate, not the party. They can hardly learn the party's agenda. The Civil Democrats are presenting very blurry demands: they are against corruption, they are against selling state property, and they want more housing.

I do not think the Czech Republic is worse than the rest. These are general trends. But I understand people who are skeptical towards democracy when they do not know who is ruling, why they are ruling, and think that their vote really doesn't matter. Other countries experience worse situations. Certainly, the political parties in Azerbaijan are in a worse state than in Czech Republic.

But the West is also changing and the West is now looking for a new identity after the end of the Cold War. What we are seeing with the West's attitude towards Ukraine is not the same West as twenty-five years ago. Someone has taken its anti-communist nerve away.

ARKADY DUBNOV

Petruška mentioned that the West has changed. It is not like it was twenty-five years ago. It does not have an anti-communist nerve. I remember that Gyorgy Arbatov, one of the most influential advisors to Gorbachev, used to say that "we are going to disarm you by taking communism away. You are going to be weaker because you will have no enemy." But the West did not notice that instead of communism there is the threat of energy imperialism. I do not say that it is Russian imperialism. I say it is energy imperialism. Germany is not afraid of military imperialism, it is afraid that the energy umbilical cord will be disconnected.

IRENA LASOTA

Anti-communism was at times unpopular even in the United States, and is very much out of fashion today, but I think it is important to the discussion. Twenty-five years ago, the popular movements in Eastern Europe were anti-communist, even when they did not explicitly say they were against communism or the communist system. Simply, these movements promoted values that were contrary to values imposed by communists for 50 or 70 years. And by communist, I am not necessarily speaking about an ideology or about dogmatic communists but rather people who, as rulers, had what the philosopher Theodor Adorno called an authoritarian personality, people who were unsympathetic towards democracy or pluralism. Having such an authoritarian personality, the communists, were highly successful in governing the passive parts of the society. In his book *Political Dictionary*, Jakub Karpiński defined words according to their use in communist countries. He defined “activist” as “the most passive part of the society that can be mobilized when given orders.”

The popular movements of 1988-89 went against communist definitions and values. I have looked again at all the pictures from those years. It is clear from them that these were authentic popular movements existing throughout the Soviet bloc, having leaders who came out of the people’s movements, and all acting against the communist rulers. Go back to when societies began to awaken, in Baku in 1988–90; in the Baltics from 1988–91, especially when a million people held hands in a human chain over 300 kilometers; or in Hungary, on June 16, 1990, when more than a million people came out in Budapest for the reburial of Imre Nagy. They were rejecting communism.

But that was not the only attitude at the time. At that Budapest demonstration, a then-young liberal, Viktor Orbán, was the first to call openly for the withdrawal of Soviet troops. That night, he went to a reception and when he came out, he was shaking. Not only US Ambassador Mark Palmer but also the famous Polish dissident Adam Michnik had told Orbán that he had just committed the most dangerous mistake possible because he would likely be the cause for Soviet retaliation that would ruin everything. This was telling: many people, in the West too, did *not* want people to speak about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, or about Soviet troops, or about independence, or about democracy. And so, later, when the leaders of popular movements in many countries were replaced by those selected by the communists or secret services, there was not enough reaction. In 1992–94, there was an anti-democratic counter-revolution of the former communists, who became successful in Azerbaijan, in Georgia, and as far away as Tajikistan. Two anti-communist prime ministers were deposed by parliamentary coups: Jan Olszewski in Poland and Philip Dimitrov in

Bulgaria, and the democrats in Lithuania lost elections in November of that year. Even here in Poland, there is a sense that somehow the victories of 1989 were compromised by the communists. Solidarity the trade union was forgotten and the revolution was kidnapped by those willing to enter the process of negotiations with communists. The process of how to put down mass movements has been studied by many people from the 17th century on, but the process after 1989-91 was new. The democratic victories seemed to be so permanent that the communists had to regroup through political manipulation.

ISA GAMBAR

Some of our colleagues ask that we discuss our mistakes. We made a lot of them and can talk about them. But when voters asked me whether we would make the same mistakes as before, I said, "No, I will commit new mistakes." The point is that our mistakes are not as significant as the decisions taken in Moscow and Washington. The aggressive policies of Moscow are causing more problems than any of our mistakes. The policy of the West to support only mass media and NGOs and not the political opposition was more harmful than some of our mistakes. Similarly, the decision not to support independent trade unions, which were an important part of civic and political life. Today, we have no independent trade unions; they have been crushed. The same is true in other countries. I remember ten years ago, we tried to get support for the independent trade unions in the oil industry—any type of support. It never came. The decisions made by Moscow and Washington are both significant in their impact.

VYTAUTAS LANDSBERGIS

I want to respond to the idea that the Cold War was won by popular movements against communism. But it wasn't communism that was defeated, as we can see. It was the Soviet Union that collapsed. And what was taken away was the pseudo-communism of Stalin, who seized everyone's property. But certain ideas survived. The "enemy" was taken away, but it was only the formal communist enemy, the name, that was removed, and as a result there was no clear post-war arrangement to prevent its revival.

Before, there was the fanatical belief that the Soviet Union was the leader of the world proletarian revolution and everywhere it succeeded all property would be "socialized," meaning taken away. What lay behind this fanatical belief was the use of revolutionary violence, or simply violence, for the higher goal of Soviet communism. This use of revolutionary violence was the foundation of Soviet communism and the use of violence is the underlying idea of the current revived threat of Russian imperialism. There is a banner inside the premises of the ruling United Russia party.

It shows Putin as the savior of a girl (representing the nation) by having seized the Crimean peninsula. The idea is that Russia, raped by the West, is saved through the rape of territory. This banner shows everything. Communism was a religion of violence that has been appropriated by today's Russian imperialism. The old KGB people were taught to use techniques to confuse people. The crude term—I apologize for using it—was “to shit in people's minds.” This is what is going on now with Putin's propaganda. The savior is saving Russia from being raped by raping others. Another term, which was used after Georgia, was “keeping the peace by force,” telling the victim of rape to be at peace with her rapist. The “peace” is kept by the one who uses force to seize territory.