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Reflections on Democracy

The Iron Curtain has lifted, revealing scenes undreamt of even a year ago. Last August Solidarity became the leader of Poland's new coalition government. In the next two months Hungary codified civil and human rights and scheduled free, multiparty elections. November saw mass demonstrations in Prague and the resignation of the Communist leadership. By year-end Vaclav Havel, a dissident playwright, had been elected president of Czechoslovakia; the Romanian dictator Ceausescu had been executed; and ten thousand protesters were marching in Sofia, demanding an immediate end to Bulgaria's Communist regime.

In a matter of months, the Eastern Bloc's Communist governments fell like so many dominoes. Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania all took their first steps on the long, hard road to democracy. Multiparty elections have been scheduled for this spring. The principles of free-market economics have been widely, and fervently, embraced.

The historic drama reached a symbolic peak in early November, when the East German government knocked holes in the Berlin Wall. As thousands of citizens streamed through to visit the West, their jubilant compatriots danced in celebration on the Wall's top. A month later shoppers could find chunks of the Wall on sale in Washington, D.C., department stores: nestled in velvety pouches, each complete with a certificate of authenticity — the perfect stocking-stuffers for the Christmas that brought the end of the cold war.

A triumph of capitalism? Or a sad comment on the American way of life?

As we watch the nations of Central and Eastern Europe struggling to reorganize their economies and political systems, many of us long to offer advice. Some of them can hardly remember how democracy works;

some never really knew. We'd like to encourage them, guide them, tell them all that Americans have learned from two centuries of experience with democracy. Yet we must pause to ask ourselves: Just what can these newly democratic nations learn, and what should they not learn, from the United States?

In what follows, five authorities — on political science, law, and economics — suggest answers to this question. And, true to the American tradition, they sharply disagree.

To make its research readily available to a broad audience, the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy publishes this quarterly newsletter. Articles are intended to advance philosophically informed debate on current policy choices; the views presented are not necessarily those of the Institute or its sponsors.

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Hard Decisions

by Jane Mansbridge

The economies of Central Europe are a shambles. The transition to more market-oriented economies in these countries will, in the short run, hurt a large number of people. But democracy, many hope, will legitimate these hard decisions.

This hope is not completely farfetched. Management studies show that when employees participate in making a decision, they are more likely to accept the results, instead of quitting or overusing sick days. Even convicted criminals support the system that convicts them more when they think the process is fair than when they merely get the outcome they want. On the national scale, too, faith in the democratic process can lead citizens to accept outcomes that hurt them as individuals.

Yet hopes for legitimating hard decisions through democracy can founder when practice doesn't live up to democratic ideals. And practice cannot live up to democratic ideals unless those ideals are better understood.

The Politics of Power and Persuasion

Democracy, as practiced in the United States and Western Europe, is a hybrid idea that incorporates conflicting assumptions. In one vision of democracy, the system creates fair procedures for resolving conflicts of interest; in another, it encourages deliberation about how best to promote the common good. Intellectuals in Central Europe are often quite aware of the difference between these two visions of democracy. In the German Democratic Republic, the *New York Times* reports a growing gap between "intellectuals and dissidents, who formed groups like New Forum with the notion of democracy as a process of well-meaning discussion in which the universal good was the shared goal, and the political parties in West and East Germany whose primary goal is to win the elections."

Practicing politicians in the United States and Western Europe tend to understand democracy in only one of these two ways. For them, democracy is an adversary system that assumes conflicting interests and sets up fair procedural rules under which each side attempts to "win." Political scientists in the West also describe politics in this way, as a matter of who gets what. This is the politics of power, not persuasion.

Yet American and European philosophers who discuss democracy usually emphasize its "deliberative" character. In deliberative democracy, citizens talk with one another about public problems. Their talk can be both raucous and constrained, conflictual and harmonious. It can turn on opinion as well as fact. It can draw on emotion as well as reason. It can help the participants think "we" instead of "I." While it does not rule out the possibility that the participants' interests fundamentally conflict, it aims at the creation of a common good. It works through persuasion, not power.

In fact, politicians in the West practice not only a politics of power but also, in some of their roles in the legislature, a politics of persuasion aimed at the common good. Recent research among political scientists is only now uncovering the extent of this common-interest behavior. While political

rhetoric aimed at the common good often masks, whether consciously or through self-deception, both self-interest and the interest of a particular class or locality, previous analysts who prided themselves on their "realism" have simply failed to see the genuinely communal motivation that prevails in certain contexts.

The danger in the next few years is that the new governments of Central Europe will duplicate only the West's highly visible adversary institutions, premised on conflict and designed to "aggregate," or sum, individual preferences, and will ignore our less visible, but no less real, deliberative institutions. They may also ignore their own potential to develop new institutions that encourage a quality of citizen deliberation surpassing any known in the West.

The new governments thus have two tasks. They must act quickly to foster aggregative institutions that settle issues of fundamental conflict fairly, on the basis of one person, one vote. And they must also act to provide what is not so common in the West — extensive forums for deliberation, in which citizens have a voice in determining the common good.

Keeping Adversary Procedures Fair

To legitimate the hard choices ahead, Central European governments must first protect their new "aggregative" institutions from corruption through bribes, stuffed ballot boxes, and intentional miscounts. Multiparty monitoring of elections, neutral investigative commissions, and swift, strong punishment for infractions will maintain confidence that the adversary procedure is fair.

More problematically, legitimacy in adversary democracy rests on the proposition that each citizen should count for one and none for more than one. Yet every democracy's formal aggregative process admits gross inequalities in power based on unequal economic and social resources. As a result, citizens at the bottom of the socio-economic scale often feel that, as one survey in the United States puts it, "People like me don't have any say about what the government does."

Free markets will soon give Central Europeans vastly different economic resources, and their social resources already differ dramatically. Democratic institutions will not have the same force of tradition behind them that they have in most Western democracies. If the countries of Central Europe cannot develop institutions that consciously guard against the excessive power of their new elites, they may find the legitimacy of their decisions severely undermined.

Central Europeans must also realize that majority rule works only in polities with many cross-cutting cleavages. When majority rule results in certain groups being outvoted again and again, democracies require corrective measures: proportional representation, federalism, and "consociationalism," i.e., the division of power and state-provided goods, like school and television time, in proportion to each group's percentage of the population. While such solutions do not provide equal satisfaction to ethnic and other minority groups, they still work better than winner-take-all majority rule.

Adversary democracy generates winners and losers. It therefore combines badly with state socialism, where there is only one arena in which to win or lose. As state socialist systems begin to adopt adversary democratic procedures, they need diversified political and economic systems, so that "apparatchiks" who lose in politics can become "entrepreneur-chiks" who win (or at least can win) in economics.

Indeed, moving toward adversary democracy means injecting large amounts of risk into previously risk-averse systems. The new governments in Central Europe will have to learn to live with uncertainty. But accepting uncertainty, losing control over outcomes, and being unable to guarantee the protection of one's personal interests will require from many citizens and bureaucrats an ideological, political, and psychological breakthrough.

Institutionalizing continual conflict requires tolerance of opposition parties. Yet after years of oppression by authoritarian systems, some activists in Central Europe and the Balkans can think only of revenge. In countries like Romania, where most people with talent and administrative experience have collaborated in some way with the old system, that impulse toward revenge may breed a rhetoric of character assassination that is bound to erode trust in any system of representation.

Citizens cannot easily be weaned from cynicism after decades of "facade politics," in which elites determined public policy behind a front of supposedly democratic institutions. Exposed to an array of charges and countercharges from the new democratic parties, Hungarian voters have already grown jaded. "All they do is make promises," says one worker. "And those advertisements on television, it's like a cabaret. I don't believe any of them."

To counter this legacy of pervasive cynicism, Western forms of aggregation through representation may have to be supplemented not only with the (mostly symbolic) devices of initiative and recall, but also with more participatory institutions, such as national and local referenda. Decentralizing decisions to the lowest possible level — instituting elections and referenda in schools, workplaces, villages, cities, and counties — would also provide experience in accepting conflict. As those who run in local elections and those who vote for them learn to lose on some issues but win on others, they should become more able to understand, and bear, losing nationally.

Fostering Deliberation

The procedural methods of adversary democracy are necessary to produce legitimate decisions in conditions of conflict. But they are insufficient to generate the individual transcendence of self-interest that hard decisions often require. Adversary democracy encourages participants to aim at winning rather than at finding a course of action that is best for the whole. It discourages listening. It lends itself to short time horizons.

Like an economic market, adversary democracy legitimates the pursuit of self-interest. Voters pursue their individual interests by making demands on the political system in proportion to the intensity of their feelings. Politicians pursue their own interests by adopting policies that buy them as many votes as possible. While this system of "politics as marketplace" ensures accountability, it also mirrors — indeed, encourages — a larger materialism. Candidates and their policies become commodities, selling themselves or being sold.

The dynamic of adversary democracy has traditionally made democracies incapable of the kinds of sacrifices that Central European governments are now asking of their citizens. National unity and national sacrifice for long-run ends have instead often required a strong, even dictatorial, leader. Yet revolutionary movements demonstrate that citizens will sacrifice even their lives when they believe that their sacrifices are for the common good. That conviction can arise not only from devotion to a charismatic leader, but also from faith in policies arrived at through deliberation, which command the loyalty of those who participate in creating them.

Throughout their past struggles, many dissident groups in Eastern Europe held together through institutions that fostered a common commitment to national goods. As one of my American friends concluded from talking with members of Solidarity, "The decision rule there is what is good for Poland." Much of Solidarity operated by *de facto* consensus, making decisions only after members had worked their way through a deliberative process that tried to encompass widely differing points of view. The experience produced unity in the struggle, widespread practical understanding of how to take many interests into account, and a consequent willingness to live with the results of decisions. This bottom-up practice in deliberative democracy may give Poland an edge over other newly democratizing nations in the use of democracy to make hard decisions.

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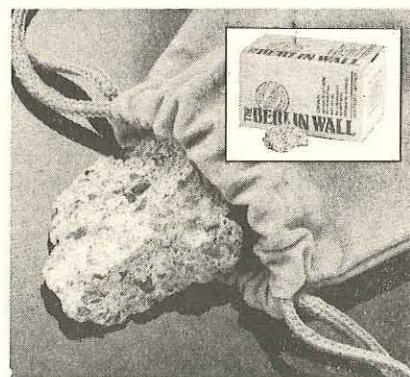


BERLIN WALL

AN HISTORIC ARTIFACT.

Own a fragment of history and celebrate a city's triumph with this authentic cul taken from the heart of the Berlin Wall. Your purchase will include a wall segment, soil carrying pouch, declaration of authenticity and an informative booklet. Boxed and imported by Hyman Products. (D.077) \$10. On view through Saturday at Metro Center, a 40 lb. segment from the British gale.

HECHT'S



Before and After. (At left:) U.S. Army scouts check activity on the Communist side of the Berlin Wall during a border patrol in 1980. (Above:) A newspaper advertisement for fragments of the Wall on sale in Washington, D.C., department stores during December 1989.

Whenever possible, participatory institutions should bring together citizens of opposing views in circumstances that reward mutual understanding and the accurate gathering of information. Deliberation among intellectuals, or even elected representatives, is not enough. In the United States, theorists have accordingly proposed neighborhood and workplace assemblies, referenda requiring two distinct votes separated by a period of deliberation, and "policy juries" formed from representative samples of citizens — all institutional means of nourishing deliberation at its citizen roots.

Each nation must work out the deliberative innovations, and the mix of adversary and deliberative institutions, that fit its own patterns of cleavage, its own history, and its own culture. In the long run, deliberative processes may offer the best hope of finding ways to handle not only class conflicts, but also the ethnic disputes that threaten to split several of the newly democratizing nations in Eastern Europe. While "consociational" and federal solutions can produce reasonably just allocations among groups, shifting citizen perspectives from class or ethnic interests to a long-run common good requires the transformations of self that deliberative processes make possible.

Jane Mansbridge is Professor of Political Science and a member of the Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research at Northwestern University. Her first book, *Beyond Adversary Democracy*, from which many ideas in this article are drawn, was followed by *Why We Lost the ERA*, a study of the problems of deliberation in the social movement that advocated the Equal Rights Amendment. *Beyond Self-Interest*, a collection of Mansbridge's recent research on public-interested motivation, will be published this spring by the University of Chicago Press. The present article draws on the following sources: Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Adam Przeworski, "Some Problems in the Study of the Transition to Democracy," in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1986); George Schöpflin, "The Political Traditions of Eastern Europe," *Daedalus*, vol. 119 (1990); Valerie Bunce, "The Transition from State Socialism to Liberal Democracy," in Kazimierz Poznanski, ed., *The Great Transformation in Reverse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming).

Learning Not to Love Revolution

by George Friedman

For the past two centuries every revolution has wanted to serve as the model for all future revolutions. Since 1917, two regimes have laid claim to be the rightful heir of the revolutionary tradition. For most of that time, it appeared to reasonable observers that it was the Soviet Union that would serve as exemplar to the world. In a stunning reversal of fortunes, the Soviet model has fallen into disrepute, and most of the rebellious world appears to be taking its bearings from the American regime. It is the Statue of Liberty that moved the crowds in Peking and Prague rather than the Internationale.

While this is a very satisfying view of things, it should not be accepted too quickly. This is not because the American model is not superior to other models, but rather, because the world, and particularly those rising up against communist tyrannies, has not yet learned one of the fundamental teachings of the American revolution: Don't enjoy revolutions too much. They have not learned to expect only the bare necessities from politics and to seek the more sublime joys of life elsewhere.

Eastern Europeans still expect great things from revolution. Coming together in rebellion is seen as a great moment. They see their revolution as paving the way to a generally and radically improved human condition. This places them at odds with the modesty of the American revolution. In their great hopes for more than a mere "more perfect union," the crowds of Berlin and Prague still share much with their oppressors and less than they should with us. They understand revolution very differently from our founders; it follows that

the sorts of regimes they will found will be very different from our own, and, I think, terribly inferior.

When Revolutions Are Young

There is a certain ineffable sweetness about revolutions when they are very young. In the beginning, when they strike out against tyranny, they are poems to decency and community, promises of radical simplification. They are odes to joy more than exercises in political theory or action. Consider the words of Schiller immortalized by Beethoven:

Joy, bright spark of divinity,
Daughter of Elysium,
Drunk with fire we walk in
Thy celestial holiness.
Thy spell reunites
What custom has divided,
All men become brothers
Under Thy lingering, gentle wings.

This poem and Beethoven's symphony are not incidental to politics. Beethoven wrote the Ninth Symphony with the French Revolution very much in mind. Perhaps more immediately relevant, the Ode to Joy movement of Beethoven's Ninth is the anthem of the European Community, the Community that the Eastern Bloc now very badly wants to join.

Elysium was, in Greek mythology, the field on which the gods and those humans the gods favored, came together in peace and harmony. Schiller in his poem combines three themes. First, there is the promise of a pastoral redemption.

Second, the means are those of a fiery intoxication. Third, there is the secular vision of human brotherhood, the Elysian Fields brought to earth. In this fusion of pagan and Christian symbols, and of divine and secular principles, Schiller celebrates the central theme of the enlightenment: that men will become like gods in their power and perfection. And nowhere is this fire-drunken surge to perfection more practically visible than on the barricades of a revolution.

Young revolutions are festivals, celebrations of youth, bravery and innocence. Men and women, boys and girls, gather together with the simplest and noblest dream, that the wickedness of the past will end. Young revolutions are a universe in which good will would appear to be a sufficient basis for political life. In a way, revolution is a time when a new species of man already appears to have been born, possessing a new relationship to everything old and commonplace. Even in the most brutal of revolutions, this poetry of redemption permeates. Consider, in John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World*, his description of an old man, telling the young soldiers, "Mine, all mine now! My Petrograd."

At that moment, it was his Petrograd. He had lived in it when it had belonged to others, when he was the city's demeaned and exploited guest. He had joined with others against the manifest wickedness of his dispossession, and now the city was his. As with the sentiments of lovers, thoughts that seem absolutely true at the instant of expression, become false or banal, even a mockery.

The simple truthfulness of the old man's sentiment at the moment of the triumph of Bolshevism inexorably turns false. The sweetness of his sentiment becomes a mocking indictment of the revolution, as the words "my Petrograd" become a cruel joke. The moment at which the Russian revolution became a lie was when the sentiment "my Petrograd" had to be turned from an aesthetic celebration into a principle of political operation. What did it mean for a citizen to lay claim to his city? Such a question required sober reflection, and such sobriety is the antithesis of the revolution's joy. Revolutions do not fail because wicked men seize hold. They fail because the very practicality of governing is a betrayal of the revolutionary sensibility. Revolution is about the sublime and the sacred. Governing is about the prosaic and the profane.

In Paris in 1789, in Petrograd in 1917, and in Berlin or Prague or Bucharest or Peking in 1989, the men and the women in the streets did not see themselves as merely overthrowing the old. The act of coming together in the streets had created a new species of society, the community of the celebratory crowd. As Germans danced on top of the Wall, it appeared that all things were suddenly possible for Germans and humanity alike. Both on the highest and most ordinary levels, revolutions make the revolutionaries feel that the mundane profanity of everyday life has already given way to something new and unprecedented. As with all revolutionaries, those of 1989 want their glowing moment to suffuse everything that comes after.

America's Modest Revolution

An Eastern European intellectual was asked by a reporter about the sort of society he hoped to create. His answer, consistent with those of others, was apparently modest: he wished to borrow the best ideas from socialism and capitalism and combine them into something new, something suitable to his country. On the surface it was a reasonable answer.

Two things were striking about the answer. The first was that the question and answer always involved society rather than the regime. Society encompasses all human relationships while the regime confines itself to political ones. True

to the more radical revolutionary tradition, the Eastern Europeans remain committed to social restructuring, to creating a new society, instead of seeking to free people to live their private lives without demanding that they measure those lives against standards of social significance.

This raises the second striking point about the answer: that one was given at all. Another answer to the question might have been: "I haven't given it a thought. I personally plan to open a hardware store." But the intellectual had an answer. He intended to create a new and better world for others to live in. Unlike Marx or Lenin, the intellectual had no complex system of thought to guide him. But quite like them, the revolutionary of Prague or Berlin in 1989 was convinced that the power to reshape society was now his.

*Eastern Europe must learn to love
private life more than public. . . .
The revolution over, it is time to go
home, fall in love, raise children,
make money, and see the sacred in
the banality of everyday life.*

If the city belongs to the revolutionary, then he is morally obligated to do something with the city, to improve it. He cannot just go home to make a living. A revolution feels itself morally bound to improve the human condition as a whole, rather than just the condition of a single private citizen. To have replied: "I want to go home and make money" would have been a betrayal of the deepest moral principle of revolution.

Almost all modern revolutions have suffered from being both too beautiful and too ambitious. The one exception to this was the American revolution. Its very sobriety and modesty caused many to argue that it was not a genuine revolution at all. Its desire to found a regime rather than create a new species of man has caused many to dismiss the American example as an anti-colonial war that left the social order intact. It fell short of the spirited beauty expected of revolutions.

Our founders wished neither to found a new society nor to perfect the old. They sought merely to found a regime that would protect society from its own ambitions, leaving men free to find their own way in the world. Our founders sought to create a world in which men of modest vision could pursue their private ends in peace, entering public life only as necessary, and reluctantly. There is a vast difference between the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," and "liberty, equality, fraternity." The former is a promise to individual men concerning their private lives. The latter is a promise of a new species of man with a new understanding of what it means to be human.

Learning to Value Hardware Salesmen

In 1917 and 1789 all eyes were on the capital city, first on the streets and then on the public buildings. The public's eyes never left those buildings, except in despair or terror, when citizens sought refuge in private lives far more distant from