TRAJECTORIES OF FEAR AND HOPE:
SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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ABSTRACT

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Broad based, popular support is a necessary condition for the survival and effective functioning of democratic regimes. This research analyzes the levels, trajectories and determinants of popular support for Communist and post-Communist regimes in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania. On average, there has been a rise in support for the new political regime by comparison with the old, but a fall in popular support for the new economic system by comparison with a planned economy. Supporters of the new regimes outnumber opponents in every country in the survey. Economic hopes (prospective evaluations) are more important influences on levels of support than evaluations of the current or past economies or than social structure characteristics. Lingering fears of the old communist regimes are important sources of support for current regimes as well. Because the majority of East Europeans expect future economic conditions to improve rapidly, there is an even higher level of support for what the new regime is expected to become in five years time than there is for the regime today. Even making "worst case" assumptions that memories will fade and expectations will not be fulfilled, levels of support for the new regimes should remain positive on balance for the foreseeable future.

INTRODUCTION

The collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe is the latest evidence that the lives of political and economic regimes are precarious. Some interpret the fall of one-party regimes with centrally planned economies as evidence that liberal democracy and the market economy reflect the end of history. However, the frequency with which democratic regimes, including previous attempts to establish democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and in Russia, also have collapsed cautions that successful transitions to democratic forms cannot be taken for granted (cf. Fukuyama, 1992; Linz and Stepan, 1978).

A defining characteristic of democratic regimes is that they depend for their survival on the existence of widespread public support (Easton, 1965). Although commonplace in western social science, this idea was explicitly rejected by Communist rulers, who interpreted Marx's dictum about the dictatorship of the proletariat as meaning that the party knew what people thought (or ought to think) and therefore what merited support (cf. White 1979; Shlapentokh, 1989; Carnaghan, 1992). However, in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989 there have been abrupt and fundamental discontinuities in the regimes of all of the formerly communist countries. Although many of the new regimes fall short of western democratic ideals, all possess two important democratic attributes: they are pluralistic rather than totalitarian in orientation, and they rely on open, competitive elections as the basis of government. By definition, new regimes are in motion. The post-communist regimes of Eastern and Central Europe did not originate in the distant past; they date from 1989 or later. Since stable democratic regimes are not created overnight, the new regimes probably are best described as democratizing rather than democratic. As such they are even more vulnerable than established democratic and even more dependent for their survival on widespread public support.

The survival and effective functioning of democratizing regimes depends on more than simply the aggregate level of public support. The trajectory of support over time, the distribution of support across significant societal sub-groups, the rules and institutional mechanisms by which support is aggregated, and the number, nature and severity of the problems or stresses facing the regime are among numerous other important considerations (see, *inter alia*, Eckstein, 1971; Rogowski, 1974; Przeworski, 1991). Regarding stress, for example, many of the new regimes in Eastern Europe have undertaken fundamental economic reforms in parallel with their political transformations. Central planning and government ownership have been replaced with

market mechanisms and private property. In most cases, the scale of economic change is as profound as the change in regimes, and the two are inextricably linked. Just as command economies depend upon political power (cf. Kornai, 1992, ch. 3), so economic privatization is necessary to create the institutions of civil society presumed by political pluralism (Agh, 1993). Moreover, although citizens experience the economic changes in their roles as producers and consumers, they can express dissatisfaction with the economic changes in their roles as citizens and voters. Thus, the challenge of simultaneously transforming both the economic and the political regime greatly increases political stress and increases concomitantly the levels of support necessary for survival.

As this illustrates, it is not possible to specify a priori an absolute level of support necessary for regimes to survive. Established regimes with minimal levels of stress may survive by inertia even they enjoy relatively modest levels of support. Conversely, regimes facing fundamental and intractable challenges or lacking institutions capable of mobilizing support or of responding effectively to challenges may fail despite substantial public approval. Because the relationship of public support to political regimes is both relative and contingent the most that can be said about this relationship is, ceteris paribus, that stable or increasing support facilitates the survival of democratic regimes, whereas declining support puts regimes at increasing risk.

Support for a new regime not only must be stable or increasing, it also must be widely distributed. Writing about elites, Przeworski (1991: 30-31) hypothesizes that "[d]emocracy will evoke generalized compliance ... when all the relevant political forces have some specific minimum probability of doing well under the particular system of institutions." As Lijphart (1977) has shown, it is possible to devise institutions of consensual government that can bargain about social, economic and political differences. However, the history of Eastern and Central Europe emphasizes that the success of elite bargains is far from certain. One reason is that elites may not be able to deliver; mass support for elite bargains is far from certain. Thus, while the distribution of elite support is critical to democratizing regimes, we believe that it is important to consider the distribution of mass support as well. Even where overall levels of public support are relatively high, the stability of democratizing regimes can be compromised if there are significant pockets of opposition, whether territorially based as in Czechoslovakia before its dissolution, ethnically based as in Bosnia, or functionally based as among urban workers or the peasantry (cf. Sartori, 1976).

Examples of the rise the rise and fall of fledgling democracies are abundant;

explanations for the trajectories of such regimes are more numerous still. Unlike most previous studies that emphasize thick description of single cases, this article examines support for transitions to democracy by analyzing public opinion data comparatively across five Central and European Countries -- Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia (as of autumn 1991). After a brief discussion of the meaning and measurement of political support, we compare public evaluations of the fledgling regimes in autumn 1991 with recollections of the old Communist regime as it functioned five years previously and with hopes or expectations about what the regime will be like five years in the future. Our intent is to measure both current levels of support and the trajectories of support from past to present and into the future. Consistent with the hypothesis that regimes require broad based as well as increasing levels of support, we also examine the social and economic correlates of support comparing levels and trajectories of support among a variety of social and economic groups. Finally we develop a series of multivariate models both to better understand the determinants of support and to enable us to engage in "bounded speculation" about the durability and future trajectories of support for regimes attempting simultaneous political and economic transformations.

THE CONCEPT AND MEASUREMENT OF REGIME SUPPORT

The idea of political support is venerable, but empirical concern with the concept begins with David Easton (1965). Easton emphasizes the distinction among different objects of support, including the community to be governed, the institutions that constitute the political regime, and the authorities who occupy the principal offices of governance within the regime. He also distinguishes different types of support including specific support, generated as a quid pro quo for the satisfaction of demands, and diffuse support, a generalized and relatively enduring loyalty which is not contingent on short term inducements or rewards.

Although Easton's conceptualization has proven remarkably durable and stimulated considerable research, it also has provoked controversy. Empirically, questions have been raised about the ability even of relatively sophisticated citizens to differentiate the objects of support. Similarly, the distinction between specific and diffuse support has been criticized on both theoretical and empirical grounds (for a review of the literature and summary of the debate see Abramson, 1983; Dalton, 1988; Kornberg and Clarke, 1992; and Easton, 1975). Nevertheless, distinctions between and among different types and objects of support remain commonplace in the literature,

although they frequently are disguised in different terminology, such as Weil's (1989: 686) reference to "deeper and more superficial" levels of support.

Distinguishing different types and objects of support may be especially difficult for citizens during periods of abrupt and fundamental change, such as characterize Eastern Europe. Upheavals have broken the Communists' monopoly of power. The constitutional order of Communist legality has been abolished, and representative institutions and civil liberties have been introduced where formerly they did not exist. Elected governments are in the hands of new and diverse coalitions of parties, factions, and individuals. Moreover, changes in party control of governments since 1989 have coincided with fundamental changes in regimes and, in some cases, in the community. The limited history of the new regimes has not allowed sufficient time for the alternation of government and opposition parties to establish clearly the difference between changes of administrations within a regime, as distinct from changes in the regime itself.

The limited history of the new regimes also confounds public distinctions between specific and diffuse support since new regimes lack the reservoir of legitimacy enjoyed by older regimes as a consequence of the inertia of generations of familiarity and acceptance. Nevertheless, the new regimes in Central and Eastern Europe may enjoy a measure of "negative tolerance" as a consequence of public rejection of the old Communist regime and fear of its possible resurrection. For many citizens, the defining quality of the new regime is that it is not Communist and not imposed by Soviet troops; its legitimacy derives at least partly from the opprobrium attached to its predecessor -- at least for as long as memories of the old regime remain politically salient. Therefore, whereas Weil (1989: 669) maintains that established regimes are supported both for what they are as well as what they do, new regimes in Central and Eastern Europe are more likely to be supported for what they are not and for what they do not do (cf. Rose, 1992).

Similar reasoning underlies the expectation that new regimes also will be judged according to public expectations of what the regimes are likely to become in the foreseeable future. Having escaped the absolute dissatisfaction of the past, citizens may exhibit a degree of patience with present conditions so long as they can sustain the hope of improved political and economic performance in the future. Because they have so little history of their own and have had such limited opportunities to compile independent records to impress the popular mind, new regimes must rely more heavily for support on citizens' fearful memories of the past and hopeful visions of the future.

The blurring of distinctions among different types and objects of support also means that new regimes are likely to be perceived holistically; support is likely to be indivisible (on the idea of indivisibles see Ragin, 1987; on the indivisibility of support see Rogowski, 1974). Citizens in Central and Eastern Europe are not political scientists. They lack the experience and knowledge to distinguish government and regime or to evaluate specific institutions of the new regime in detail. Citizens cannot be expected to pick and choose among different aspects of the political system, supporting some, opposing others. The experiential choice is between the Communist regime of the recent past and the democratizing regime of the present. Citizens confront the reality of a new regime which they must support or reject as they find it. More abstract and nuanced evaluations may develop later. For now, however, the current regime must be judged as good or bad, not according to some abstract standard, but in direct comparison to the reality of the Communist Regime -- the only other political system with which they have direct experience.

In contrast to this holistic and experiential perspective, most surveys of Central and Eastern Europeans since 1989 have adopted an idealistic approach (see e.g. Carnaghan, 1992; Finifter and Mickiewicz, 1992; Gibson and Duch, 1993; Miller *et al.*, 1993). The logic is to identify abstract norms, values and beliefs considered fundamental to an ideal-type democratic government and market economy and to measure the extent to which Central and Eastern Europeans embrace these ideals¹. Given the multiplicity of ideas about the meaning of democracy, it is not surprising that these studies differ in their conceptions of the ideal democratic type and in the questions asked to measure public support for these ideals. It is not surprising, therefore, that different surveys find support for some of the various principles of democracy in some countries, opposition to other principles or in other countries, and neutrality or ambivalence about still others or elsewhere.

The volatility in public opinion "observed" in a number of these countries over even relatively short periods of time is a predictable consequence of the idealistic approach. The focus on ideal types renders this approach especially susceptible to the measurement of what Converse (1964) calls, "non-attitudes," a principal characteristic of which is inconsistency in responses across repeated measurements. Little consensus exists about support for democracy and markets as abstract principles in Eastern and Central Europe because few citizens have very well developed or firmly held beliefs or attitudes in these regards. Of course, even less is known about the nature and determinants of support for the democratizing regimes as they currently

exist because these questions has not been asked.

Rather than imposing an idealized model of democracy or asking a battery of questions concerning different types or objects of support about which people may have little knowledge or interest, we apply Occam's razor and treat support as both experiential and fundamentally indivisible or holistic. Specifically, we solicit citizens' assessment of the regime as a whole, as they experience it in its entirety including its various institutions, leaders and policies at the moment. This is consistent with recent research in which we demonstrate that public support for legislative institutions in Central and Eastern Europe is largely determined by individuals' support for the regime, but that public attitudes regarding the legislature have little independent or reciprocal effect on individual assessments of the regime². Our assumption, quite simply, is that citizens in Central and Eastern Europe have little experience with democratic theory but abundant experience with two real, if very different regimes, one Communist with highly centralized, authoritarian institutions and limited civil liberties, the other pluralist -- if not democratic -- with competitive elections, fledgling representative institutions, and relatively extensive civil liberties.

The specific measure of political support we employ is one that is included in the 1991 New Democracies Barometer which asked citizens in five Eastern and Central European countries:

Here is a scale for ranking systems of government; the top, +100, is the best, and the bottom, -100, is the worst. Where would you put:

(Show card with scale)

- a) the former Communist regime?
- b) the present system with free elections and many parties?
- c) our system of governing in five years time?

The question was asked initially in the 1991 New Democracy Barometer, the first in an annual series of surveys coordinated by the Paul Lazarsfeld Gesellschaft, Vienna. Fieldwork was undertaken in the autumn of 1991 in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania. In each country a national representative stratified sample of approximately 1000 people was interviewed face-to-face, producing a total of 4992 respondents³. Each survey used the same questionnaire, except in so far as national differences (e.g. in education systems or occupational categories) dictated minor differences (for details see SWS-Rundschau, 1992:992; and Rose and Haerpfer, 1992).

The five countries in the analysis display a rich array of social, economic, and historical similarities and differences. Each country has its own language; Hungary and

Romania have non-slavic languages. Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland are predominantly Catholic in religion; Bulgaria and Romania are predominantly Orthodox. Economically, the countries range from Czechoslovakia, which enjoyed a thriving market economy and relative affluence prior to World War II and suffered relative decline under Communism, to Bulgaria, historically one of the poorest countries in Europe but whose economy was industrialized during the Communist era. Historically, the countries share a common experience of Soviet domination through rule by an indigenous Communist party-state, yet they differed both in their activities and policies under Communism and in their relations with the Soviet Union. Collectively, the five countries provide a diverse setting for investigating the nature and determinants of support for democratizing regimes. Hence, we present results for each country individually as well as for the five countries collectively. Comparisons of the individual and pooled results enable us to distinguish general patterns of democratization and regime transformation in the post-communist regimes from idiosyncratic country patterns.

DISTRIBUTIONS OF SUPPORT

When Central and Eastern Europeans were asked in 1991 to evaluate the Communist regime that existed five years previously, most expressed opposition. The mean level of support across the five countries is negative (-23) with sizable majorities in all countries except Hungary rating the former Communist regime well below zero on the 201 point scale (Figure 1). Consistent with the repression of the Ceausescu regime, rejection of the old regime is strongest and most widespread in Romania. Negative assessments are strong too in Czechoslovakia, where Soviet repression of the 1968 Prague spring is vividly remembered and widely resented. Hungary, is exceptional, however, in that support for the Communist regime is effectively neutral (mean +4). This probably reflects the detente promoted by local Communist leaders in Hungary following the Soviet repression of the 1956 uprising. Adhering to the slogan, "he who is not against us is with us," the Hungarian regime not only allowed citizens the "ironic freedom" (Hankiss, 1990) of paying mostly lip service to Soviet views, but also provided much greater actual freedom of discussion, travel and economic enterprise. Nevertheless, differences among the Central and Eastern European countries should not be exaggerated. The mean scores for the other four nations are within 16 points of each other on the 201 point scale, and Hungary's difference is a matter of degree, not kind, as subsequent analyses will demonstrate.

Within country differences in public opinion toward the old Communist regimes

are even greater than the differences between countries as indicated by the sizable standard deviations shown in Figure 1. Overall more than two-thirds of the respondents in the New Democracies Barometer give the old regime scores below -50. Nearly one in five reject the communist system absolutely, giving it the lowest possible rating of -100 on the scale. Public opinion, however, is far from unanimous in rejecting the past; nearly one citizen in three remembers the Communist era with at least a modest degree of satisfaction. Another ten percent express ambivalence.

[Figure 1 about here]

When Westerners look at the contemporary situation in Central and Eastern Europe the tendency is to emphasize economic problems and political risks. The problems identified are real; the inexperience of legislators, the continuity of administrators with ties to the old regime, the problems of privatizing an economy in the absence of a pre-existing private sector are just a few frequently cited examples. However, these problems are most readily identified in comparison to Western institutions and experiences. For most citizens in Central and Eastern Europe the salient comparisons are across time not space. Current regimes are evaluated against previous experiences in their own country. As reflected in Figure 2, the outcomes of such comparisons are usually positive. Majorities in each country express at least modest support for the current regime. Again, there is substantial variation around the mean, but only about one-quarter of citizens expresses opposition and only about one in eight expresses strong opposition, rating the current regime below -50 on the scale.

[Figure 2 about here]

Predictably, support for current regimes varies inversely with levels of opposition to the old regimes⁴. As argued elsewhere (Rose 1992:373), "In so far as dissatisfaction with the past is virtually absolute, then almost any state will be preferable as a lesser evil." Thus, the highest support for the current regime is found in Bulgaria and Romania, notwithstanding the severe problems of transition that both countries confront. This support may be less a vote of confidence in the current regimes and their capacities to solve existing problems than it is a reflection on the Communist regimes they have supplanted. In contrast, the more modest level of support for the current regime in Hungary accords with relatively benign public recollections of its former Communist regime.

Only in Poland is there any evidence that the activities of the new regime may have alienated large numbers of citizens. Although support for the current regime is slightly positive on balance, it is considerably lower than might be expected given the

level of rejection of the old Communist regime, whose survival near the end was assured only by the presence of Soviet troops. Yet, even in Poland, a small majority of citizens support the current regime and less than 40 percent are opposed.

Although support for current regimes is consistently positive, the level of current support is appreciably less than the rejection of the past. Whereas the negative rating of the old Communist regime is -23, positive support for the current regime averages +15. Moreover, although slightly diminished, the standard deviations for current support remain large. A regime that is only a year or two old is not comparable as a stimulus to an established regime that citizens have experienced nearly all their lives. Uncertain, perhaps, about what the current regime actually is or what it will do, citizens individually express considerable reserve and collectively manifest ambivalence.

The reserve that citizens feel toward the current government evaporates as they contemplate the future (Figure 3). Of course, no one can be certain about the nature of the regime that will prevail in five years time. The unexpected collapse of Communist regimes throughout Central and Eastern Europe only months before these interviews were conducted underscores the point. Yet even though the future is unknown, people can and do have expectations about what the future will bring. For many these expectations may be based on nothing more than individual hopes that government will improve as the regime gains experience and acquires additional resources. Alternatively, individuals may fear that the new regime is incapable of coping with the problems that exist or, worse, that the new regime may degenerate into something as unacceptable as the previous Communist regime. In either case, public expectations -- individual hopes and fears -- can have profound effects on individual support for the current regime. Citizens with positive expectations about the future are likely to manifest greater patience with the current regime; those with negative expectations are likely to be far less patient and less supportive as a result.

As indicated in Figure 3, most citizens in Central and Eastern Europe are optimistic about the regime they expect to evolve in five years. The mean rating is +40, more than double the level of support for the current regime. Overall more than four-fifths of respondents hold positive expectations about the regime; more than half rate the future regime higher than +50. Here again, the similarities across countries are more remarkable than the differences. In each country expectations are positive, substantial and substantially higher than current levels. Even citizens who give negative ratings to the current regime or prefer the old Communist regime still expect the current regime to be appreciably better in five years (data not shown). Hope for the

political future is both widespread and intense. In this sense, hope appears stronger than fear.

[Figure 3 about here]

TRAJECTORIES OF SUPPORT

In the long run, all political support is contingent and thus potentially unstable and susceptible to change (Rogowski, 1974). However, whereas political support for established regimes is relatively viscous, support for new regimes is more fluid. Although the level of public support for new regimes undoubtedly is an important consideration, the survival of democratizing regimes may depend more on the direction and trajectory of support than on its absolute level. Broadly conceived, there are three possible trajectories of support. First, if circumstances are favorable and hope is widespread the trajectory of support will be strongly upward, and support will diffuse rapidly throughout society. Second, if current travails create fear of the future, the trajectory of support will be negative and the regime likely will be short lived. A third possibility is that trajectories of support will vary in direction among sub-groups within countries resulting in a polarization of attitudes to the regime.

Current (1991) levels of support for the new regimes in Eastern and Central Europe are only slightly positive. However, the trajectories of support are strongly upward both from past to present (except in Hungary where the increase is minimal) and from present to future -- keeping in mind, of course, the previous caveat about the meaning of future or expected support. Overall, as indicated in Figure 4, the distance travelled is great. Regime support increases an average of 38 points from past to present. Expected future is another 25 points higher than current levels--a net change of 63 points in regime evaluations from past to future. This would be a big change if registered in a series of interviews with a panel of respondents over a decade; that this change reflects differences at a single time between individuals' recollections of the old regime and their expectations for the future development of the current regime is only slightly less impressive.

In each country, then, clear majorities have upward trajectories of support, although small minorities have reacted negatively to the change in regimes, a very quite vehemently. Overall, about a third of respondents view the current regime more negatively than the old regime but only nine percent rate the current regime below the old regime by as much as 50 points or more (data not shown).

[Figure 4 about here]

Modest differences can be observed in both the levels and the trajectories of support across the five countries in the New Democracy Barometer. For example, Hungarians view the present regime as only a modest improvement over the old Communist regime, which we have noted was relatively less repressive than other Eastern and Central European regimes. In contrast, the trajectory from past to present is much larger for Romanians, who were subject to a much more repressive regime, and Czechoslovakians, who were subject to Soviet occupation forces. Hungarians, however, are relatively more hopeful than other Central and Eastern Europeans about the change from present to future. The differences across countries may reflect small differences in sampling and measurement but are more likely reflections of differences in the histories and cultures of these countries.

Nevertheless, the similarities in support across countries are more remarkable than the differences, emphasizing the extent to which the period of sovietization dominates individual responses to both past and present regimes. This is not surprising since most East Europeans have lived their entire lives under Soviet-style regimes with pronounced authoritarian tendencies. The effects of more distant historical and cultural differences are overwhelmed by the more proximate, intense and shared reality of Communism. Because of the fundamental similarities across countries and the limitations of space, subsequent analyses do not report separate results for the five countries but concentrate on the pooled data. Where notable variations occur between countries, however, they are highlighted⁵.

CORRELATES OF SUPPORT

As previously discussed, the level and trajectory of support among significant societal groups may be as important for the survival of democratizing regimes as the level and trajectory of support for the society as a whole (see, *inter alia*, Eckstein, 1971; Rogowski, 1974; Przeworski, 1991). The common experience of Communism may overshadow historical and cultural differences in explaining the similar patterns of support across the five countries, but the large standard deviations observed in the level of support in each country suggests that individuals and sub-groups within countries may react quite differently to common experiences. This means that individual and sub-group differences may be as important as national histories in determining levels of support.

As Rogowski notes (1974:28ff), there is an "impossible profusion of explanatory theories" to account for individual variations in support for the regime. Although greatly

oversimplified, two broad categories of explanations can be identified. One set of explanations emphasizes long term social and economic considerations, including but not limited to reactions individuals' locations in the social structure. There are any number of individual attributes that might be important in this regard, but we follow convention in focussing on age, gender, education, religion, urban vs. rural residence and primary group identification (cf. Finifter and Mickiewicz, 1992). A second set of explanations emphasizes short-term responses to the day-to-day performance of the regime. Although there are numerous bases by which citizens might judge the performance of a regime, their personal material well being and the performance of the macroeconomy are among the more obvious and important. This is particularly so in Central and Eastern Europe, where one of the legacies of a state-run, centralized economy is that citizens are accustomed to holding government responsible for economic conditions.

Political support is widely and relatively evenly distributed throughout the social structures of the five Eastern and Central European countries surveyed in the New Democracies Barometer. Table 1 reports the mean levels of support among different societal groups. It demonstrates that past and present levels of political support appear only modestly correlated with individuals' social positions.⁶ For example, support for the old Communist regime is slightly higher and support for the current regime is slightly lower among older generations of citizens. This is consistent with expectations that older generations of citizens are less amenable to change because they are more invested psychologically and materially in the old regime. Nevertheless, these differences are generally small; the most and least supportive cohorts differ by a maximum of 12 points on the scale. More importantly, all age groups oppose the old regime, support the current regime, and have strong upward trajectories of support from past to present.

[Table 1 about here]

Similar patterns can be observed with regard to education, gender, and town size. Better educated citizens, men, and the residents of larger towns and cities all express greater opposition to the old regime and register larger increases in support from past to present. Again, however, these differences are small; current levels of support among the different groups are virtually indistinguishable. Religion also has little effect on support, in part because there is so little variation in religious backgrounds within most of these nations.

Somewhat larger differences in support can be observed with respect to

individuals' primary identities. Citizens, who think of themselves primarily as Europeans are nearly twice as supportive of the current regime and twice as opposed to the former Communists as individuals whose primary identities are with their country or locality. This accords with the established contrast between locals and cosmopolitans in the American sociological literature (Merton, 1957, ch. 10). It also fits the distinction increasingly made in post-Communist societies between those with and without a cosmopolitan "culture stock" of ideas drawn from Western democratic and market societies (Csepe and Orkeny, 1992). Of course, the number of citizens with European identities is very small; only 5 percent choose it as their primary identity and 12 percent as a secondary identity. Moreover, the vast majority of citizens reject the old Communist regime and support the current one regardless of identity.

An important exception to the general observation that social structure has little bearing on political support is the evidence of relatively strong ethnic differences in support in Czechoslovakia. Predictably, in 1991 residents of Slovakia were significantly less critical of the old Communist regime (though they were negative on balance) and less supportive of the new federal regime (though they were supportive on balance) than residents of what is now the Czech Republic. Similarly, whereas the trajectory of support for the average Czech increased by 69 points from past to present, that of the average Slovak increased by only 11 points. Clearly, this is a substantial difference. Yet the overall levels of support for the Czechoslovak regime are clearly positive for both Czechs and Slovaks. Both Czechs and Slovaks have upward trajectories of support for the regime as well.

Given the importance ascribed to economic determinants of political behavior, much larger differences in support might be expected according to individuals' 'objective' economic circumstances such as their occupation type or current income level. This should be especially likely if support is performance based. This expectation is not supported in the data, however. Differences linked to objective economic circumstances closely resemble those observed for measures of social position: they exist, but most are too small to be consequential (Table 2).

[Table 2 about here]

Somewhat greater differences in political support are found among individuals with different subjective perceptions of the economy. Reflecting the distinctions drawn between sociotropic and egocentric economic evaluations, and between retrospective, contemporaneous and prospective evaluations (Kinder and Kiewiet, 1979; Fiorina, 1981), the New Democracies Barometer included an array of questions about

individuals' satisfaction with the national economy as well as with their personal/family economic situations past, present, and future.

Consistent with research in the United States and Western Europe on public support for governing parties and leaders (MacKuen, Erickson and Stimson, 1992; Lewis-Beck, 1988; and Clarke et al., 1992), sociotropic and prospective considerations clearly have the greatest impact on regime evaluations in Eastern and Central Europe. For example, individuals reporting that their families' living standards are better today than under the old regime are 19 points more supportive of the current regime and 24 points more opposed to the old Communist regime than those who think their living standards have deteriorated. Even more impressive, individuals who are satisfied with the macroeconomy are 46 points more supportive of the current regime than those dissatisfied with current macroeconomic conditions.

Although retrospective economic evaluations bear a modest and predictably negative relationship to current political support, contemporaneous and prospective economic evaluations have much stronger correlations with support. Indeed, the relationship of current regime support to prospective economic evaluations is among the strongest in the survey.

Another indication of the importance of macroeconomic conditions is that current levels of political support among those least satisfied with the national economy are modestly negative. This is even more the case among those who expect future economic conditions to be unsatisfactory. Indeed, these two groups are the only ones in the survey whose overall support for the current regime is negative and whose trajectory of support declines from past to present.

Figure 5 compares the trajectories of macroeconomic evaluations and regime support from past through present to future expectations. The aggregate trajectory of support is sharply upward. A majority is more supportive of their present regime than of the past communist regime, and an even larger majority is even more supportive the regime in five years. By contrast, the trajectory of evaluations and expectations of the macroeconomy is J-shaped; there is a drop from past to present followed by an increase from present to future. The average citizen in each country evaluates the current economic situation as appreciably worse than the economy under Communism. There is optimism about the future economy, but it is more restrained than the optimism about the future political regime.

[Figure 5 about here]

The divergent trajectories of macroeconomic evaluations and political support

from past to present should caution against simple determinist arguments that political support in Central and Eastern Europe is primarily materially based or that the survival of democracy hinges directly and immediately on improvements in standards of living and macroeconomic performance. As Przeworski (1991: 33) concludes: "... the assertion that democracy cannot last unless it generates a satisfactory economic performance is not an inexorable objective law." Support can be maintained or even increased in the short term in spite of reverses in individual standards of living or macroeconomic conditions. Nevertheless, the longer term individual-level relationship between macroeconomic evaluations and support indicates that in the long run economic evaluations are critical for support.

MODELS OF SUPPORT

The preceding discussions suggest a model in which support for the current regime develops as a consequence of individual reactions to the old regime, evaluations of current macroeconomic conditions, and expectations about the future economy and regime -- a model of fear and hope. The social and economic positions of individuals in society appear to be only secondary influences on support. The regression analyses (OLS) reported in Table 3 confirm the basic structure of the model and underscore the extent to which both current support and the trajectory of support from past to present are driven by macroeconomic (sociotropic) evaluations and by memories of the past Communist regime. The standardized coefficients (betas) in Table 3 show that the strongest influences on current regime evaluations are individual assessments of both the current and the future macroeconomy⁷. The regression coefficients (b) indicate that every ten point increase in individual optimism about the economy, now or in the future, is linked to an approximately 2.5 point increase in support for the current regime.

Evaluations of the past Communist regime have a secondary though still substantial influence on current support after controlling for other variables. Predictably, given the large sample size, the coefficients for several other indicators also are statistically significant. None, however, are comparable in magnitude to the first three. Importantly, none of the social structure variables have any appreciable bearing on current levels of support⁸.

[Table 3 about here]

A fear and hope model also explains individual trajectories of support for regimes from past to present. Because Communist regime evaluations were excluded from this equation for methodological reasons (i.e. to avoid autocorrelation since past regime

evaluations are included in the trajectories measure) retrospective economic evaluations serve as a proxy in this equation for individual reactions to the old regime. Their impact is strongly negative. Prospective economic evaluations are a secondary, though still important influence on changes in support from past to present with contemporary economic evaluations exerting still smaller influence. Once again, however, social structural influences are minimal.

Among the notable features in Table 3 are the very small effects of egocentric evaluations. The large proportion of citizens in Eastern and Central Europe who report that their personal living standards have deteriorated under the current regime are not appreciably more likely to oppose the regime than those who have benefitted personally, other things being equal. Political support is significantly enhanced by perceptions that living conditions will improve over the next five years, but the size of this effect is small and dwarfed by sociotropic considerations. The pattern observed in Central and Eastern Europe may not be as sharply drawn as in the United States, where MacKuen, Erickson and Stimson (1992: 606) argue that people judge economic performance more like bankers than peasants, "evaluating the President on the basis of an informed view of the nation's economic prospects, rather than its current living standard." In Central and Eastern Europe, citizens rely heavily on future economic prospects and discount personal living standards but they also attend closely to current macroeconomic conditions.

More generally, the centrality of macroeconomic evaluations for political support cautions that support in Central and Eastern Europe as of 1991, although surprisingly widespread, is contingent. It is at least partially performance based, and therefore potentially unstable. Nevertheless, current levels of support also are also strongly and negatively influenced by evaluations of the old Communist regime. This means there is an autoregressive or enduring element to support; political support carries forward in predictable ways over time -- or at least in individual perceptions of time -- thus providing a reservoir of support that is not contingent solely on current macroeconomic performance.

BOUNDED SPECULATIONS

Current support for the new regimes in Central and Eastern Europe and the upward trajectories of support from past to present are driven principally by fear of the old Communist system and hope for an improving economy in the foreseeable future. In social psychological terms, however, fear and hope are variables not constants.

They can change as memories of the Communist system fade or as continuing economic difficulties lead people to lower their economic expectations. If the present regime falters, nostalgia for the past could occur. If perceptions of the current economy and expectations for the future begin to erode, economic hope could turn to despair. If hope and fear turn to nostalgia and despair, what would be the effects on public support for the current political regime?

While attempts to answer these questions necessarily involve speculation, the statistical models provide a basis for placing bounds on speculation. By making plausible "best case/worst case" assumptions about the discount rates of Communist fears and of economic hopes, we can assess the robustness of the optimistic findings that emerge from current data. Specifically, what is the likely impact on regime support of a major change in public evaluations of the old Communist regimes or of future macroeconomic conditions? How bad would evaluations have to become in order to produce a clear majority against the current regime?

The statistical model in Table 3 identifies three principal determinants of current regime support and provides estimates (regression coefficients) of the impact of each variable on support. By altering the mean values of the independent variables or their coefficients while making the strong assumption that other variables and coefficients in the model remain unaffected, it is possible to estimate how much (or how little) the mean level of current political support would change. The ceteris paribus assumption, of course, is critical and clearly is an oversimplification. The logic of this exercise, however, is not to arrive at deterministic predictions but to establish reasonable guidelines for interpreting current patterns.

To estimate the level of support in the best case scenario, we assume that: a) memories of Communist repression are abiding and undiminished in effect (i.e. there is no change in either the coefficient or the mean value of the variable); b) current economic conditions improve as much as citizens currently hope (i.e. the coefficient remains the same but mean evaluations increase from -13 to + 27); and c) optimism about future economic conditions continues to run ahead of current conditions at the same rate (i.e. the mean level increases from +27 to +67 but the coefficient remains the same.). Given these optimistic developments, the model projects, ceteris paribus, that the mean level of political support in the five countries would increase from +15 to +35 (Figure 6).⁹ Although the 20 point increase is substantial, the best case scenario still falls 5 points below the support that citizens expect to have for the regime in five years. This suggests that current expectations about the regime are extremely optimistic,

being driven substantially by generalized hopes which, in the nature of fledgling regimes, cannot be based on experience. If the best case scenario is realized, in 1996 we would be speaking about the "double miracle" of a further surge in political confidence and a big economic boom. However, faith in miracles is not proof that they will happen.

[Figure 6 about here]

Most economic analyses of Central and Eastern Europe are pessimistic, emphasizing that the establishment of market economies in most countries poses far greater problems than most Western European countries faced in reconstructing their economies after World War II (cf. Kirwan and Reichlin, 1990). For example, Lawrence Summers (1992: 27), writing as chief economist of the World Bank, has estimated that, "the richest parts of Central Europe enjoy a standard of living today that is lower than that which the United States enjoyed in the 1920s." Furthermore, he calculates that the most fortunate countries of the region will not recover their 1989 living standards until 1996 and the least fortunate countries will not regain lost ground until the year 2000. Given normal growth in Western Europe, virtually all of the Eastern and Central European countries are expected to fall even further behind Western Europe at least until the middle of the first decade on the next century. Such economic forecasts often are interpreted as spelling doom for democracy in Central and Eastern Europe.

In contrast, our analysis indicates that bad economic conditions do not necessarily (or at least, not immediately) undermine support for democratizing regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. The relationship between economic conditions and political evaluations is not one-to-one (cf. Weiner and Ozbudun, 1987). Our statistical model shows that it takes a four point fall in either current or future economic evaluations to produce a one point fall in evaluations of the regime. Even though East European living standards are well below those in Western Europe and are widely perceived as being worse than they were five years ago by respondents in the New Democracy Barometer surveys, the majority of East Europeans support the current regime, and many do so quite strongly.

To test the robustness of current regime support under adverse economic conditions, we assume in the worst case possibility, that economic conditions continue to deteriorate in the foreseeable future and memories of Communism fade. But pessimism, like optimism, should be bounded. Thus we assume: a) the negative rating of current macroeconomic conditions doubles by 1996, going from -13 to -26; b) the

deterioration in current economic conditions crushes hope, reducing the mean rating of the future economy by half from 27 to 13; and c) memories of the Communist regime fade so that their impact (b) on current regime support is 0 rather than -.12. Ceteris paribus, the model projects that support for the five regimes would fall to +2, only 13 points below current support for the regime (Figure 6). In this worst case scenario, public support is effectively neutral, with the population divided about equally between support and disapproval, roughly comparable to the situation in Poland in 1991.

These simple calculations are not forecasts. They establish boundaries for interpreting the trajectories of regime support based on current data. Although the possibility of a downward trajectory of support is possible, the great majority of possible future trajectories encompassed within these boundaries are modestly to substantially upward.

How bad, then, do economic conditions in Central and Eastern Europe have to become to move the majority of citizens to oppose their regime? According to our statistical model -- and remembering the strong ceteris paribus assumption -- to move citizens in the five countries to a mean disapproval rating as negative (-15) as the current rating is positive would require a decline of more than 100 points in current and future economic evaluations combined. For example, the mean rating of the current economy would have to fall by 35 points (to -50) and hope for the future would have to decline by 70 points (also to -50). In addition, citizens would have to suffer a collective memory loss regarding the old Communist regime (i.e. $b=0$). Even turning citizens slightly negative toward the current regime, reducing the mean level of support to -5, would require a combined 70 point drop in economic evaluations plus collective amnesia about the repression of the Communist regime.

Even though official statistics stress that economic conditions in Central and Eastern Europe in 1991 were very bad by Western standards and deteriorating by comparison to Central and Eastern European standards, a clear majority of the New Democracy Barometer respondents endorsed the new political regimes as of 1991. How bad would economic conditions have to become to create a clear majority of Central and Eastern Europeans opposed to current regimes? The answer, suggested by this research is, "truly dreadful."

NOTES

1. The idealistic approach is consistent with the practice of American constitutionalism, which assumes that the characteristics of the regime should reflect the values and beliefs of the citizenry. But the European tradition is very different. For centuries regimes were based on dynastic inheritance, force, and elite domination. The regime came first in point of historical time and the process of mobilizing popular support came relatively later (see Dyson, 1980). This certainly was the case in Eastern Europe where the Communist seizure of power was followed by relatively aggressive efforts to mobilize support through propaganda, socialization and involuntary participation in shows of allegiance (cf. Friedgut, 1979; White, 1985; and Hahn, 1991).

2. In a separate analysis (Mishler and Rose, 1994) we undertake a more direct examination of the hypothesis that political support is holistic. Employing two-stage least squares procedures and separate measures of public support for legislatures and regimes in Eastern and Central Europe we demonstrate that while support for legislative institutions has very little impact on support for regimes, levels of regime support have profound effects on public evaluations of legislative institutions. This pattern is consistent with the view that public opinion in Eastern Europe does not discriminate between legislatures and regimes but evaluates the former almost entirely in terms of the latter. Although data were not available to test the assumption with regard to other institutions, the logic of the argument is the same.

3. These include 1002 respondents from Bulgaria, 951 from Czechoslovakia (including 660 from what is now the Czech Republic and 291 from what is now the Slovak Republic), 923 from Hungary, 1130 from Poland, and 986 from Romania.

4. This comparison depends upon self-reported changes in regime support. Such data clearly are not as robust as panel data or even repeated cross-sectional surveys over time. Unfortunately, reliable surveys on regime support in Central and Eastern Europe are unavailable for the period prior to the fall of the Communist regimes. The principal Soviet studies undertaken by Westerners were interviews with emigrants (Millar, 1987). These also depend on recall data and are unavailable, in any case, for Eastern and Central Europe.

5. Separate analyses for each of the five countries are available on request from the authors.

6. Because most of the social and economic variables in the analysis are measured at the nominal or ordinal level whereas support is measured on an interval scale, Eta is an appropriate measure of the correlation between social position and regime support. The Eta statistic measures the nonlinear covariation between a discrete and a continuous variable and is particularly appropriate for assessing the strength of the differences in means or proportions across categoric groups. It is calculated as the ratio of the between-group and total sum of squares and can be interpreted as the proportion of variance in the dependent variable which is "explained" by the independent variable (George W. Bohrnstedt and David Knoke, 1982: 212-14). Eta is always positive and ranges between 0 and 1.0. Although we routinely report significance tests for the Etas in the analysis, this information is of limited utility. Given an 'N' of nearly five thousand cases, even relatively weak correlations achieve statistical significance at convention levels.

7. The causal direction of the relationship between future macroeconomic evaluations and current support is ambiguous. Logically, the relationship could go either way and probably is reciprocal. Expectations regarding future economic conditions undoubtedly influence citizens' patience with and support for the current regime, just as evaluations of the current regime are likely to influence individual assessments about future economic conditions. Unfortunately, our attempts to disentangle the reciprocal linkages using two-stage least squares were unsatisfactory. The use of OLS procedures probably overestimates the impact of prospective macroeconomic evaluations on regime support. However, these are the best available estimates with the evidence currently at hand.

8. To test the robustness of the model and the sensitivity of the model to country specific effects, we replicated the model including dummy variables for all but one of the five countries in the analysis (not shown). If substantial differences exist between countries in the determinants of support we would expect the coefficients for the dummy variables to be large and statistically significant. We also would expect substantial increases in the over variance explained (R^2) by the equation. In fact, although several of the country-dummy variables did achieve statistical significance (.05

level), their coefficients were consistently small. Moreover the inclusion of the dummy variables did not increase appreciably the variance explained by the equation. Equally important, the coefficients of the other significant variables in the equation were not substantially affected by the inclusion of the dummy variables.

9. The mean level of current regime support across all respondents in the five countries is 15. Of this average level of support, the regression equation in Table 3 estimates that the three variables, Communist regime support (CRS: $b=-.12$ $x=-23$), current economic evaluations (CEE: $b=.24$ $x=-13$), and future economic evaluations (FEE: $b=.26$ $x=26$) account for 6.5 of the 15 points of support (i.e. $((-.12 * -23) + (.24 * -13) + (.26 * 26) = 6.5)$ All other variables and the regression constant combine to account for the remaining 8.5 points. Therefore, to calculate the net effect on support of the best case assumptions for CRS, CEE, and FEE while holding all other variables constant we treat the 8.5 points of support explained by all other variables as a constant which is added to the additional level support predicted by the best case assumptions. Expressed mathematically:

$$\text{Estimated Support} = 8.5 - .12 \text{ CRS} + .24 \text{ CEE} + .26 \text{ FEE}.$$

Making the best case assumptions that the mean CRS is unchanged as -23; CEE improves to +26; and FEE improves to 67 we get:

$$\text{Best Case Support} = 8.5 + (-.12 * -23) + (.24 * 26) + (.26 * 67) = 35.$$

Similar procedures are used to calculate the "worst case" and "truly dreadful" levels of support discussed below.

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TABLE 1.

MEAN LEVELS OF REGIME SUPPORT BY SOCIAL STRUCTURE FOR FIVE NEW DEMOCRACIES

VARIABLE		Support for Old Communist Regime	Support for Current Regime	Change in Support Past to Present
Age	< 29	-29	16	45
	30-39	-25	11	36
	40-49	-24	18	42
	50-59	-13	14	28
	60+	-17	13	31
	eta	.11*	.06*	.10*
Education	None	-12	13	26
	Vocational	-25	18	44
	Some Univ.	-31	13	44
	University	-39	20	53
	eta	.16*	.05	.13*
Gender	Female	-20	15	36
	Male	-25	15	40
	eta	.04	.00	.03
Primary ID	Local	-21	14	35
	State	-20	15	36
	Europe	-51	27	78
	eta	.12*	.06*	.12*
Religion	Catholic/Orthodox	-24	16	40
	Other/None	-18	14	34
	eta	.04	.02	.03
Ethnicity	Czech	-42	25	69
	Slovak	-6	5	11
	eta	.27*	.21*	.32*
Town Size	< 5,000	-14	15	30
	5,000-100,000	-23	15	39
	100,000-1,000,000	-29	14	44
	> 1,000,000	-36	15	50
	eta	.13*	.01	.09*

N = 4992 overall but varies slightly by variable. N for Ethnicity is 951.

* $p < .05$

Source: As in Figure 1.

TABLE 2.
MEAN LEVELS OF REGIME SUPPORT BY ECONOMIC POSITION AND ECONOMIC EVALUATIONS
FOR FIVE NEW DEMOCRACIES

VARIABLE		Support for Old Communist Regime	Support for Current Regime	Change in Support Past to Present
<u>ECONOMIC POSITION</u>				
Occupation	Manual	-17	12	27
	Non-manual	-25	16	41
	Professional	-34	14	50
	eta	.16*	.08*	.16*
Income Quartile	Lowest	-14	11	26
	Second	-19	13	33
	Third	-24	17	42
	Highest	-31	18	50
	eta	.10*	.07*	.11*
<u>EGOCENTRIC EVALUATIONS</u>				
Living Standard Better Today	No	-16	4	9
	Yes	-40	23	58
	eta	.18*	.21*	.30*
Living Standard Better In 5 Years	No	-25	16	40
	Yes	-35	9	23
	eta	.25*	.05	.07*
<u>SOCIOTROPIC EVALUATIONS</u>				
Evaluation of Communist Macroeconomy	-11-100	-54	19	73
	-10/10	-24	14	38
	+11-100	14	12	-2
	eta	.59*	.08*	.46*
Evaluation of Current Macroeconomy	-11-100	-19	-2	21
	-10/+10	-22	17	39
	+11-100	-32	46	78
	ETA	.08*	.42*	.29*
Evaluation of Macro- Economy in 5 Years	-11-100	-8	-14	-6
	-10/+10	-18	-1	16
	+11-100	-29	37	66
	eta	.15*	.44*	.35*

N = 4992 overall but varies slightly with missing data from various independent variables.

* p < .05

Source: As in Figure 1.

TABLE 3.

OLS REGRESSIONS FOR CURRENT (1991) REGIME SUPPORT AND THE
CHANGE IN REGIME SUPPORT FROM PAST (1986) TO PRESENT

VARIABLES:	Current Regime Support		Change in Support Past to Present	
	b (se)	BETA	b (se)	BETA
Communist Regime Support	-.12* (.01)	-.17		
Evaluation of Current Macroeconomy	.24* (.02)	.25	.20* (.03)	.12
Evaluation of Communist Macroeconomy	.05* (.01)	.06	-.62* (.02)	-.43
Evaluation of Future Macroeconomy	.26* (.02)	.26	.39* (.03)	.23
Own Living Standard Better Now	.06 (1.46)	.00	7.14* (2.42)	.04
Future Living Standard Better	3.96* (1.41)	.04	15.7* (2.32)	.10
Town Size	-.11 (.44)	-.01	2.01* (.73)	.04
Income	1.64* (.59)	.04	1.81* (.89)	.02
Age	.94* (.37)	.04	1.20* (.61)	.03
Education	-.43 (.46)	-.01	1.69* (.75)	.03
R	.51		.60	
R2 adj	.26		.36	

Notes: Political Support and Current, Communist and Future Macroeconomy variables measured on 201 point scale (-100/+100). All other variables coded as in Tables 1 and 2.

N = 4326.

* P < .05

Source: As in Figure 1.