

## IS THERE A SPECIFIC EAST CENTRAL EUROPEAN WELFARE CULTURE?

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### The «Homo Sovieticus»<sup>1</sup>

A WIDE range of writings has been dealing with the legacy of the Soviet totalitarian system. Part of it analyses how it marked and distorted the personality of people under totalitarian rule. The authorship of the term *Homo Sovieticus* itself is under debate. It is usually credited to Józef Tischner, Polish priest and important Catholic philosopher. Others trace the authorship to Aleksandr Zynoviev, Soviet philosopher. Whoever coined it, the term is not «value-free». Its use is double-faced, and its overall legitimacy is dubious.

The list of alleged character defects is long. Very early after the regime change M. Marody (1992) put forward the thesis that the morality of people was seriously undermined by the totalitarian system, that «learned helplessness» was a main feature that created obstacles to entrepreneurship, weakened individual responsibility, and made people expect everything from the state (Marody 1992). Some years later a study of P. Sztompka (2000) summarised quite a few of these defects under the term *civilisational incompetence*. This incompetence supposedly dominated economy (paralysing entrepreneurship), politics (blocking the emergence of citizenship), and everyday life (stifling all concerns with everyday virtues of civility). It resulted in «primitive egalitarianism», and in «demands of welfare and social security from the state». Coercion also led to «opportunism, blind compliance, reluctance to take decisions, avoidance of personal responsibility», adding up to a syndrome of «prolonged infantilism» matched by state «paternalism» (Also Rose and Haerper 1992, Mueller 2000).

There is some truth in the above analyses. 45 (let alone 70) years of totalitarian or authoritarian rule certainly marked people. They may be at the root of many psychological or socially ingrained attitudes. The most painful of all is (in our view) the much invoked «democratic deficit» in people's attitudes. Nevertheless, generalisations of this type are trite and unjust. The term *civilisational incompetence* seems to me particularly inappropriate. It is a variant of traditional Eurocentrism. It implies that all societies outside the heart of Europe are Barbarians. As for personal traits like opportunism or blind compliance, the political system might have imposed them on many people (or at least they simulated compliance). Still, these character defects have certainly not been the privilege of those living in East Central Europe. Moreover, inasmuch as eastern attitudes are specific, and inasmuch as there is a «civilisational deficit» there, «Communism»<sup>4</sup> is certainly not the only culprit to have created them.

Historical heritage is complex. The pre-war history of Central and Eastern Europe represents a varied and often heavy legacy. The border of «Europe» —what was regarded as centre and what periphery— varied over the centuries. As Wiarda (2002) puts it, the wall, even if moving all the time, has been «a cultural wall, a religious wall, and a socio-psychological wall as well as an economic and strategic one». It meant for the periphery —with due exceptions— a longer lasting feudalism, belated and more vulnerable democratic institutions, and a widening economic gap between core and periphery. Thus if there have been significant differences in 1990 between a Hungarian and a French farmer, or between a German and a Polish mechanic, who knows how much of these had to be ascribed to «Communism» and how much to former centuries? (Let alone assumptions about «original»

national or ethnic character traits.) Meanwhile there have always been «islands of commonality». Alongside the aristocracy that was always «international», many traditional and modern professional groups have had shared «civilisational codes» before as well as after World War Two.

I would also argue that the socio-psychological upshot of decades of «Communism» is not exclusively negative. Before 1945 in most Eastern countries social relationships had been obsoletely feudal with practically unbridgeable social distances, and asymmetrical social relationships between upper and lower strata, men and women, people having high and low status. Unequal relationships were deeply ingrained, manifesting themselves not only in forms of communication and addresses, self-humiliating words, but also in body language (deep bows, kissing the hands of the master, etc.) These asymmetries have been radically reduced since World War Two. Most of these changes are probably irreversible: interpersonal attitudes were not imposed from above but have evolved spontaneously on the basis of post-1945 societal changes that finally shattered feudal structures. The new generations have been socialised according to new behavioural codes. By now these codes are at least in a majority ingrained, are in line with the new democratic institutions, and are even (for instance in case of women or children) safeguarded by law. Some of the character defects mentioned above merit special attention here as they relate values and attitudes toward the welfare system. Accusations about «primitive egalitarianism», or «demands of welfare and social security from the state» because of «learned helplessness» have a direct bearing on the issue. I shall focus first on allegations about the attitudes of a pampered population relying entirely on a profligate and paternalistic state.

Ironically enough these allegations are not new. Identical or similar arguments have been used (just to give some examples) to prevent the institutionalisation of social security in the French Parliament at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Hatzfeld 1971), or to attack welfare arrangements in Sweden in the sixties, in the UK during the Thatcher era, or since decades in the US (Segalman and Marshland, 1989). All this was duly analysed and ridiculed long ago by Hirschman (1991). Similarities over time and space are uncanny. A text published in 1971 of a British author is almost word-perfect: «The moral fibre of our people has been weakened. A State which does for its citizens what they can do for themselves is an evil State; and a State which removes all choice and responsibility for its people and makes them like broiler hens will create the irresponsible society» (Boydes 1971, Introduction)<sup>5</sup>.

The thesis about the lack of individual self-reliance as caused by «Communism» forgets at least two facts. It ignores the history of public social protection in the «core» European countries where public demand played a large role. And it forgets that in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century East Central Europe was closely integrated to «Europe» adopting similar public policies. The beginnings of social security in the last third of the nineteenth century were largely contemporaneous east and west, or at least there was no startling lag. To give just one example: within the Bismarckian social insurance system the first law covering health was enacted in Germany in 1883, that on accidents in 1884. The respective Hungarian laws were enacted in 1891 and 1907 (Szikra 2004). It may be worth noting that even the best-known studies on European welfare systems like that of Peter Flora (1981) or Hugh Hecló (1984) while talking about «Europe» usually overlook the developments in East or East Central Europe.

After an early start social protection developed slowly in ECE until the second World War due to conservative politics, slow industrialisation, rigidity of the social system. It remained restricted to a minority. Czechoslovakia was, and has remained in many respect a significant exception. After 1945, or rather, from the 60s on, the institutions of social security developed rapidly all over the region in a sort of welfare competition with the West. Development was motivated by the idea of social «catching up» with the West, by the need of political legitimacy, and by a real or rhetoric ideal of assuring mass well-being. Yet even after several decades of state socialism the «communist» social protection system never approached Western standards (Therborn 1995).

Thus despite early acceptance of the «European model» the socialist paternalist state is a legend. The main missing elements were democracy (legal basis, participation), lack of the spirit of care and compassion, and lack of concern about levels of adequacy. There remained in each country large uncovered areas of the social «risks». Hungary for instance was relatively good in family policy, but help with first homes was missing, social work was practically banned, provision for the unemployed was non-existent. *The state was very far from being paternalist*, much less so than in any decent western welfare state.

Learned helplessness seems to be a convenient myth, and prolonged infantilism a malevolent one. People had to have many skills to organise everyday life under conditions of a «shortage economy» and on a shoestring. Because the welfare system was defective

and rigid people had to cope with countless problems on their own. They had to find more or less unconventional solutions not only for housing, but also for all the individual or family problems that did not quite fit the public system tailored to «mass needs». They had to cope on their own without public help, social work, market solutions, or supportive civil organisations. Many collective «coping» instruments open to citizens living in a free society —from strikes to opting out from wage-work— were also legally unavailable. Only inventiveness, the opposite of learned helplessness helped people to find solutions. No doubt, illegal resistance —strikes, underground collective opposition— was rare, though ubiquitous. However, all these «unconventional» behaviours may have played a part in preparing the collapse of the system.

Accusations about the pampered population eager to have security have never been politically innocent. The need to abolish causes of «learned helplessness» — that is the need to cut back the «caring» state — was spelt out long ago. The economist J. Kornai criticised already in the early nineties the oversized «premature welfare state» that was detrimental economically and morally. The economist and many in his wake opted against putting the premature being in an incubator that would have been the logical consequence of the metaphor. They rather opted for its dumping. «The main problem with the welfare system inherited from the communist regime is that it leaves too wide a sphere of action, and a corresponding range of resources, in the hands of the government rather than with the individual. This infringes on such fundamental human rights as individual sovereignty, self-realization, and self-determination». In this view people should be responsible for themselves: «They must give up the habit of having the paternalist state think for them, and must be assisted by reformers in this «detoxification». The freedom of choice and responsibility for it is, according to Kornai, «a trivial requirement» in the United States. However, «for generations that came to maturity under the communist system, a different principle was instilled: that the ruling party-state was responsible for everything... Since the state provided for any unforeseen eventualities (e. g. illness, disability, death of the breadwinner), there was no need to prepare for the uncertainties of tomorrow (Kornai 1997: 287). A similar argument was advanced by the dean of Warsaw University: the state should be only the «facilitator of private transactions» and not the «benevolent protector of the people»: Poland must modernize and demistify the state in order to throw off the inherited inertia of the socialist era». (Krol 1997).

To conclude about the Homo Sovieticus: admitting that there may be differences in the psychological make-up of core and peripheral European countries in people's attitudes to state protection, I would argue, that

- a) the historical roots of differences (inasmuch they exist) go back much further than socialist dictatorship;
- b) the need for social protection, and the demand of a state that assumes responsibility for these needs are not specific to the ex-socialist countries. The «European model» of social protection is embedded in modern European culture;
- c) the accusations about learned helplessness and similar character traits form since long part of a liberal economic agenda aiming at undermining the legitimacy of the social functions of the state.

### The need for, and the construction of security West and East: security and civilisation

#### The West

Security as we understand it at present may be a social construct, but its importance seems to be paramount for individuals as well as for societies. Security of course has many meanings. One of its modern faces is security of civil freedoms, ownership included. The other is protection against everyday threats and risks that may undermine normal everyday existence. Modernity based on the individualisation of society needed both securities. However, «the fight of everybody against everybody else» would have nipped in the bud any such development. Hence the need for a new collective protective agency, some form of «the Leviathan».

The modern state had, indeed, as its first function the protection of the life and property of its free citizens in a social environment based on rights. The Universal Declaration of Human and Citizens Rights of 1789 declared property a sacred and inalienable right. In the interpretation of Castel (2003) property at this point was understood as ownership of self, foundation of a free and autonomous individual. The conception of individual independence «was constructed through the valuation of ownership, coupled with the rule of law».

The security of the individual was rooted in this autonomy protected by the state. But for property-less individuals freedom and autonomy were hollow



concepts. The protection of autonomy and hence security became meaningful only if there was property to be protected. That is why Castel's observation is of seminal importance. He points out —and this is rarely if ever done— that «This construction should have considered a central question the status, or the lack of status of the individual having no ownership» (Castel 2003: 26). Indeed, if protection is related to property, what happens to the propertyless?

This central question was not raised. Security for those having no property to assure their independence was «forgotten» for a long time. The old forms of protection based on proximity —family, village, lord, church, guild— were shattered and splintered as a consequence of modernisation. Under the new conditions it was assumed that those without property should live from their day-to-day work. But work was totally insecure, and the meagre resources it assured were altogether stopped when work was lost, when illness or death struck, when one became too old or too weak for labour. Thus the majority could not enjoy neither social independence nor an autonomous life, and did not have any well-defined status in the new society. The «lower classes» living in dire poverty did not have any hold on their present, let alone their future. Their life was overshadowed by the basic insecurity of their everyday existence, social or existential insecurity. The insecurity of the poor represented physical, social and even moral dangers, and a constant threat for the rule of law and order, for the new «civilisation» that was emerging (Elias 1939)<sup>6</sup>. The attempts to deal with these dangers were numerous, including repressive state policing (poor laws, etc.) or individual charity. None of them could work effectively or on a large scale. Thus the community, ultimately the state was forced to take on new proactive functions.

The new state functions are usually called welfare functions adding up to a «welfare state». I propose to split them in two —*civilizing* and *welfare* functions— even if the dividing line between the two is not always clear cut. The story of their unfolding is well known. I take up the issue only to bring out some differences between east and west.

De Swaan (1988) describes in detail the emergence of such new activities and institutions like the enforcement of a common national language, literacy, and also behavioural codes through (for instance) compulsory schooling, or the fight against contagious diseases through sanitation and public health measures. Large urban projects that made the towns more liveable, or the development of transport

and communication through public efforts could be added to these. All these developments created protection against the dangerous poor by improving general infrastructure, by advancing public safety, by alleviating the worst aspects of poverty that hurt new sensibilities. Much of the state's efforts in the nineteenth century aimed at handling aspects of poverty most disagreeable for the non-poor, namely *public squalor*. These efforts implied sanitation and increasing orderliness of the environment as well as inculcation in the poor of many aptitudes, attitudes, and norms promoting modern «civilised» lifestyle.

I propose to distinguish these civilizing attempts from the genuine *protective* or *welfare functions* aiming to abate *private squalor*. In fact the first public attempt to «civilise» the poor did not solve the original dilemma spelt out by Castel: how to assure social protection and the original promise of the Enlightenment to protect property and life of the citizens while assuring for all full citizenship. The solution to this dilemma was found at the end of the nineteenth century or only in the twentieth century. It consisted in inventing *labour law and social law*, in attaching strong legal protections to work, promoting the *protection of those having no property to protect their security*. Social insurance based on «common social property» created with the help of a new type of property a stable social status and identity (Castel 1995, 2003). Together with a strong economy and more resources, new securities promoted «civilisational» standards. Thereby they could also strengthen the operation of modern (mass) democracies. They allowed growing fractions of society —at least in a number of countries and for ever longer periods— to live together according to modern rules of law.

### «Eastern» solution

Need for security existed in countries situated in the East of Europe, too. Dictatorial state socialism however found a different solution to the dilemma between the lawful sanctity of ownership as basis of security, and the impossibility of assuring security to those having no property and living from their work. It cut the knot in a way completely opposite to the west using a despotic shortcut feared already by Hobbes. The state became all-absorbing ruler. The Rule of Law was violated: private property was almost totally abolished, all or most property was transformed into allegedly common, in practice state ownership. With this one stroke civil rights and civil and political freedoms were to a large extent abolished (if not formally, substantively). The tragic consequences of totalitarian unfreedom are only too well known to be

discussed here. Yet state ownership opened opportunities that were not necessarily harmful.

Private property being abolished no open resistance was opposed to the reduction of income inequalities, and to use public (state or cooperative) ownership and public resources for state purposes. The list of these targets is long and varied. Many of them were neither reprehensible in themselves nor incompatible with modernity. They included «full employment», that is easy access to secure waged work for practically everybody. The construction of «nationwide, compulsory, collective institutions» (De Swaan 1988) of the social protection system was also on the agenda. In the course of rapid (even forced) modernisation the state's civilisational and welfare functions merged. An all-encompassing school system, a practically universal health system, and the construction of a practically universal social protection system were built up in some decades. The price paid for them was extremely high in terms of real autonomy and freedom. Yet, *for the majority who in pre-war society enjoyed neither freedom nor any security it did not seem so*: as many contemporary and current surveys testify, people valued social security. Also, security promoted many types of habitus in line with attitudes conforming to «European» civilisation. I venture therefore to argue that the reduction of the civilisation gap between east and west, between men and women, and between higher and lower echelons of society has been probably *the most positive outcome of socialist dictatorship*. In most countries the former efforts «paid off» even if in a way largely different from original intentions. More literacy, more ability to have a reflexive relationship to the present and future, more information about modernity improved probably chances to adjust to the requirements of political democracy and a market society. The new political class had a huge responsibility in handling this inheritance. They had the option to attempt to protect the inherited human assets or to squander them away.

The switch from dictatorial state socialism to capitalism in its rather wild form took its toll. In some cases the shock was so strong as to annihilate (at least for a while) the impact of the civilisation process. Elias warned about this danger when he wrote: «The armour of civilised conduct would crumble very rapidly if, through a change in society, the degree of insecurity that existed earlier were to break in upon us again,

and if danger became as incalculable as it once was». (Elias 1939, I: 307). Apparently in some of the countries (parts of the former Soviet Union or Yugoslavia) the change was too rapid to maintain the armour.

Even in countries where there was no major disaster transition rapidly ended the feeling of security. The new system restored the Rule of Law, private ownership and the market, and also increased massively the number of the non-owners. In the first years of the transition undeniably many if not all collective arrangements built up under the former system continued to protect those who could remain on the labour market or had acquired entitlements on it. It did not occur to anybody, though, that «collective social property» could play a lasting role in protecting the new non-owners outside the labour market. Everyday security crumbled for those who lost their job and livelihood despite some new arrangements to handle unemployment. Labour rights have weakened. Vulnerability and insecurity reappeared on a massive scale. Under these conditions the maintenance and strengthening of former arrangements should have been a first priority to prevent —among other things— a civilisational set-back harming the whole social fabric.

The new political classes did not deal well with the heritage. With diminishing economic functions of the state there was a historical opportunity to concentrate on its civilisational and welfare functions. This opportunity was missed. The fate of the Roma in all the countries of ECE is a blatant proof of this. In Hungary for instance at the end of the 80s over 80 per cent of Roma men had a full job —now almost 80 per cent are without a job. For decades they have climbed up the civilisational «ladder» with tremendous pain only to fall down from there after the transition with dizzying speed (Kemény, 2003).

The need for collective defences has been rapidly mounting in other respects, too. We live not only in a «risk society» (Beck 1992), but in a society genuinely threatened by harms and dangers ranging from environmental disasters through destabilising insecurities to various forms of chaos. Most threats are related to a large extent to the operation of an uncontrolled global market. New dangers make imperative the creation of powerful and legitimate global

institutions, ultimately of a global state (Soros 1998, Stiglitz 2002). But these institutions will have to be financed. In all probability still existing nation states will be the first to be compelled to foot the bill of this emerging new state working for peaceful international coexistence.

In the «new democracies» not enough happened to prevent the weakening of social security of the non-owners, or to face already visible needs of collective arrangements against new dangers. The main gains in social policy are connected to «Europeanisation», including more democratic procedures, institutionalisation of social work, re-emergence of civil organisations, new concerns with poverty (Guillén and Álvarez, 2004). The efforts of the Union to put poverty and exclusion firmly on the agenda have been relatively successful. Still anti-poverty efforts have remained insufficient, and civil society is still too weak to put genuine pressure on the state, or to control it (Ferge and Juhász 2004).

Meanwhile many interest groups pushed East Central Europe towards the American solution of social protection, or even a downsized version of it. Strong endeavours have emerged to «Americanize» ECE instead of its «Europeanisation». Supranational monetary agencies (IMF, World Bank, wto) had a major role in shaping post-socialist societies particularly if the countries had been indebted (Deacon, 1997). The main elements on their social policy agenda were the strengthening of individual responsibility and the weakening of public responsibility in social matters; the promotion of privatisation and marketisation in all spheres; the emphasis on targeted assistance to the truly needy at the expense of universal benefits; the scaling down of social insurance to assure «work incentives». In short, a leaner state in general, and a diminished welfare state in particular. These ideas have found powerful supporters in most ECE countries. Many went farther in the privatisation of pensions or health, or in introducing a flat-rate taxation than the «core» European countries. The privatisation of pensions for instance made such a headway that in the last years East Central Europe<sup>7</sup> has often been presented by liberal spokesmen as a social policy model to be followed by all members of the Union. And of course this may happen.

To conclude: a relatively civilised way of life, and relatively peaceful social coexistence were evolving mainly in the decades following World War Two simultaneously and in interaction with the collective arrangements of social protection. This process occurred east and west with similarities and differences. The weakening of universal arrangements may undermine hardly won civilisational gains. This danger may be greater in new democracies than in old ones.

### Public (civic) culture and security

Liberal pressure on the welfare state is ubiquitous. Unfortunately the European Union does not offer unconditional support to the European Social Model, either. The social components of the original Lisbon commitments are wavering. Pressure of the EU to increase competitiveness at the expense of social cohesion is strong. The welfare gap between western and eastern Europe may inevitably increase if —as observed by the European Commission (CEC 2004)— «economic convergence criteria and budget deficit reduction goals (appear to) take precedence over social cohesion goals» (p. 35). Meanwhile the convergence criteria and budget deficit goals seem to be more strictly enforced, and failure to implement them more readily sanctioned by the Commission itself and by many other supranational or global forces than social cohesion goals. This hits particularly harshly poorer countries in dire need to combat poverty and social exclusion partly for the sake of competitiveness.

Meanwhile public opinion, or «civic culture» appears in all ECE countries to continue to support the welfare state, the European social model and its basic values. Whether this is a general feeling or whether it is a specific cultural trait of the «pampered» eastern countries remains to be seen.

It follows from the thesis about Homo Sovieticus that there is a «bloc culture» in ECE that could not absorb modernity. According again to Sztompka (2000) «the Communist system succeeded in creating a common cultural framework, over and above distinct national cultures, and relatively isolated from wider global culture: the unique syndrome of values, rules, norms, codes, standards typical for the bloc as a

whole, the *bloc culture*». «Primitive egalitarianism, demands of welfare and social security from the state» belong to this culture. Thus we have to search for evidence about egalitarianism and statism east and west<sup>8</sup>.

A cursory look on a Hungarian time series presenting opinions on equality would confirm belief about egalitarianism except that opinions do not seem to be primitive or unreflected at all: the condemnation of too high inequalities is strengthening with increasing income and wealth inequalities.

TABLE 1

Hungary: Agreement or disagreement with the opinion that income inequalities are too large, 1987-2003.

Percentage distribution of answers (Fully disagree=1, fully agree=5)

	1987	1992	1999	2003
Indicators of income inequality				
Gini coefficient	0,24	0,27	0,31	0,32
Multiplier between top and bottom decile	4,6	6,0	7,6	8,1
Opinions about income inequality: inequalities too large				
Fully or slightly disagree: not large	11	8	3	3
Unsure	12	8	4	6
Slightly agree: somewhat: too large	36	39	26	26
Fully agree: much too large	41	45	67	66
Total	100	100	100	100
N=	2.498	1.213	1.199	3.956

Source: Income, TÁRKI 2005, p. 37. Opinions: TÁRKI Monitor 2003: <http://www.tarki.hu/adatbank-h/kutjel/pdf/a134.pdf>.

«Bloc culture» is not very uniform, either. The Czechs seem to be less worried by too large income inequalities which, in fact, were lower in their country than in the others both before and five years after the transition. Other transition countries perceived the increase of income inequalities that was significant in all of them, and did not quite like what they saw.

It should be noted that structural differentiation usually of high importance is not very significant in case of the rejection of inequalities. For instance it is almost uniformly high in all educational groups with the significant exception of Czechs with higher education.

TABLE 2

Four countries in ECE: Distribution of opinions about the acceptability of income inequalities

Percentage distribution of the answers of the respondents

	Czech Rep.	Poland	Hungary	Slovakia
Income inequalities are				
Income differentials 5 years ago (around 1990)				
Too small	25	19	5	17
Acceptable	65	65	74	73
Too large	10	16	21	10
	100	100	100	100
Income differentials at present (1995)				
Too small	9	7	3	15
Acceptable	24	13	8	11
Too large	67	80	89	74
	100	100	100	100

Source: FERGE *et al.* 1995, SOCO survey, table V. 23, p. 316. (n= around 1000 in all the countries).

TABLE 3

Four countries in ECE: Ratio of respondents who think that income inequalities are too high, within groups of different educational level of head of household, %, 1995. (Only heads of household under 60)

	Primary	Vocational	Secondary	Higher	Total	n (total under 60)	Sign. level
Czech Rep.	82	67	67	44	67	691	***
Poland	82	77	82	72	80	663	NS
Hungary	89	92	90	84	89	651	*
Slovakia	69	74	76	74	74	589	NS

Source: FERGE *et al.* 1995, SOCO survey, table V. 24, p. 317.

The high valuation of equality goes hand in hand with a very high valuation of newly gained freedoms. In the SOCO study of 1995 (Ferge *et al.*, 1995) a series of questions attempted to gauge the value of various aspects of freedom from the free choice of a doctor to freedom of opinion or press. On a seven-point scale all civil and political freedoms got very high scores in all five countries covered. (The average for these freedoms was around 6).

The respective valuation of freedom versus equality is a standard question of many surveys. The European Value Survey for 1999/2000 showed for instance that in the 23 European countries covered 54 per cent valued freedom more than equality. In exactly 7 out of the 14 western countries the ratio was higher than average (with a top 69 per cent in Denmark), and in 7 it was lower (with a bottom 39 per cent in Italy). There were 9 ECE countries. In 6 of them the ratio of



freedom-lovers was higher, in 3 of them lower than the European average<sup>9</sup>.

In analysing the situation in Hungary I was concerned more with the trade-off between freedom and security than between freedom and equality. This trade-off is about people's perception about whether freedom may be enjoyed without basic securities. Data are scarce on this issue. (I could not find any in the comparative data bases.) We used the SOCO survey of 1995 to construct a variable answering this purpose. People were asked separately about the importance they attached not only to various types of freedoms but also to different types of security. The importance of security scored (on average) even higher than that of freedom. The security of the future of children, of housing, of health care, of income, of public safety, of jobs got an average score between 6,6 and 6,8 (out of a maximum of 7) in all five countries covered.

The new variable was based on the difference between the average valuation of all freedoms and of all securities. This seems to be a very artificial and indirect variable. It proved to be very robust, though. We conducted several surveys after 1995 in Hungary asking the same set of questions. The results have been almost identical for the derived variable. In all surveys only about one fifth of the sample valued freedom higher than, or at least as high as, security. Meanwhile over one fourth valued security much higher, over half higher than freedom.

TABLE 4

Hungary: Percentage distribution of the scores of the derived variable about the comparative importance of freedom and security

	1995	1997	2000
Freedom is more than, or as important as, security (score 1)	14	16	18
Security is more important than freedom by maximum 1 grade (score 2)	33	27	29
Security is more important than freedom by 1,0 to 2 grades (score 3)	26	28	27
Security is more important by more than 2 grades (score 4)	27	30	26
Total	100	100	100
N=	1.000	1.200	974

Source: for 1995, FERGE *et al.*, 1995; for 1997 the Hungarian Panel Survey, TARKI; for 2000: an Omnibus survey of Sonda-Ipsos. Support from the Hungarian Research Foundation gratefully acknowledged.

Method of calculation: the difference between the average score of all securities (7 point scale) and of all freedoms (7 point scale) varies between -6 and +6. This new score was compounded in the four groups presented in the table.

Results for the other ECE countries covered in 1995 showed some between-country variation. The rate of those who valued freedom more than security ranged between 14 per cent (Hungary) and 30 per cent (Poland). Security was valued higher than security in all the countries, but the intensity of the longing for security was different. (Strongest in Hungary, weakest in Poland). While security seemed to be somewhat more important than freedom *the relationship between freedom and security depended strongly on how much security one had*. The better off, the more educated, those with higher income, with more secure jobs tend to value freedom more than, or at least as much as security. The reverse is true for the poor or insecure strata: security may become all-important at the expense of freedom. The differences were significant in all five countries covered. The relationship with educational level for instance is consistent and significant in all countries covered. Some examples may prove the point. The rate of those for whom security was much more important than freedom was 27 per cent in the Czech Republic among those with only primary education, and 2 per cent among those with higher education. The respective data were 18 and 3 per cent for Poland, 41 and 8 per cent for Hungary, 28 and 8 per cent for Slovakia. The rates for the freedom lovers, by contrast, ranked between 19 and 43 in the Czech Republic, or 7 and 27 per cent in Hungary with higher values for the more educated. These results suggest that increasing insecurity may jeopardise democracy.

Thus security, and the role of the state in social matters seem to be very important indeed for people in East Central Europe. It has still to be answered whether they form thereby a «bloc culture» far removed from European culture. Available evidence does not support this thesis, certainly not on welfare issues.

The commitment to equality is far from being an «Eastern» phenomenon. Equality is a core European value. Table 5 presents results for countries that became members of the EU up to 2005 derived from a survey carried out in 1999. In all the surveyed countries at least two thirds think that income inequalities are too large. The bias of ECE (over-addiction to equality) appears mostly in the ratio of those who strongly agree with the statement. The quotients cover an unusually wide range, between 12 and 82 per cent. Three of the seven former socialist countries are above 60 per cent. Meanwhile Portugal and France are also in this group. A similar pattern emerges in case of all those who «agree»: the ECE countries are overrepresented among

the egalitarians, but they do not form a separate bloc. Only a more profound analysis would show the respective role of such factors as former dictatorship, poverty of the country, shock of the rapid increase in inequality, deceived expectations, current level of inequalities, and so forth.

TABLE 5

European countries, members in 2005: Percentage distribution of answers to the statement: «Differences in income are too large».

The countries are ranked according to the first column, % of those who strongly agree.

Country	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly agree and agree together	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Total
Portugal	82	14	96	2	2	100
Slovakia	74	20	94	4	2	100
Hungary	69	25	94	3	3	100
Czech Rep.	61	27	88	6	6	100
France	60	27	87	7	6	100
Latvia	58	39	97	2	1	100
Slovenia	50	42	92	5	5	100
Poland	49	42	91	6	4	100
Germany East	45	49	94	4	2	100
Austria	41	45	86	9	4	100
Spain	36	54	90	7	3	100
Great Britain	30	49	79	12	7	100
Sweden	29	43	72	18	10	100
Germany West	21	56	77	14	10	100
North Ireland	17	50	67	20	9	100
Cyprus	12	54	66	21	12	100

Source: ISSP, 1999, Survey on Social Inequality. I warmly thank Peter Robert and Laszlo Bass for making available and calculating all ISSP data.

The ISSP survey of 1996 had some information about the opinions on the state's responsibility. People were asked whether the state had to intervene, provide benefits, assure care in various fields, namely health care for the sick, benefits for the elderly, decent housing for all, assure jobs for all, provide for the unemployed, control prices, assist the growth of industry, control industry to damage less environment, and reduce income differentials. The answers show «statism» all over Europe. The ratio of those who agree (strongly or at all) that the state has a role in a matter form almost in all cases a majority. There is just one question, provision for the unemployed as a public duty —the cornerstone of solidarity— in case of which there are countries where agreement is under 50 per cent. Otherwise in all the cases and all the countries at least 60 per cent accept or find important state responsibility.

The data of the European Value Survey for 1999/2000 confirm a bias towards statism in many countries and in case of several issues, particularly on the issue of assuring basic needs for all. It has to be added that there was one question in this battery of question attracting less strongly statist answers. People had to place themselves on a scale from 1 to 10, 1 meaning that individuals should take more responsibility for themselves, and 10 meaning that the state should provide everybody. The mean for the 22 countries covered was 5,14, a very slight statist bias. Out of the 13 «core» or old countries only 3 were above this level, but out of the 9 new countries 7 were above it, that is leaning towards statism.

The role of the state is considered important also in case of income inequalities. A sizeable majority all over Europe would like to see state intervention even in this particularly delicate matter. The majority of respondents in all European countries (with the exception of Denmark) covered by the 2002 ISSP survey think that the state should curb income inequalities. They agree more or less strongly with the statement that «the government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels». The ratio of those who «agree strongly» varies between 8 and 45 per cent (Denmark and Greece) among the 14 old member states, and between 22 and 40 in the four ECE countries covered by the sample. The total rate of those who consent is an outlier low in Denmark (43 per cent), but very high, over 75 per cent in six western, and three eastern countries. Hungary is among the countries where agreement is high, but not the highest.

Out of all the questions we could analyse in the cross-country surveys only one showed a clear bloc impact: whether the state should assure jobs for all. The range of those who agree varied between 70 and 90 per cent, but all ECE countries were over 80, and all others under it. Past experiences seem to colour these answers: state responsibility played a similar role every where in most fields (or was stronger in the west than in the east). Only massive job creation by state will was a specific trait in the east.

To sum up the evidence: There seems to be no deep gap between core and periphery as regards the strong adherence to basic European values, freedom and equality, and also security. There are between country variations in both sets of countries, and the sets are to a large extent overlapping. Statism is slightly stronger in the east than in the west but we did not find evidence for the thesis of a bloc culture.

## Conclusion

«Welfare culture» does not seem to be very different in the east and west of Europe. Attack against it is also ubiquitous. It is based in East Central Europe on allegations about a pampered «Homo Sovieticus» plagued with «learned helplessness» and about «primitive egalitarianism». These seem to be clichés used in various times and places to discredit social security and to make a case for cutting back public expenditure. Indeed, historical forces shaping the character of people go much further back than some decades, and the need for security is part of modern European culture not specific to the east of Europe. In the «core» of Europe social security of the non-owners (workers, employees) was achieved at the end of a long gestation period with the creation of «common social property» (essentially social insurance based on strong labour rights) as a counterpart to private ownership. Socialist dictatorship found a tragically opposed solution to the dilemma of assuring security to non-owners by abolishing private property altogether. The price was extremely high in terms of the violation of the rule of law and of freedoms. Yet even in this truncated form security promoted norms of «civilised» coexistence even in the worst-off social strata (in Hungary the Roma) that ultimately helped the rapid adjustment to new societal rules and norms. Everyday security was probably instrumental in facilitating the emergence of democratic attitudes.

Unfortunately the new political classes did not deal well with the social heritage. They fully missed the opportunity offered by diminishing economic functions of the state to concentrate on civilisational and welfare functions. (Their irresponsibility is only partly explained by the circumstances of globalisation and the pressure of supranational agencies.) As a consequence of indifference on behalf of the ruling political and economic groups at least half of the citizens —among them Roma in countries where their number is high— are still losers of the transition. Meanwhile the safeguarding of political and social security, and state action to curb increasing inequalities within the limits of the rule of law is probably unusually imperative in ex-communist countries. The basis of democracy may be weakened if expectations of the majority meet with an unresponsive state.

It seems that the contradiction between two basic aims of the European Union as formulated in Lisbon — an increasingly competitive economy and an increasingly cohesive society— had to be approached in a more innovative and more humane spirit than is actually done. The issue is not whether social disasters will ensue

if the wise recommendations of scholars to curb global market forces are not followed. These threats are real but they relate to an invisible future. The present paper has a shorter perspective. It argues for societies that are liveable here and now —east and west.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank for helpful comments Andras Biro, Judit Kiss, Adrian Sinfield, Zoltan Tarr, and for help with statistics Peter Robert, Laszlo Bass and Wim van Oorschot.

<sup>2</sup> The paper was originally prepared for an edited volume: Wim van Oorschot. Michael Opielka, Birgit Pfau-Effinger (eds) (2006) *Culture and Welfare State - Values of Social Policy from a Comparative Perspective*.

<sup>3</sup> The part of Europe covered by the paper is alternately called Central and Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, «Mittel-Europa». Here I use the term East Central Europe, ECE for short. This area corresponds vaguely to the new EU member states and the candidate countries.

<sup>4</sup> I put «communism» in inverted commas because I find the term a misnomer. It is by now too widely used to attempt to change it to something politically more appropriate like «dictatorial» or (for later decades) «authoritarian state socialism».

<sup>5</sup> I thank Adrian Sinfield and J. Veit-Wilson who drew my attention to the parallels, and to A. Sinfield who found the Boydes text.

<sup>6</sup> I put the term «civilisation» in inverted commas because I often use it in a more colloquial sense than Elias. I mainly refer by it to the rules, norms, codes, and ways of enforcement of the rules that allow people to live together in a society.

<sup>7</sup> A compulsory private funded pillar was introduced in Central and Eastern Europe between 1997 and 2002 in Hungary, Poland, Latvia and Croatia. The scheme was on the agenda in 2000 in Bulgaria, FYR Macedonia, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and also in Russia and the Ukraine (LINDEMAN *et al.*, 2000), The Czech Republic and Slovenia seem to resist all pressures.

<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately there are few comparative data over time and space. We shall use some Hungarian sources, the SOCO survey of 1995 covering five ECE countries, the European Values Survey (EVS) and various waves carried out within the ISSP, that is the International Social Survey Programme. The World Values Survey could not be used for these particular issues.

<sup>9</sup> I thank W. van Oorschot for sending me his calculations based on the EVS file.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza tres interpretaciones sobre la cultura del bienestar. La primera, que el sistema totalitario creó un nuevo tipo de individuo, el «Homo Sovieticus», caracterizado entre otras cosas, por su «impotencia aprendida», que le lleva a depender totalmente del estado (de bienestar). Sin embargo, la necesidad de seguridad forma parte de la cultura moderana europea, y no es propia sólo de la Europa Central y del Este. También analiza el papel del Estado en el proceso de civilización y seguridad en la sociedad europea, y la relación entre ambas cuestiones. Por último, se ve la cultura de bienestar a escasa social en relación con los valores, y se defiende una tesis distinta de la de «cultura de Bloque» de la Europa Oriental.

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