

# Education in Eastern Europe: The New Conservative Wave

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The "East-bloc countries" represent about one third of the population and about one half of the continent of Europe. Yet, since World War II until the mid-1980s, they were viewed by the Soviets, as well as by their own leaders, as "the member countries of the socialist camp". The other part of Europe echoed this view. They called Eastern Europe the "satellite countries" or simply "the Communist bloc".

The events of the late 1980s surprised both East and West. The peoples of that remote part of the continent made it clear that they would not belong to "Eastern Europe" anymore - and also, that they did not necessarily want to be an appendage of the West. They are deeply committed to "Europe" in the French sense - a concept, used mainly by opposition movements like Romania Libera. Or they try to revive another concept that we thought had been buried forever, namely that of "Central Europe" - a German concept used by movements like the Hungarian Democratic Forum or the Slovenian Social Democrats.

Renaming themselves is far more than a game of the intellectuals. It represents a crisis of legitimacy faced by both ruling parties and opposition forces in Eastern Europe today. The Soviet leadership does not support "the old guard" anymore. Those who have not built up any grassroots legacies will ultimately go. Others, like the Bulgarians or the Hungarians, may be experimenting with peaceful transitions, their public policies aimed at forming welfare states. They called themselves socialist states and insisted upon ideological monopoly. But, since the mid-1920s, socialism, the ideology of the labour movements from the mid-1800s, has been used as a facade for Russian-Soviet "internationalism" that had fully deteriorated. For generations of teachers and students, socialist education came to mean simply ideological indoctrination - "the formation of the individuals' personality within the collective - and administrative bureaucracy - "the further development of our educational system".

There exist throughout these countries groups of intellectuals called "dissidents". Being enthusiasts for building new societies, they lost their illusions in the course of the 1950s. They started by criticizing "existing socialism" in the name of authentic Marxism, the rediscovery of the young Marx. After 1956, the Hungarian uprising, and 1968, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, they absorbed the democratic ideas of democratic socialism, and Euro-Communism and later, the

ideas of a liberal political order. Today they represent the neo-liberal initiatives in the economy, the ideas of a legal, constitutional state in politics and the protection of human rights and social equality in the society. Their educational manifestos stress the right of the individual to his/her own culture and education. As opposition, they are well prepared as advocates of modernization and as members of future governments they might become outstanding (if not extreme) advisors. But they alone will never win elections.

Populists, like the Democratic Forum in Hungary, the Patriotic Fronts in the Baltic countries, or the Solidarity in Poland, represent the real alternative. Only they are the recipients of a legacy of the civil society. They appeal to nationalism and nationalist sentiments as their political ideology. Nationalism, the ideology of national freedom and sovereignty, swept across Europe in the Napoleonic period and continued through World War I. Even though poisoned by fascist regimes (1923-64) it remained, nevertheless, as a sentiment of family histories. It steps to the forefront again in efforts to rethink the Soviet military invasions into the region before, during and after World War II. These incursions are many - Poland 1939, the Baltic countries, Bessarabia and Moldavia 1940, Katyn 1941, Berlin 1953, Poznan and Budapest 1956, Prague 1968. Appealing to the peoples' original heritages, stressing the nation's own values and restoring traditional institutions like the church or the school - these elements complete the ideological face of the populists.

It is this shift of both political power and the dominant ideology that initiate the new conservative wave. What then might be the slogan which summarizes this economic, political, and cultural reorientation - and by which, therefore, an election could be won? It sounds like this: Back to the normal! That is: back to the precommunist era. Unfortunately, it also means a turning back of almost half a century.

In this paper I present a brief overview of the burning educational issues of Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s, focusing on three points, namely the content, the structure, and the governance of education. Since the opposition forces have not clarified their educational agendas, it is sometimes hard to differentiate among them. Therefore, I shall refer to them sometimes as the "opposition forces" in contrast to the former political leadership. Yet, it is clear that issues like the role of the churches or the importance of "national subject matters" and the stress on academics come from the populists. Other proposals, like privatization or the key role of foreign language teaching are mostly characteristic of the liberals.

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### **Foreign language teaching**

Foreign language teaching is among the most important issues, and may be the most visible issue of curriculum policy in Eastern Europe. This is not by chance. The major foreign language in those centralized school systems always has been connected with foreign policies. Until the mid-1800s, Latin had been taught in the Prussian Gymnasium as well as in its Austrian version. It was the dominant foreign language from Berlin to the Baltic states as well as from the Prussian and Austrian parts of Poland down to the Adriatic (Croatia) as well as the Carpathians (Transylvania). Later, Latin was challenged by the dominant languages of those states that ruled Eastern Europe. Russian became the official language of education in countries under Czarist rule (the Baltic states and the major part of Poland); while German had been introduced to the state education of the Austrian (later Austro-Hungarian) Empire after 1848-49. The influence of these two languages remained uncertain in the Balkans where Germans, Austrians and Russians competed with each other and with the remnants of the Ottoman Empire. After World War I, foreign language teaching clearly reflected the foreign policies of the new-born nation states. Thus, German became the major foreign language in the schools of Estonia and Latvia, and it remained the first foreign language in Bohemia (Czechoslovakia) and Hungary. Other countries, like Poland or the Balkan-states adopted French because of the influence and cultural support of France. After World War II, the Soviet educational bureaucracy followed its Czarist predecessors in requiring Russian as the first foreign language to be taught throughout Eastern Europe. Russian became the "language of internationalism" everywhere, causing almost unsolvable problems in terms of foreign language teacher training and supply.

After 1948, Tito left the Cominform (the successor of the Communist International, first set up, then razed, then built up again by Stalin), Russian language teaching decreased in Yugoslavia. After Ceausescu's deal with the Soviet Union in 1964 with the Balkan Pact and the withdrawal of the Soviet military forces from the Balkans, Romania also stopped teaching obligatory Russian and substituted for it options of languages (in theory) with French (or, to a certain extent, English), as its daily practice. Other countries followed their mandatory Russian language teaching till the end of the 1980s. States that remain parts of the Soviet Union like

Moldavia or the Baltic countries practice Russian language teaching even today. Yet, teaching Russian proved to be a complete disaster, partly because Russian has never become a tool of everyday communication in the region. During the past decades, all sorts of exchange and cooperation that would have provided occasions for speaking Russian were kept at the lowest possible level partly due to cautious Soviet bureaucrats and partly due to unwilling partners. It proved to be a complete failure also because forcing Russian blocked the teaching and learning of other European languages. The result is that entire nations have been cut off from the rest of Europe because of a lack of skill in using any second languages.

Today, foreign language teaching has again become an issue of political reorientation the solution of which depends upon how various political forces will relocate their countries on the map of Europe. Which language is to be taught in order to communicate with Europe?

The neo-liberal forces usually indicate English as the tool of international communication. It would serve their major target which is to join with the European Community. Those who would follow a vision of Central Europe argue in a different way. According to them, the region has traditionally been influenced by the Germans and might be influenced again by a unified Germany. This sounds like a strong argument for making German the first second language. The history of Nazi Germany, however, clouds this cultural sky. Therefore there is also an interest in teaching French as the second language as in Romania, Bulgaria, or Croatia, or teaching even Italian as in Hungary. In any case, however, the foreign language issue leads far away from the geopolitical realities.

## **Ideology**

Obligatory Russian teaching was only one sign of oppression. Mandatory ideological teaching was another expression of it. The content of ideological teaching varied in the different school systems. Without question, the Polish system was the most liberal, where even Christian values were extensively taught. Hungary also adopted a kind of liberalism, and with it, the teaching of the Bible, as part of the world literature program of its secondary schools, as well as the study of Christian church history incorporated into the world history curriculum. Other systems required a much tougher indoctrination. Marxist-Leninist ideology was an independent subject matter of the Czechoslovak or the East German curricula. The Yugoslavi syllabi, which

varied from republic to republic, were and still are less liberal than expected; while the Romanian regime developed its own version of national Marxism as its official ideology. The toughness of the indoctrination depended, and perhaps still does, upon the positions of the ruling parties.

Indoctrination went on smoother and in more sophisticated ways in countries where the political leadership felt its position to be safe, as in Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, or in Croatia and Slovenia among the Yugoslav republics. In those countries the parties gained a certain respect from the intellectuals, especially among the teachers. Indoctrination was tougher, however, in countries such as Czechoslovakia after 1968, where party leaderships could not establish solid grass-roots support or could gain credence only envisioning dangerous challenges from outside, such as the fall of the federation for the Yugoslav, a Soviet invasion for the Poles, or loss of territories for the Romanians.

These examples show also that ideological teaching had an additional function. It was necessary in order to maintain the (limited) national sovereignty of the ruling parties in the region. In the Brezhnev era, for example, the maintenance of ideological teaching could be offered as proof of loyalty to the preservation of Soviet hegemony in the region. At the same time, by emphasizing the "equality of the parties and the importance of "national characteristics," ideological instruction provided the national parties with a vocabulary for conceptualizing their resistance against outside even soviet-influences. Romania, for example, maintained its unified territories in ideological terms, and Yugoslav leaders always stressed the historical necessity of its federation in ideological expressions. For almost a decade, the Polish leadership opposed Soviet intervention partly by showing ideological loyalty; and the East German party had only one argument for an independent state (in opposition to the Federal Republic), and it was socialism. Marxism is the political terminology by which, at the end of the 1980s, the Communist parties of the Baltic states expressed their independence from the Soviet party. The abolition of the ideology from the central syllabi is one of the main requirements of opposition groups. It is so important that they combine it with the abolition of the party monopoly from their constitutions as happened, for example, in Czechoslovakia in November 1989. Yet, the abolition of the state ideology creates an ideological vacuum and revitalizes alternative values.

The liberal oppositions are against any kind of officially stated values. To require official values in the educational system, they argue, means to substitute one totalitarianism with another. According to the populists, however, a new system of values is desperately needed. The teachers have been trained in the Marxist ideology. Now, they have to be provided with alternative values. The youth grew up in a political culture that has entirely been penetrated by Marxism; now they have to be offered alternatives. Yet agreement on those alternatives is distant.

Religion represents one of the options, and, in fact there are some who would require it as part of school syllabi. For a long time religion lost its political and social influence in Europe and lost its chance to become an official ideology. Yet, there are considerable religious revivals throughout the region, and partly among the youth. Oppositions rightly expect a growing religious influence in state education.

Nationalism is another alternative. Nationalism has a long (although uneven) history in the region since the creation of the first nation states in Europe. Nationalist values contribute to the ideological indoctrinations of the youth in Romania, Poland, and in some Yugoslav republics. Hence the emphatic and enthusiastic turn to the revision of history textbooks, the heavy demand on mother tongues and the national literatures, the new interest toward geography, environment problems, and the deep sense for the traditional symbols.

## **National studies**

At the end of the 1980s, Ukrainians, Latvians and Lithuanians suddenly appeared on the streets under their own national flags. Slovaks and Hungarians were fighting for the official use of their traditional national shields. Romanians living in Moldavia want to replace their present Cyrillic alphabet with their original Latin characters. During the turbulent days of the Bucharest uprising (December 1989) a new national anthem was as important for the temporary Romanian government as the arrest of the members of the Securitate (the former secret police).

One reflection of these political demands is a "back to the basics" movement. The slogan, familiar to Westerners from the 1950s and 1960s, reflects a reality: the ultimate importance of primary education. After decades of politically manifested and bureaucratically initiated reforms, the traditional elementary school teacher has come back to public life. Her/his message is clear:

if you want to save your nation after decades of communist rule, you have to turn back to the ultimate values of your people. That is: to its mother tongue and to its peoples' heritages. Another reflection of these political demands is the movement to give higher priority to “national subjects” in the central syllabi. Analyses of the central syllabi show the dominance of science as opposed to the social sciences, civics, and humanities. Forty seven to sixty one percent of the content of the syllabi of the general schools in Hungary, the GDR or Poland is covered by scientific subjects. Opposition forces, mainly the populists, urge an increase in the proportion of “national studies” which would automatically mean the reduction of science.

The present textbooks of history and its related fields are under siege. In the Baltic countries, the major concern is the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 that gave legality to the Soviet invasion of Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Moldavia. The Polish debates heated up around the fate of the Polish revolts and the Warsaw uprising during World War II. The Czechs and the Hungarians demand authentic interpretations of their liberation movements and their Soviet invasions. The role of Tito and the present power balance is challenged everywhere in Yugoslavia. It seems that history studies will turn back the clock to the 1940s. Lithuanians want to turn back to their history textbooks published before 1941; the new private publishers advertise the historical maps of the country in Hungary; the new political and intellectual leadership raise up the issues of the old Kingdom and Great Romania (containing Moldavia and Bessarabia) in mass communication.

The dilemma, however, is not so much the interpretation of the past as the interpretation of the present and moreover the future. Opposition forces agree in rejecting the former doctrine of “internationalism” because it covered Russification and Soviet influence. But they can hardly agree upon future steps. The liberals propose economic recovery and the political turn-back to Europe with the hope that - in the long run - economic expansion and a free market will eliminate nation state borders. Populists, however, insist upon independence and sovereignty which, in turn, assume ultimate commitment to one's own nation and homeland. Populist movements all over the region seem to be influential enough to penetrate the present subject matter debates and to initiate a kind of 19th century turn to national studies within the foreseeable future.

## **Structures**

In present debates about the structure of education, the "general schools," those comprehensive and compulsory basic schools meant to unify elementary education with the middle schools, are being challenged by opposite forces. The opposite movements also criticize the vocational training and the admission to the higher education. If issues of the syllabi drive them toward a conservative pedagogical standpoint, so do issues about the structure. In the following lines, I try to make it clear why.

### **General schools**

The general schools were established in the course of democratic school reforms at nearly the same time (1944-47) all over Eastern Europe. The reform cut down the first three (four or five) grades of the various, traditionally selective, secondary schools, unified their curricula, declared them obligatory and administratively connected them to the elementary schools. In this way, the Eastern European countries adopted a basic education system of eight years - seven years only in Romania or Bulgaria, and nine years in Czechoslovakia. The general schools were declared to be the democratic schools which would bring to an end the cultural privileges of selective secondary education.

In the early 1960s, the parties adopted the new idea initiated by Krushchev and his educational ideologists at the Soviet Pedagogical Academy. They started to introduce a new system of public education which went back to Lenin's wife, Krupskaja, which was called the ten-year general polytechnical secondary school. It was introduced to the Soviet republics (including Moldavia) during the 1960s, but the Baltic states saved their former systems of eleven year public education. The same system was also introduced (or planned) in countries with shorter traditions of secondary institutions, like Romania or Bulgaria. Outside the Soviet Union, the GDR was the first to establish a real ten-year public education system.

The ten-year secondary education met a social reality. After years of compulsory (mostly eight-year) basic education, a new generation grew with higher demands for schooling. A ten year compulsory and comprehensive system seemed to meet their demands. And it also promised



to postpone the selection year from the age of 14 to 16 and was an alternative to the dominance of vocational training.

Though the brother parties were strongly advised to do so, two of them (the Czechoslovak and the Hungarian) did not adopt the ten-year system. Somewhat later (1973-77) others, namely Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia decided for it. The first and second grades of the secondary schools were separated from the remaining third and fourth grades and became independent, as in Yugoslavia and Romania, or were connected to the eight-grade general schools, as in the GDR. In the course of their nation-wide introduction, however, the ten year systems proved to be impossible to operate.

The governments simply declared the "new structure", even making it mandatory. In doing so, however, they did not expand the school networks and did not raise the numbers of the teachers. In the name of establishing a new system the administration ruined the existing secondary schools. The secondary schools were rooted in the prewar period and already were accepted by families. Those schools and their faculties had already suffered an earlier reorganization (the creation of the general schools) and could hardly cope with it.

After eight years of comprehensive studies the entire population of the given age group was expected to attend the same type of schools for the additional two years. Many parents did not want to send their children into classrooms "poisoned" by unmotivated and undisciplined classmates. (it is a well-known argument which has received special publicity in Poland as well as in Voivodina, Yugoslavia.) Some of those restructuring actions were stopped and/or declared to be "experiments" at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s. Yet, opposition groups became highly cautious about comprehensiveness. The real issue behind the comprehensive secondary education is, however, the future of the traditional secondary schools, called the Gymnasium in Hungary or Lycee in Romania and Bulgaria. There is an emerging demand for revitalizing them, and for reestablishing the selective and elitist secondary education of the pre-war period. The Hungarian authorities have already accepted - as an "experiment" - the eight-year Gymnasium, as it essentially looked until the creation of the general school. The liberals argue for them in the name of the individual right to establish or attend quality schools even if they prove to be socially selective. The populists, on the other hand, emphasize that the Gymnasium (Lycee) was part of the educational traditions of the country and the farmlands that had been ruined by the communists. Some intellectual groups are in favour of them because they promise more

academics and by this way a better preparation for university studies. These days only few dare to argue for comprehensiveness. The opposition has no better alternatives to the comprehensive general schools - initiated and then deteriorated by the former bureaucracy - than the selective system of the pre-war period.

## **Vocational training**

Soon after the communist take-over a new and strange system of vocational education was introduced into the entire region: an apprenticeship training combined with military-like boarding schools. First the Yugoslavs introduced it in connection with their international youth camps for railway construction (1945-46). The GDR got a selective system that offered only limited programs for agricultural apprentices. it favoured mining, energy and heavy industries to light industries and services.

Yugoslavia had the first state-organized vocational education in the Balkan countries (with minor exceptions in Croatia, Slovenia, factories in Serbia, Transylvania or Bulgaria). For others (Slovaks, Czechs, Hungarians), it was a turn-away from their earlier apprenticeship of the German-Austrian type. in any case, however, it was a system imposed on public education. It served the parties' target of building up a heavy-industry based defense economy that relied upon Soviet energy and raw materials. The state training system was a copy of the state industry system which was dedicated to serve the production sphere with manpower. In countries with developed industries (like Czechoslovakia), the training system supported the rebuilding of the industry according to the Soviet model. In countries with strong agricultural traditions (like Bulgaria or Hungary) the new system forced the peasants to give up their private farnis together with their working habits and to move to industry as the new proletarians.

Economists of the 1960s and 1970s considered the new training systems as outstanding chances for manpower planning. During the economic reform wave of the mid-1960s, blocked by the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Polish, Czechoslovak and Hungarian economic planners successfully influenced their governments to expand the training system. In this way, they hoped to prepare their work force for a technological modernization.

The present state of their economies demonstrates that vocational training of that type contributed to the survival of the state-owned, heavily subsidized, energy consuming industry. It

provided these industries with an oversupply of young, technically undertrained, educationally counterselected, socially dependent labour force. It is a labour force which prefers job security to private ownership, economic ventures, and high technology. Vocational training of that type also served as a social segregation of those who were "sentenced to physical work" even if they did not want to do so. It also helped ruin the traditional middle classes in countries where they did not want to cooperate with the new leaderships, as in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Croatia. The former administration selected 45-55% of an age cohort for vocational training following their general school studies. That is, they were selected around the age of 14, with some exceptions, as in Bulgaria where there still exists an option to leave the general school early for vocational training.

Evidently, the new educational administrations cannot accept vocational training of that kind. The liberals would require a competitive labour market and would not even mind a limited rate of unemployment. On the other hand, they also emphasize the right of the families to choose the future careers of their own children. "Let them vote against dirty industrial labour and for more academics" they say - in the hope that they could reach higher education instead of the strictly controlled, physically exhausting factory work. The question, however, remains: Who will be employed in a society with so many academics, and who will become unemployed in the stagnating economies of Eastern Europe? To abandon a training system that was forced on them does not mean automatically that the youth will face a more prosperous future. on the contrary, it seems that the opposition would be driven into an equally selective system although one not selective in favour of the industries. A selective secondary education might cope with the the neo-liberal beliefs and the neo-conservative nostalgia. But it will not necessarily cope with the Eastern European realities.

### **Admission systems**

After the communist take-over, the new educational administrations adopted the Soviet system of admissions into different types of schools. Between 1940-48 they introduced admission regulations for schools which were not obligatory. In this way they could double check the schooling of the entire population. Mandatory schooling was an instrument of

extensive control over the families and their children. By controlling the admissions they selected those whom they wanted to give the nobility of higher educational diplomas.

The schooling statistics can be used as arguments for the rigid system of educational admissions in Eastern European countries. All of them can boast of a high level of primary and secondary schooling. In the GDR and Czechoslovakia a high proportion of those who completed general school also entered the secondary education. (The appropriate figures are also close to the optimal in Poland or Hungary where 85-89% of a given age group completes the general school within eight years, and 93-96% within ten years. Secondary enrollments in those countries are above 90%. Other statistics, including those of the Baltic states, are not clear. The corresponding Bulgarian and Romanian figures are higher than others while the federal statistics of Yugoslavia, like those from Albania, are hard to interpret.

The social mobility tables - first produced in the mid-1960s in Poland and Hungary - reflect a rapid restructuring of Eastern European societies. Of course those findings are closely related to the educational systems because they mostly use schooling figures. Analyses of those tables regularly show that the Eastern European school system offer better chances to working class children than other educational systems. One can easily attribute this to admissions regulated to accord with students' social backgrounds. The admission systems were more or less politically rigid according to the parties' control over the schools. There was almost no political selection for secondary school enrollment in Poland and in Hungary since the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, while it was tough and restrictive in Czechoslovakia and the GDR. Admission to higher education also varies from the nearly free admission at Jagellonian University, in Krakow, Poland during the 1970s to manifested quotas according to parents' occupation and service location in the Soviet Union. Being more or less sophisticated, however, the regulations have always openly preferred youngsters from the working classes.

The opposition movements aim to liberalize the admissions. it is one of their major demands in the GDR, Czechoslovakia and in Romania and, to a limited extent, everywhere else. But in doing so, they will have to expand their educational capacities considerably, something for which the governments will not have budgeted. Without increasing the number of teachers and schools, the opposition groups can do only one thing. They can give preference to those social strata that have been disfavored by the former political leaderships in the past, namely to the intelligentsia and small property holders. This would clearly be a liberalization of the

admissions for the intellectuals (who already support the opposition movements). But it might end up in a more rigid selection against the majorities in Eastern European societies

## **Administration Finance**

In the name of constructing socialism (communism), the former leaders of the region tried to develop their own welfare states. On the one hand, they accomplished an almost total state employment of their populations. The employment rates go up to 88-96% of the age group of the 15-55 year olds. Bulgaria reported the highest while Hungary the lowest figures at the turn of the 1970s-1980s. On the other hand they subsidized heavily the various fields of "social allocations" like health, education, transportation, housing, child-care, food supply, arts and entertainment.

But they paid incredible prices. Their economic policies - heavy industry, state ownership, self-reliance - did not match their social targets; therefore they could keep moving their welfare states only at a low standard, exploiting agriculture and nature, depending on cheap Soviet energy and raw materials, and creating huge Western debts. Thus, with some exceptions in Hungary and Bulgaria, the opposition forces have inherited from their predecessors economic disaster, deterioration of nature and agricultural poverty. State coffers are empty and few are free of foreign debt. Hungary has the highest per capita rate of foreign loans and Romania the lowest.

One of the unintended effects of those socialist welfare states has been the impoverishment of the schools and the teaching force. The salaries of those working in the service area are especially low. Teachers have the poorest salaries among all diploma holders throughout the region, with the slight exception of professors in some fields of higher education as well as teachers in public education in the GDR. The new governments will have to discover new resources to finance their educational systems. one option that seems to emerge from these debates is privatization. World Bank specialists formulated and discussed this proposal recently in considerable detail (1987-88). They visited Poland and Hungary to negotiate additional loans for education and vocational training as parts of their economic modernization programs.

Although it may seem shocking to those who have grown up under state paternalism, the idea of educational privatization is not quite new in Eastern Europe. Several decentralization efforts (Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary) undermined the central state monopoly in education and

educational administration. What is really new about educational privatization is that some opposition groups (mostly the liberals) would include individuals as well as private owners into the financial sources of educational finance. Yet a question remains. Who will pay the total cost of education? There are only a few calculations of the per capita costs of education in these countries. According to those calculations, the school, even the most elementary type, is too expensive to be financed by individuals and without state support. Privatization, by itself, cannot save the schools and the teachers from their present poverty. So educational privatization is more a political than an economic issue on the agenda of the opposition. It may give, say the opposition groups, better chances for individual families and private organizations to influence the school. The liberals want to save the individual's right for public teaching and learning; a right which was never practiced without state limitations. Populists in Hungary and in Poland used to associate educational privatization with their community school experiments. Those experiments would give the schools to the local societies. Who will change the content of the education and who will modernize the system? influenced by decentralization and democratization rhetoric, neither the liberals nor the populists can answer these questions.

## **Churches**

Since 1947-49, the churches of Eastern Europe have been expelled from the educational enterprise. It happened somewhat earlier in the Baltic countries as well as in Moldavia; and in Tito's Yugoslavia this separation occurred between 1945-46. This step was accomplished legally through secularization acts that were enacted everywhere in the region. Under this name, the ruling parties completed a full state monopoly of education. Traditional elementary as well as secondary schools became elements of the state educational network and were soon reorganized into general schools. Separating the church from the state was without question a historical necessity in Eastern Europe. The necessity of the state monopoly in education, however, varied from country to country according to the roles their churches fulfilled. The Romanian Catholic churches took a major role in public education. Being the majority in Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia and Slovenia, they also took strong stands on the political changes in their own countries. Some of them, like the Polish church, heavily opposed the Nazi German invasion; others, like the Slovak or the Croatian churches coped with it. It gave more political

authority and respect to the Polish church to oppose the communist take-over in Poland than other churches which became suspicious after the war (like the Hungarian church).

Since the Reformation of the sixteenth century, the Protestant churches assumed a traditional role in elementary education. But their political roles varied according to the nationalities of their memberships. The Lutherans, the majority church in Estonia and a German-based church in the other countries, could easily be suspected of German cooperation. The Calvinists, Presbyterians in Hungary and Transylvania, fought constantly against Austrian, i.e., Habsburgian German influences, and referred easily to their democratic traditions.

Eastern Christianity continued its historical role to establish, maintain and develop Russia. The Balkans have always been under the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church. They were incorporated into the Czarist regime and continued as the major ideological opponent of the young Soviet state. The Russian Church was treated accordingly. Other churches in the Balkans, however, were closely associated with the struggle for their nation states. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church happened to be the force of survival during five centuries of Ottoman occupation and oppression. The Church of Romania played the major role in establishing the new Romanian state after World War I. So they could not be turned easily from this cultural policy. All the more because those churches focused mainly on church education and the training of their priests.

Muslims in Albania, Bulgaria or Romania and in some republics of Yugoslavia had little influence (if any) on public education. The same was true of the orthodox Jewish communities in Poland, Belorussia and Ukraine. In some countries (Bosnia-Yugoslavia) Muslims got outside support from Arab states. In other countries the Jewish holocaust gave social respect to the Jewish congregations who survived.

Some of the churches were able to make deals with their states, others were not. In Yugoslavia or Albania the party leadership heavily attacked all of the churches including Muslims and all Christian denominations. The traditional Christian holidays were banned, and basic Church services forbidden (e.g. baptism in Albania). In other countries, as Bulgaria, Romania or Hungary, the dominant churches could keep a few of their original educational institutions but used them mainly for church training. In Poland or the GDR the dominant churches saved large parts of their properties, including schools and universities but also hospitals and welfare institutions, and with them, their societal influences as well. From the mid-

1980s they became the centers of the opposition movements in Poland (Solidarity), Lithuania, Ukraine and in East Germany.

The emerging roles of the churches became visible in the late 1980s. Populists demonstrated under Christian symbols, demanded their original churches in the Ukraine and Lithuania. They openly celebrated Christmas on the streets (Romania 1989), and organized their opposition in the Lutheran churches throughout the GDR. As part of the same wave, opposition movements want to receive back those (secondary) schools that had been nationalized in the late 1940s. And the schools will be returned, even if church officials declare their neutrality on public educational issues as the Romanian Catholic Church has done in Hungary.

This movement can be considered also as an element of educational privatization, although it is more than that. It represents partly a nostalgia for traditional institutions; a nostalgia shared by so many that it can soon become a political demand. Partly, it is also a human rights issue because the churches represent different ethnic or national minorities in each of the nation states. Anyway, it is a fact that the opposition forces have to cooperate with the churches that once were considered to be reactionaries and that are traditionally connected with the conservatism in the political arena.

## **Minorities**

In order to understand the dilemmas of the new governments concerning their nationalities, we have to distinguish between two types, the ethnic minorities and the national minorities.

The predecessors of the present ethnic minorities arrived in the region during the last three centuries. Germans moved into the Baltic area as well as into the Carpathians during their historical "Move to the East" (Drang nach Osten). Turks moved into the present territories of Bulgaria, Albania, and Yugoslavia when those territories belonged to the Ottoman Empire. Before 1918 and after 1940, Russians immigrated to Moldavia, the Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Romanians immigrated to Transylvania when it belonged to Hungary and to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Slovaks moved from the Northern Carpathians to the Great Plain when Turks moved out of the traditional Hungarian territories. The picture is by no means complete without mentioning the Jews who had moved from the German fields to present



Poland, Lithuania, Belorussia and the Ukraine, and later, during the XVIII-XIXth centuries, they moved back to the West, arriving in Hungary and Austria. Romanies (known as Gypsies) moved from the Middle East to the Balkan Peninsula under the Ottoman Empire, passed through Greece, Bulgaria and Romania, and reached the soil of Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, and Slovakia.

All of these immigrated for economic reasons. They did not have political entities or nation states to leave behind. Therefore they always defined themselves as ethnic, cultural, language or religious minorities. They had no national identities and have never defined themselves as political minorities. In the course of the history, the ethnic minorities integrated and assimilated into host societies. The national minorities did not move anywhere; they were "created" by wars and peace treaties. One third of the Hungarian population is living outside of present Hungary because its original homelands became parts of Romania, Czechoslovakia, the Ukraine, Austria and Yugoslavia after World War I. Albanians and Bulgarians live outside of their nation states as a result of the two Balkan wars (before World War I). Roumanians in Moldavia and Bessarabia, Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians in the Soviet Union became also national minorities after 1940 and World War II.

In opposition to ethnic minorities, national minorities always defined themselves as parts of their "mother nations". Identifying themselves with existing nation states - although other than their permanent locations - they cause unsolvable problems. Their situation is unique because they have to be the citizens of states that were created on the basis of ethnically and culturally homogeneous populations.

The communist regimes emphasized internationalism and argued strongly against national separatism. In other words, they tried to transform their original nation states into political states. In reality, however, these actions contributed to the supremacy of the Soviet Union in the region, guaranteed by party supremacy in each country. The collapse of party power monopolies again drove the issue of national independence and sovereignty to the forefront. The movement is supported by strong nationalism which stirs up all the political problems of minorities.

In fighting against separatism (national and/or political), they denied the collective rights of minorities. The socialist constitutions stated the right for one's own culture but as an individual right only. The interest of the collective represented by the socialist state - could always precede the interest of the individual. This gave the legacy for the party and government

to compel their political interests against the minorities. Unfortunately, national minorities receive legal support in the original United Nations documents. Their rights were stated as human rights.

From the legal point of view, the individual might have rights for his/her mother tongue or ethnic culture, but had no right (as a member of a collective) for a school other than the state-owned local institution. This argument served well to stress socialist humanism on the one hand and the closing down of minority schools on the other hand. It happened so in the Baltic states. The same thing happened to the Romanians in Moldavia and to the Hungarians in Romania.

This general trend of decreasing minority education in the name of majorities was opposed by an opposite trend. It used minority education as a tool of foreign policy. Moscow supported Russian elementary education throughout the Baltic area with the intent of Russification as the way to internationalism. The same happened to the Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania 1944-45. Here the Hungarian minorities group had to submit to the new communist regime led by the Romanians. As a reward, the Soviet military presence guaranteed the survival of that minority. Tito wanted to create as many republics as he could to create a balance against a strong Serbia which appeared to be deeply influenced by Soviet party politics and secret agencies.

Hence the dilemma of all the opposition forces in Eastern Europe: they can receive popular support only if they use ideology opposite to that of the ancient regimes. The new ideology must rely upon common values like religion, ethnic heritage, and national traditions. Stressing, however, those values, will challenge the minorities. Until now the nationalities have suffered because they had no constitutional guarantees as minorities. So they supported the liberalization movements in the name of democracy. Under the new democracies, however, they may face another challenge: the nationalism of the majority, a nationalism of those (mainly the populists) who have liberated them in the name of democracy, but who need the support of the majority of their population - which is full of nationalist feelings.

## Appendix

Unlike other comparative studies, I have included the Baltic countries plus Moldavia (Bessarabia) in this overview but not the entire Soviet Union, though, sometimes I referred to it. The debates reviewed in this paper assume an initial knowledge of the history of Eastern Europe. In a short overview, however, I cannot summarize information of that kind. Those who want to be acquainted with details may turn to the leading international handbooks (which mainly reflect the 1970s).

It seems, however, that comparative education has not yet coped with the new political and ideological realities of Eastern Europe, and this has its explanation. During the cold war, East European studies served anti-communism (while the opposite side used comparative education as an ideological arrn against capitalism). Later (from the mid-1960s), the Western comparatists limited themselves to fact-collecting and statistics-crunching of a positivistic type, while Easterners served their states and parties by informing them about the practices of the "brotherly parties". During the 1970s, studies of each others' systems tended to serve a kind of popular cultural @ssion, a kind of cultural tourism. Comparativists of both sides have established special and even personal connections which have contributed to the mutual international respect of key figures of the educational establishment of Eastern Europe.

Economic, sociological, political and cultural analysts, on the other hand, rarely understand the key role of the populist movements and the importance of the new conservative wave in Eastern Europe. This might be a consequence of the fact that the liberals, dissidents, new leftists, and Neo-Marxists, have better representation than the populists in the international social science community. Hence the surprise from time to time that Eastern Europe is full of conservative and nationalist ideas and that forces we have never heard about win elections. The importance of analysing educational issues is evident. What is going on in the classrooms influences the political future of Eastern Europe much deeper than what is happening in the public arena. The present collapse of the former establishments of Eastern Europe demands a new approach to the educational issues as well as a new generation of comparativists.

## **Note**

This is the summary of an introductory lecture series given at the Department of Cultural Foundations, Syracuse University, during the Fall semester of 1989/90. Since things are changing rapidly in Eastern Europe nowadays, it is important to notice that the manuscript was prepared between December 1989 - January 1990. The author thanks Thomas F. Green for his invaluable assistance as faculty associate, consultant as well as reader and editor.