Free to Hate

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To the others, who are many

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That things continue on this way *is* the catastrophe.

Walter Benjamin

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INTRODUCTION

If I had to trace the germ of this book to a specific time or event, it would be a visit to the Malibu Jugendklub in East Berlin on Christmas Eve 1989, a month and a half after the opening of the Berlin Wall. I had spent the day in West Berlin between my laptop and the kitchen radio, listening to the latest broadcasts from Romania about the revolution there. Despite the initial, exaggerated reports of tens of thousands of massacred protestors, I was thrilled to hear that the Dictator, as Romanians referred to President Nicolae Ceauşescu, had been overthrown. There would be plenty of rejoicing this Christmas in Romania, and the euphoria was palpable everywhere that the walls and their architects had fallen.

The excitement over the changes in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) had naturally infected West Berlin, where the cafés and bars were crowded, the mood inside light and cheerful. But I had begun researching a story on Skinheads in East Germany, and that Friday evening I had plans to visit a certain disco in the outlying East Berlin district of Hellersdorf. The "youth club" was a well-known hang-out for young neo-Nazis and fascist Skinheads. It was rumored that a Mozambican guest worker had been murdered there two years ago, al-

though neither the East nor West German press had made mention of the killing.

Nearly an hour's trip away on the *S-Bahn*, the commuter railroad, the Malibu lay at the base of a labyrinth of tall, cement-gray high rises, the kind of Stalinist housing projects that dominate East Berlin beyond its refurbished tourist center. Inside the disco, a sparse, box-like room that served as a cafeteria by day, a strobe light flashed wearily to some 1970s pop hits. A rotund man in his mid-thirties, perhaps a communist youth functionary a month ago, presided over the turntables as a handful of teenage girls danced with one another. There were no Skinheads to be seen, but outside on the terrace, a group of young guys in collarless "baseball jackets," with short haircuts and thin moustaches, stood about smoking cigarettes. Some sat on the dirty steps, while others paced anxiously back and forth, disappearing inside for a few minutes and then reappearing. The boys shared a similar nervousness in their movements and blank, cruel gazes. They had about them an aura of adolescent meanness, anger, and restlessness.

The boys recognized me at once as a stranger. Though wary, they seemed curious enough about my presence in Hellersdorf on Christmas Eve to agree to chat. No, they said, they hadn't been following the events in Romania. Yes, they agreed, the opening of the Berlin Wall was a fine thing, even if it was only the first step to ousting the communists once and for all. As for politics, they didn't have much use for them, and none of them identified with any of the political parties, East or West. At the same time, they all considered themselves "right wing," which translated first into being anti-communist and second into wanting the reunification of Germany. Finally, they said, they could be "proud to be Germans again."

They knew the Skinheads who frequented the Malibu, who would usually show up later in the evening and start fights or shout "Sieg Heil!", "Foreigners Out!", and other such slogans. The adolescents in the baseball jackets weren't fascists, but they didn't have anything against the Skinheads either. "On some things, like the niggers and the *Fidschis* (Asians), the Skins say it like it is," said one of the guys, a pimple-faced teenager a bit more talkative than the others. "They come here from the third world and get everything that they want,

just because they're communists. But now that's come to an end." When I asked, they said that they knew about the murdered Mozambican. The worker, one said, had been "harassing all of the local girls."

I naturally had no idea at the time that in a few years the aggression against foreigners in eastern Germany, as well as in the western states, would climax in a string of vicious pogroms, arson attacks, and dozens of deaths, events that would shake the very foundations of the newly united Germany. There had been a small underground neo-fascist movement in the GDR since the early 1980s, and racism against people of color was nothing new in any of the communist countries. These guys from the Hellersdorf projects weren't committed Nazis, however, but more or less average teenagers, born and raised in the GDR. They clearly had little in common with the dissidents and intellectuals who were basking in the world spotlight at the moment, touting ideas of civic democracy and human dignity. They were frustrated and bored, looking at a future that had even less to offer than they imagined at the time. Like their peers throughout Eastern Europe, they had pinned their hopes for a new future on a swift transition to capitalism, which, they were convinced, would put their living standards on a par with that of the West Germans in just a few years' time. But how would they react if these expectations failed to materialize? If they found themselves unemployed upon finishing vocational school instead of pulling in comfortable West German salaries?

Communism's capitulation freed the East Germans and their Soviet bloc partners from the constraints of the police states, but it also handed them responsibility for filling its void. Although most of the people who lived under communism never identified with its rule, two generations had been socialized under its supervision. What would these people choose to replace the imposed ethic of the "real, existing socialism"? How had their experiences prepared them for the dramatic changes that would affect their lives? Also, the intensity of the Hellersdorf youths' racism was frightening in light of the paltry number of foreign nationals in the GDR. Where did this racism come from, and how far into mainstream society did it reach? On the way back to West Berlin I thought about these questions. I looked into the faces of the people coming and going from the S-Bahn and asked myself just

what forty years of dictatorship had made of the citizens of Eastern Europe.[1]

These thoughts and others crossed my mind as I traversed the region as a journalist, and it didn't take long before ethnic violence in western Romania's Transylvania region, and in Kosovo, Serbia's Albanian-populated southern province, confirmed some of my initial doubts. But as early as 1989, excessive pessimism was out of place. The "democratic revolutions" had swept communism from history's stage in Eastern Europe, and their symbols—toppled Lenin statues, dissidents-turned-politicians, free elections and national flags—expressed the hope of the moment. The people had thrown off single-party rule for a Europe of constitutional democracies based upon multi-party elections and accountable parliaments. Eastern Europeans seemed to speak in a common language about "a return to Europe," a united Europe no longer partitioned along the fronts of the Cold War. At the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) summit in Paris in 1990, West and East European leaders toasted a European House united by the common values of democracy, pluralism, human rights, and the rule of law.

The air was electric with potential and promise. Czechoslovak President Václav Havel spoke of Central Europe's unique opportunity to "approach a rich Western Europe not as a poor dissident or a helpless amnestied prisoner, but as someone who brings something with him: namely spiritual and moral incentives, bold peace initiatives, untapped creative potential, the ethos of freshly gained freedom, and the inspiration for brave and swift decisions." In their own countries, Havel saw the new elites' task to instill "spirituality, moral responsibility, humaneness, and humility" into politics. An era of dictatorship had ended, and a new one of democracy had begun.

The burst of creativity and democratic inspiration that Havel envisioned never materialized. If 1990 was a year of hope, 1991 was one of uncertainty, and in 1992 the idea of a united, democratic Europe perished for good in the mountains of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Soviet empire's collapse and the dissolution of the police states reopened a Pandora's Box of age-old antagonisms, ethnic racisms, and historic rivalries. The consequences of nationalism reverberated across Eastern

Europe, the Balkans, and the Soviet Union. Its centrifugal forces fractured populations along ethnic fault lines, where those lines existed. Few of the nationalities in Eastern Europe, however, are so fortunate as to have homogeneous ethnic populations within undisputed borders. In ethnically mixed nation-states, nationalism distinguishes minorities and majorities, setting the stage for conflicts immeasurably easier to ignite than extinguish. By 1993, half-a-dozen wars alternately flickered and blazed on the territory of the former Soviet Union, with as many more waiting to flare. In former Yugoslavia, the world watched on as Serb—as well as Croat—forces systematically expelled and slaughtered the Bosnian Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, reviving memories that we had prematurely consigned to history books.

With communism barely behind them, Eastern Europe's democrats confronted an adversary more unpredictable and incalculably more menacing than the unpopular dictatorships that had collapsed like houses of cards. Across the region, deeply conservative, radical nationalist, and even neo-fascist movements arose from communism's ruins. A diverse spectrum of right-wing forces surfaced in every country, each brandishing nationalist ideologies with authoritarian and racial underpinnings. A new, charged discourse of ancestry and tradition, of suffering and fate, of lost territories and thwarted ambitions replaced the stale rhetoric of Marxism-Leninism. Along with the national pageantry, some of the now-free press flaunted anti-Semitism and ethnic chauvinism that rivaled the tone of the interwar years. The darkest names of that period also reemerged after their decades-long banishment—Tiso in Slovakia, Antonescu in Romania, Pavelić in Croatia, and even Hitler in Germany. On the streets, racist violence erupted against foreigners, native Roma (Gypsies) and third world students. With their arms outstretched in the Nazi salute, young neo-fascists in the newly united Germany fire bombed the hostels of political asylum seekers. Most chilling, the wars in former Yugoslavia illustrated the consequences of national extremism when turned into a political program. Half a century after Auschwitz and Treblinka, a fascist politics was possible again on European soil.

The Eastern Europeans filled communism's vacuum with the most convenient ideology at their disposal—nationalism; and in almost every

country, the first free elections since the 1940s brought conservative nationalist leaderships to power. In and of itself, nationalism does not preclude the creation of democratic institutions or the guarantee of basic rights. While all of the far right movements in Eastern Europe are nationalist, not all nationalism is right wing. The free expression of national identity and culture also has a place—and arguably a constructive one—in modern societies. But, with the exception of the Czech Republic, the historic nationalisms of Eastern Europe have never yielded healthy democracies.

The former communist countries now all boast constitutional democracies, regular elections, and varying measures of press freedom. In one sense, most of Eastern Europe has never been so democratic. The kind of democracy that has emerged, however, is a far cry from that in postwar Western Europe. For democrats, the break with communism implied the nurturing of western-style democracies and market economies in countries that, most of them admitted, lacked such traditions. For nationalists, the termination of Soviet occupation opened the way for a return to the national traditions and myths that communism had either swept aside or incorporated into its own ideological framework. The ghosts of the past reappeared in the garb of modern democracy, with thinly cloaked philosophies of organic society, ethnic superiority, and national destiny. Like those of the past, the nationalisms of post-communist Eastern Europe inherently contradict the assumptions of liberal democracy and a united Europe.

Nationalism and extremist right wings also exist in Western Europe and the U.S. In 1991, former Ku Klux Klan chief David Duke garnered thirty-nine percent of the Louisiana vote in his run for governor. The past five years have seen the National Front in France, the Republican Party in Germany, the Northern League in Italy and other like-minded "New Right" movements in Sweden, Austria, and Belgium score unprecedented victories. With a potent mixture of racism and economic populism, these parties have effectively exploited the anxieties of the lower and middle classes, making their way into parliaments at the expense of the traditional conservative and center parties. In some cities and towns, they take well over a quarter of the vote. In the 1994 elections in Italy, a far right coalition, including the neo-fascist National

Alliance, captured an outright majority of seats in parliament and went on to form a government. These events elicited a surprisingly mild reaction from Italy's fellow European Union members and NATO allies. An ultra-right government in power, it seems, would not undermine the institutions supposedly based upon the concensus of liberal democracy. Yet, as worrying as the political crisis in Italy may be, in Western Europe, Italy is the exception, for the moment at least. However ugly the message and worrying the electoral gains of the western far right parties, their political relevance is on a wholly different scale than that of the undemocratic right-wing forces in Eastern Europe. Ideologically, the Western European New Right has much in common with the rights in Eastern Europe. Their kind of nationalism and the political assumptions that underlie their programs are basically the same. The New Right parties, though, still dwell on the periphery of the political process. They have their seats in the legislature and agitate in their publications. And although their demagoguery inevitably taints political discourse, they are in no way positioned to come to power in the foreseeable future. So far, all of the traditional parties, including conservatives, have strictly ruled out cooperation with the ultra-right.

In Eastern Europe, parties with similarly racist and even shriller nationalist rhetoric find themselves squarely within the political mainstream, if not in power. They are talked about as "normal" and "natural" phenomena (like nationalism itself), as part and parcel of democracy, and not as threats to it. The strength of nationalism and the shape of the far right varies from country to country. Where nationalist parties dominate discourse, such as most of the former Soviet Union or the Balkans, they define the nascent political culture, undermining all but the formal motions of the democratic processes. In Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia, national populist forces compete with viable democratic movements and reform communist parties. In Romania, Bulgaria, and Serbia, the former communist parties are the ultra-nationalists, and work in tandem with even more extremist parties. The most shocking recent development is the electoral triumph of the Russian neo-fascist Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who took 23 percent of the vote in the 1993 election, with another fifth of the electorate choosing other hardliners.[2] An ultra-right populism of a different stripe has made ad-

vances in the independent Czech Republic, which singles out the Roma population as its target. In former East Germany, a militant neo-fascist movement, supported by organized Western radicals, uses the streets as its political stage. The right incorporates all of these diverse actors. That in no way makes them the same, or their implications for democracy comparable. At the same time, there are assumptions that link the array of right-wing forces, and indeed, that penetrate to the very center of society.

Since this book is about the right in Eastern Europe, it requires an explanation of exactly who and what falls under the heading of "right." The task is all the more complex in light of the tangled notions of right and left that have emerged from the Cold War. In the West, the right has become identified with the ideals of the free market, restricted government, and an emphasis on the individual in society. Two prominent figures of the Western right, for example, are Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, both outspoken advocates of free market competition and opponents of welfare systems, social spending, and so forth. They are both "conservatives" although they presided over periods of radical change.

The right in Eastern Europe looks very different. The movements examined in this book are undemocratic movements, ones that fall outside the established parameters of Western democracy. In this sense, neither Reagan nor Thatcher would qualify as "right." In fact, I refer to those political ideologies that embrace free-market versions of capitalism as "liberal," in the sense of classic nineteenth-century English liberalism. On the other hand, Western Europe's New Right, such as the National Front in France or the Republicans in Germany, would come under this definition of right.

This more traditional definition of right, which I use, is limited by not taking into account the authoritarian and racist aspects of Western conservatives. It tends to hold up liberal Western democracy as the reference point from which all other ideologies are evaluated. Although I concede this shortcoming, I also feel that the democratic ideals of the CSCE Paris Charter are positive, and that Western democracy should be looked at as a minimal standard rather than as an ideal in itself. Also,

my omission of the likes of Reagan or Thatcher is offset by the fact that they have few equivalents in Eastern Europe. There are exceptions, such as Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus, a radical free marketeer in the Thatcherist mold with authoritarian leanings and a questionable commitment to human rights and democratic procedure. Nevertheless, I decline to put Klaus in the league of Eastern Europe's old school nationalists and extreme rightists. This is not to say that someone like Klaus or Reagan (or better yet Patrick Buchanan) couldn't overstep the line that I have drawn. A slick, modern ultra-rightism with a liberal economic program could potentially be even more dangerous than the brittle nationalism that prevails now. Just such a party, the Freedom Party in Austria, was the most successful ultra-right party in Western Europe in the 1980s. And, surely, it is only a question of time before the Eastern Europeans spawn similar offspring.

The term "fascism" too requires a brief explanation. All of the ultra-right and extreme nationalist movements in Eastern Europe have fascistic elements to them, and perhaps "fascistic" is more appropriate in most cases than "fascist" or "neo-fascist." I employ those labels however for the most extreme of the far right nationalist movements, to those who not only implicitly endorse genetic hierarchies, greater national states, dictatorial regimes, and so forth, but also explicitly demand that those ideas be put into practice, either through legislation or extra-parliamentary force. Political parties that advocate laws which would empower local authorities to expel Roma from their communities or to ban the parties of national minorities would fall under this heading. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the "ethnic cleansing" of Bosnian Muslims from areas controlled by Serbs and Croats is clearly fascist. I also put the racist violence of Skinhead gangs in this category. Contemporary neo-fascism can take the diverse forms of neo-Nazi youth gangs, national populist parties, fundamentalist religious movements, intellectual circles, fascist exile groups, armed militias, or even reorganized communist parties and cliques. Often, but not always, the most reactionary of these movements fall back on explicitly fascist traditions, which serves as a useful indicator of their intentions.

The conservatism that has taken shape in transitional Eastern Europe is of a different ilk from that which has matured in postwar West-

ern Europe. Although not free of the past, conservative parties in the West, even those in present-day Germany, Spain, or Italy, have come around to the basic tenets of European democracy. In Germany, forty years of supervised democracy has transformed most of mainstream conservatism into modern, more or less self-conscious political ideologies. The single-party states in Eastern Europe, on the other hand, blocked a parallel development, suppressing independent expressions of nationalism and political conservatism as best they could, or appropriating those traditions for their own use when it proved expedient. When the dictatorships fell, nationalists had recourse to two intertwined sources of conservatism. One was that of the communist parties, which nationalists quickly stripped of its Marxist-Leninist trappings. The second was to the nationalist ideologies of the interwar period that the communists had vilified as "fascist" and "bourgeois-nationalist."

Neither of these traditions has much in common with modern, Western conservatism. In fact, Eastern Europe's nationalists harbor profound suspicions of three of the Western right's most sacred principles: the market, freedom of the individual, and limited government. Rather, it is some of today's most prominent democrats—"the liberals"—who most enthusiastically embrace laissez-faire economic policies and libertarian notions of freedom. The right in Eastern Europe calls upon a conservatism with its roots in rural, peasant cultures, traditions that emphasize prewar notions of nation, family, religion, and strong national states. It is a conservatism distrustful of modernity and the secular values of postwar Western Europe. The East European nationalists reject the Enlightenment values of progress, technological advance, human equality, urban-based culture, the individual, and self-expression. Theirs are the pre-modern values of a romantic national Golden Age, when their proud nation flourished as never before, and never again.

The ideological cornerstone of this conservatism is the nation, and whether the issue is press freedom or the family, minority rights or parliamentary procedure, the logic of the right emanates from its understanding of the nation. This does not mean that its spokesmen are true believers in their own creed. For the most part, they are the same apparatchiks who for years invoked the name of the working class to maintain their privileges under communism. But now nationalism

serves as their all-purpose recourse to legitimize their autocratic grip on power, to attack political pluralism, to muzzle the press, and to justify strong military and police apparatuses.

In the lively academic discourse that has grown around nationalism, scholars distinguish two general concepts of the nation: the civic or democratic, and the ethnic.[3] The civic definition, with its roots in the French Revolution, uses "nation" to refer to a body of citizens whose collective sovereignty constitutes a state. In other words, it is "nation" as the term is commonly applied in the West, referring to all of the people who live within a state, regardless of their ethnicity, language, or other characteristics. The underlying principle of the civic nation is citizenship, and all citizens are afforded equality under the law. The civic nation-state is thus synonymous with constitutional democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. In German, the term is *Rechtsstaat,* and *Rechtsstaaten* were expressly what the East Europeans called for in 1989, when class justice, privileged cadre, and secret-police terror were still fresh in their minds.

The ethnic nation, on the other hand, is a folkish community, bound not by a common legal code or state borders, but by descent, language, customs, and history. What defines membership in this kind of nation is ethnicity. This nation is a community of "pure-blooded" Germans or French or Romanians, for example, from which all other peoples of different lineage are excluded. The primacy of blood establishes a racial hierarchy of peoples, particularly when more than one people live in a given state. Rights and privileges are acquired by birth into the ethnic nation, and not upon citizenship. For ethnic nationalists, the nation is a natural unit, which evolves according to its own biological laws and inner rhythms. Each nation has its own unique, mystical destiny toward which it aspires, and which other nations impede at the cost of war. One critical aspect of that destiny, common to all ethnic nations, is that all of the members of their national community must live within the borders of one state.

The ethnic nation is at odds with the premises of a democratic, integrated Europe, and presents a certain recipe for conflict in the combustible multinational potpourri of Eastern Europe. Its ideology, as we shall see, sanctions autocracy, racism, ethnic hatred, expansionism, and

revanchism. All modern states today contain elements of both civic and ethnic nationalism. Modern nationalism—both ethnic and civic, however, arrived late to Eastern Europe, and when it did it tended to take particularly unsavory ethnic forms. The dismantlement of the four empires, the German, the Habsburg, the Russian, and the Ottoman, in the aftermath of World War I brought national states to life that were burdened with weak and nonexistent democratic traditions, large national minorities, competing territorial claims, and socioeconomic poverty. The attempt to carve ethnically based territorial states from the "beltway of nations" in Eastern Europe was flawed from the beginning, and reached its tragic conclusion in World War II. The fragile interwar democracies buckled under the internal pressures of nationalism, finally succumbing in one form or another to the will of Nazi Germany.

Although, at the moment at least, there exists no equivalent to Third Reich Germany on the horizon, the scenario today for Eastern Europe is no less perilous. The same dynamic is at work that led the post-WWI successor states down the road of extreme nationalism and war. The dissolution of the Soviet empire has cast the small, poor, ethnically mixed states out on their own once again. And, again, in brazen defiance of history, their first impulses have been toward national identities and national states. Where extreme nationalists take the logic of the ethnic nation to its radical conclusion, as in former Yugoslavia, the result is the forging of an all-inclusive, homogeneous ethnic nation-state. The price, again, is war, complete with forcible mass expulsions, concentration camps, and genocide. In other cases, such as the Baltics, the Caucasus, Slovakia, Romania, or Bulgaria, where significant national minorities live, the majorities have tightened the screws on their cohabitants through cultural repression and restrictive citizenship laws. Under fire, the minorities react with nationalisms of their own, which often take the form of separatist ambitions. In response, the dominant nationalities crack down all the harder on the "disloyal" minorities. The heightened tension can bring in the minorities' mother states, usually all too willing to come to the rescue of their national kin, in regions they often consider their own anyway. The action-reaction spiral of nationalism plays itself out whereever ethnic nationalism is the order of the day.

For Westerners, one of the most confusing aspects of the postcommunist right is its antipathy to free-market economics. Whatever they may say, nationalists tend to think of capitalism as a Western (ultimately Jewish) ideology designed to strip the nation of its wealth and culture. Historically, the nationalist right saw industrial capitalism and its culture of technology and profit clashing with its folkish ethics. Also, a certain populist egalitarianism infuses the concept of the ethnic nation, which capitalism of course undermines. In classic populist terms, traditional nationalists believe that wealth should benefit the whole nation, and not just a certain strata, much less foreigners or other "aliens." Nationalists and populists today argue either to slow the pace of privatization or, in some cases, to halt it altogether. The "slow approach" is entirely in their interests. A centralized, managed economy implies a strong state that keeps economic power firmly in their hands. It means the maintenance of economic privileges, which denationalization, the process of selling off state property to private investors, would naturally jeopardize.

When the revolutions of 1989 brought down the East bloc regimes, they swept away the facade of historical half-truths, distortions, and lies upon which the ruling elites justified their power. Understandably, the East Europeans' "longing for the truth," as Havel phrased it, has led them to reexamine their histories, to recover what was valuable but had been lost. In their quest to recapture that "truth," however, the Eastern Europeans have accepted new historical fictions, no less ominous in their implications for democracy.

The national myths that every country has resurrected play important functions in postcommunist society. For one, the nation offers a redemptive panacea for peoples burdened with legacies of opportunism and collaboration. Nationalists cast their embrace of the past as a return to an era of national glory that Soviet-imposed communism had artificially stifled. As in all national communities, the easily sold fairy tales of a great national history give people a common sense of historical purpose, pride, and continuity. In Eastern Europe today, the embellished histories of the "good" and "long-suffering" nation also serve to relieve

individuals of responsibility for their actions (or inactions) during communism. Admittedly, if the average person wished to live a normal life, he or she was forced to collaborate in some way with the system—as fellow-traveller, obedient onlooker, bureaucrat, or informant. Popular uprisings against the regimes were unsparingly crushed. Grudgingly or not, the overwhelming majority of people struck their compromise with power. The dissidents were the precious few.

The nationalist right portrays the history of postwar communism as a forty year struggle of their democratic nations against the Soviet-occupation regime. In 1989, so the story goes, the people finally triumphed, breaking free from the fetters of foreign rule. Under the mantle of the nation, which has supposedly fought courageously against all forms of foreign rule since time immemorial, the individual's legacy of collaboration is transformed into his victory, as a participant in the nation. If the Hungarian nation was always "good" and we're Hungarians, runs the logic, then "we" couldn't possibly share responsibility for communism, any more than for WWI or the Hungarian Holocaust. The rationale is popular throughout Eastern Europe, not least among careerist politicians. The logic raises grave questions for democracy however since it absolves the individual-as-citizen from responsibility and obligation, both in the past and in the future too. The individual acts not as a citizen with a duty to participate in (or protest against) the actions of the state, but as a subject of the nation, to be ruled from above by a nationalist leader. As part of the nation's collective past and future destiny, the individual's interests become synonymous with the will of the nation.

The nationalists also herald themselves and their historical forefathers as the purest champions of anti-communism, which, amidst the resentment flush in postcommunist Eastern Europe, has an attractive ring. The right itself poses as the antithesis of communism, the highest form of opposition to the alleged internationalist ideals of the disposed regimes. I argue, however, that while the swing to the right is a reaction to four decades of communism, it fails to break with either the totalitarian ethic of Stalinism or the ideologies that preceded it. Rather, there exists a clear continuity in the values and political cultures of the right and the communist systems. On the one hand, this is hardly

surprising since so many of today's most outspoken nationalists had been loyal communists until only a few years ago. Those that came to power tried their best to revamp but keep the institutions of the Leninist states—government-controlled presses, strong security services, and state-run economies—under new names, with a new operative logic. Although they broke with communist ideology, they could not, and indeed had no interest in, divorcing themselves from its essential structures.

In part, even nationalism is something that today's right inherited from the deceased systems. Although communism boasted of its final victory over national ideology, it routinely resorted to nationalism to bolster its legitimacy. In the aftermath of the Stalinist fifties, every East bloc country turned to nationalism in one form or another. Nationalism, as Misha Glenny says, was "refracted through the prism of Stalinism," and the product was a grotesque hybrid of both ideologies. When necessary, populist wings within the communist parties resorted to the most plebeian of their countries' traditions—although always under the banner of communism. Polish and Czechoslovak communists ruthlessly instrumentalized anti-Semitism to discredit their enemies inside and outside of the party. In Romania, Ceauşescu exploited the most extreme brand of "national communism," which was similar in content to Romania's virulent interwar nationalism. The communist governments fanned nationalist emotions from above, while simultaneously suppressing their expression from below. When nationalism raised its head as anti-communist opposition, as happened time and again, the police states brutally quashed it, condemning the movements as "fascist" and "counter-revolutionary." In East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, neo-fascist currents surfaced in underground youth subcultures that survived throughout the 1980s despite the state's repression. For most people, however, pent-up national feelings and resentments festered beneath the surface, captive until the regimes crumbled.

The communist regimes preserved and perpetuated the undemocratic, authoritarian features of national traditions. In the postwar haste to consolidate power, they refused to confront the historical and social-psychological roots of fascism's fruition in their countries during the 1930s and 1940s. Communism had defeated fascism once and for all,

they claimed. Trials were held and the ringleaders executed. The communist leaderships went leniently on their peoples' often ignominious wartime legacies, attributing popular, home-grown fascist movements to the Germans or isolated native "fascist cliques." One only had to declare oneself a communist to be relieved of responsibility for previous actions. The regimes papered over the truth of collaboration and the resentment that lingered between neighboring peoples.

The appeal of nationalist and far right ideologies in Eastern Europe is rife with contradictions. Although nationalism is a critical component of identity and deeply imbedded in culture throughout Eastern Europe, opinion polls consistently show that only small minorities of the populations agree with the ideas of the most radical nationalist and extreme right movements. The wars in Croatia or Bosnia never had the support of the majority of Serbs, much less the Croats or the Bosnian Muslims. A year before the division of Czechoslovakia, over seventy percent of Czechs and Slovaks supported the continuation of the federation. All of the mixed and neighboring nationalities have both histories of animosity and long traditions of peaceful cohabitation. In the cellars of Sarajevo, Serbs, Croats, and Muslims linked arms in solidarity, sharing their last scraps of food with one another. What is it then that compels a Croat farmer to take up a gun against the man he has shared a tractor with for twenty years? Or a respected Serb doctor to rape his Muslim neighbor's wife? Why would a Slovak, content with the Czechoslovak federation, vote for a nationalist party plotting its dissolution?

The freedoms of new liberty and self-expression, and the turbulence of change and uncertainty, came abruptly to Eastern Europe. Overnight, worlds were turned upside down, and for the first time in many peoples' lives they had to choose the course of the future for themselves. Communist rule, however, had left most people woefully unprepared for building democracy from scratch. The first years of democracy have shown the peoples of Eastern Europe easy prey for demagoguery that addresses their fears and anxieties—in some cases from the left as well as the right. Although the different nationalities and ethnic groups may have lived together harmoniously under communism, latent suspicions continued to exist. The same Serbs who said

that they opposed war openly degrade the Muslim or Croat cultures and insist that the safety of the Serb minorities cannot be insured in independent Bosnian or Croatian states. The average Slovak may have lived peacefully with the Czechs, but was always resentful of their greater wealth and elitist airs. The prejudices and hatreds of the past were *available* to manipulation, and manipulate them nationalist politicians have, with consummate skill. The most radical extremists are a tiny minority with an influence far disproportionate to their numbers. What they have successfully done is to stir up latent fears, shift debate, and win themselves a place at the center of the political stage.

The mounting economic misery in every former communist country has provided the right with plentiful ammunition to assault their market-oriented democratic opponents. While economic deprivation is not the source of right-wing extremism, it acts as a catalyst that radicalizes hopelessness and prejudice. Right-wing populists with pseudo-leftist economic demands and national jingoism have found an ear not only with the dispossessed but also with the lower and middle classes.

The Eastern Europeans departed from communism with naive hopes for a speedy transition to prosperous market-based economies. Since the late seventies and early eighties, growth in the East bloc economies had slumped badly, and living standards had dropped everywhere. In 1989, many people perceived capitalism as an instant remedy which would produce results in a year or two's time. But even five years after the changes, all but a few of the numbers are grim. The eastern economies have been unable to compensate for the loss of the rouble-based Comecon market with equivalent exports to the highly competitive and restrictive Western markets. Since 1989, overall production, industrial output, and real wages have fallen dramatically in all of the former Comecon countries. The sale and closure of many state-managed enterprises has produced previously unfamiliar phenomena—unemployment, homelessness, high criminality, and new levels of poverty. From next to nothing, the jobless figures have crept steadily into the double digits in most countries. In former East Germany, where unification dealt a swift blow to the GDR economy, unemployment soared to forty or fifty percent in some badly hit cities. The capital necessary to fund the drastic structural overhaul has failed to materialize

from the West. Western investment and aid has been only a fraction (about a tenth) of what the new democracies had anticipated.

Instead, the West has lent Eastern Europe its advice. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank accepted most of the Eastern Europeans into their ranks at the price of compliance with their standard guidelines, the same applied in Latin America and Africa with such disastrous results. The IMF shock therapy programs cut the quickest road from the centralized, state-run economies to market economies, sacrificing the short-term casualties of "belt-tightening" for a promised future of prosperity. All of the postcommunist governments in Eastern Europe, whether IMF members or not, have dutifully implemented the general conditions of the IMF's program: monetary restriction, price liberalization, deregulation, and privatization. The austerity packages include massive cuts in domestic expenditures—from investment to food subsidies—in order to insure that the countries meet their balance-of-payment targets. Should they fail to meet those preset targets, as they often do, the IMF freezes access to its reserves. Many elements of the IMF packages had been on the East Europeans' agendas anyhow, and in some cases had even been gradually introduced during the final years of communist rule. Every government in the former East bloc ultimately aspires to the goal of some kind of market economy. The question is how radically to proceed with the transitions, or—as it is put behind closed doors—how hard to push the people without sparking revolt. Although politicians often contest the IMF austerity deals when in opposition, they find their hands bound once they reach office. No government feels that it can afford to lose the IMF's blessing, which is the seal of approval for private bank loans and foreign investment.

The economic transitions have made winners of some and losers of others. Glitzy shopping streets in central Warsaw or Budapest sparkle with Western consumer goods and new wealth, testimony that some have benefitted from the economic restructuring. Not so far from the main thoroughfares, however, the run-down neighborhoods and high-rise projects like Hellersdorf in former East Berlin tell a different story. There futures look bleaker than ever before. The disappointments of the economic transition have provoked anger, resentment, envy, and anxiety. Disillusionment has replaced the brief euphoria following com-

munism's postmortem. The market and democracy were synonymous in the minds of many people, and for them the failure of one spells the failure of the other.

Under communism, the East Europeans grew used to the security of the state, and today a strong egalitarian streak surfaces again and again in their protests. The situation is ripe for right-wing populists with easy answers, who promise everything and blame peoples' misfortunes on other people—on foreigners, Jews, Roma, the West, or neighboring countries. They appeal to those hit hardest by the economic reforms, to a large extent the workers, the traditional territory of left. The reform communist parties, sometimes armed with nationalisms as vicious as those of the right, have targeted the same people, and with surprising success so soon after their unceremonious departures. Still weak and undefined, diminutive progressive left or social democratic parties have been unable to compete against the roar of nationalism, their intentions suspect as a "better Bolshevism."

For many people, the "escape from freedom" into nationalist ideology appears the simplest solution. As Erich Fromm argued, in a new form of submission the individual relieves himself of the burdens of individuality and freedom. Negative freedom, as Fromm describes the capitulation to totalitarianism, manifests itself when man "has been freed from traditional authorities and has become an 'individual,' but at the same time has become isolated, powerless, and an instrument of purposes outside of himself, alienated from himself and others; this condition undermines the self, weakens and frightens the individual, and makes the individual ready for submission to new kinds of bondage." In an authoritarian leader or an exclusivist ideology, the individual injects meaning into an existence otherwise empty, an existence devoid of real human relationships and communities.

In one light, the adherents of extreme right ideologies, especially young people, could be seen as victims of larger processes over which they have no control. Ideology is a means of escape from postmodern anomie, violence a protest against the system's injustice. Who can blame the Hellersdorf teenagers for their situations, ask some. Don't gangs exist everywhere? Victims they may also be, but their protests are not empty expressions of frustration and boredom. They endorse racial prej-

udices and often act upon them with violence. Even the teenage radicals are organized, parts of national and international networks with specific political goals. The actions of the most primitive of these right-wing elements are inherently political, indeed fascistic, and must be treated as such.

Eastern Europe's slide into a black hole of right-wing autocracy and convulsive territorial wars is by no means prewritten history. Every former communist country stands at a crossroads of democracy and proto-dictatorship. Burdened with history and the enormous obstacles of transition, the countries of Eastern Europe can hardly be expected to reproduce the achievements of Western democracy at once. For some time, at least, the vast territory that communism once ruled will be one of turmoil and armed conflict, revolutions and putsches, crises and poverty. Radical nationalism and right-wing extremism are already part of every country's political landscape, and they will continue to exert their influences in the future. The case of former Yugoslavia shows us how quickly radical extremists can fan the flames of ethnic hatred, plunging whole populations into wars that will set their countries back by decades. Tragically, these spirits take immeasurably longer to exorcise than they do to awaken.

Since radical nationalisms and extremist rights are realities of Europe's new order, they must be understood in order to be checked. Dormant for so long, their dynamics, their aspirations and their precedents are obscure to most outsiders. Although the parallels to past eras are unmistakable, the new fascisms have resurfaced under a unique set of historical conditions, with characteristics specific to these conditions. This book provides a first, by no means exhaustive, look at these movements in six countries. Since they are new phenomena, the leading figures, party names, and the political relevance of these movements will change, but their essential logic will continue to guide whatever new formations take their place.

As much as the West would like to close its eyes to Eastern Europe's problems, its own future is inextricably bound with that of "the other Europe." The conflicts in the Balkans have already prompted Western

intervention, and more than one potential conflagration could easily spread to NATO territory. The exodus of political and economic refugees from the East has put recession-strapped economies in the West under additional strain, as well as fueling the fortunes of Western Europe's own ultra-right progeny. Try as it might to throw up new walls and barriers to keep the East Europeans and their hatreds at bay, a new Iron Curtain is not at Western Europe's disposal. The resurgent far right in Western Europe dispels any illusion that it is somehow immune to right-wing radicalism. Today, the economic prosperity that accounts for a good measure of Western Europe's postwar stability seems no longer the given that it once was. As foreboding as the scenario for Eastern Europe may look, options remain open to encourage democracy and implement civil solutions in crisis flashpoints. The West and progressive forces need not look on helplessly as the nascent New Order disintegrates into lawless chaos.

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