



## Socio-Cultural Preconditions of Velvet Revolutions in Central Europe and Ukraine

### *Orta Avrupa ve Ukrayna'da Kadife Devrimlerin Sosyo-Kültürel Önkoşulları*

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**Abstract:** The focus of the research is on the theoretical and historical background as well as socio-cultural preconditions of revolutionary events in Central Europe and Ukraine in 1989-1991. Having powerful traditional and modern components, civil society in Central Europe acted as a culturally conditioned European social institution that shaped political objectives. On the contrary, due to weak intellectual reflection, Ukrainian society lacked theoretical conceptualization and cultural preconditions for deep political changes. The moral-regulatory and descriptive conditions for the development of civil society have not been fully implemented. Intellectuals were the leading force in the socio-cultural and historical changes in Central European countries. The weakness of the intellectual community in Ukraine, its dependence on colonial discourse has led to a serious complication of the processes of post-communist renewal and of the crystallization of the foundations of civil society in the newly established Ukrainian state.

**Keywords:** Civil society, Velvet revolutions, post-communist transformation, East Central Europe, Ukraine.

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## Introduction

Theoretical reflection on the historical past and re-thinking the post-communist discourse are some of the central problems of social transformation in post-communist countries. The focus of the presented research is centered on the revolutionary change in 1989-1991 and on the social achievements of Central and Eastern European communities in overcoming the consequences of the communist regime. Despite numerous studies and a strong intellectual tradition of researching the social and cultural aspects of transformation in this region, pre-modern and modern factors in shaping civil society as well as communitarian and individual dimensions of social changes in post-communist countries have not been sufficiently explored. The analysis deals with identity problems and value dilemmas of post-communist communities, focusing on both collective and individual foundations of social transformation.

The research problem is to conceptualize social, cultural and historical preconditions of the Velvet revolutions in Central Europe and Ukraine, which relied on radically different principles of identity and strategy to combat Soviet occupation. We consider the social separation of Ukrainian society from Central European patterns as a serious obstacle for value modernization and de-communization. The social changes in Ukraine in 1989-1991 were rather slow, and abstract ideological declarations did not lead to deep public reflections on the totalitarian past. We assume that pre-modern and modern socio-cultural factors (life-world, civil society, identities, ideologies) played a key role in the political changes related to the making of authentic public space alternative to the official one. We aim to explore the role of socio-cultural phenomena in the underpinning of Velvet revolutions and crystallization of the leading role of intellectuals in post-communist transformations and decolonization processes. First, we emphasize the importance of European and national experiences for the understanding of transformational strategies of national communities in Central European countries. Second, we examine the role of moral-normative, descriptive and modern-functional factors in the de-legitimization of occupational regimes. Third, the article highlights the significance of collective memory for the emergence and development of civil society in East-Central Europe. Finally, the analysis provides some insight into the



impact the 1989-1991 events had on the genesis of modern Ukrainian national identity which due to the lack of mighty intellectual influence remained at the rudimentary level of development.

### **Methodological Framework**

The combination of the national community, culture, and individual self-expression "based on self-determination" is considered as a factor of reflexive decolonization and de-legitimization of the occupational power, and a major driving force of post-colonial transformation from atomized society into a community of civil society. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak addressed the intellectuals with a talk on Postcoloniality in the post-soviet space. Violeta Kalertas pointed out that 'unlike in mainstream postcolonial theory in which the center is located in Western Europe and the eastern or southern colony is considered to be backward, representatives of the central European states thought themselves to belong to the European centers while perceiving the (post) Soviet other as inferior in civilizational terms' (1998). Similar processes but in social-economic and historical perspectives of Western and Central Europe are analyzed by Krzysztof Brzechczyn in his study *The Historical Distinctiveness of Central Europe. A Study in the Philosophy of History* (2020). Eventually, the use of post-colonial references in this context often boils down to the rehabilitation of not only certain forms of nationalism but rather a civil society as a pivot of moral-normative principles.

The problem of Central European transformation can be interpreted not only as a part of post-colonial studies but also as a combination of post-colonialism and post-communism, 'as they both demystify the great narratives of the past, colonial and Soviet, respectively; both intellectual areas analyze personal and collective memory and explore the civic nature of resistance to power' (Gundorova, 2013).

At the same time, the historical image of Central Europe is regarded as the patterns of postcolonial values and a cultural marker of resistance to the Soviet repressive regime (Keen 2014). Symbolic primacy in shaping the post-communist value-normative design belongs to the outstanding intellectuals and spiritual leaders of the 'Velvet Revolution' A. Michnik, J. Ku-



roń, M. Dzielski, L.Kořakowski, V.Havel. J. Habermas proposes an essentially important for Central Europe discourse of civil society as a new interpretation of the 'lifeworld' (person, society, culture) contrasting it with the 'system' (Habermas, 1999).

A particular role in affirming the Central European model of social change belongs to Milan Kundera, who in his famous essay 'The tragedy of Central Europe' started a discussion about the special place of this region in the European tradition, and John Paul II, who by his high ethical criteria put forward demands to civil society in the context of inevitable post-communist change (Kundera, 1996). David Ost and Andrew Arato considered the concept of civil society in Central Europe as an institution of organized resistance to the communist system. It is noted that the concept of civil society 'was elaborated outside the borders of Central and Eastern Europe and only in the second stage imported by Polish intellectuals and dissidents' and was conceptualized in a very pluralistic and neoliberal way (Ost, 2014).

D. Chioni Moor (2001) refers to the role of civil society in the 'transformation of post-soviet space'. In the context of system transformation, it is worthwhile to point out the key role of intellectuals as drivers of social changes. Works of I.Szelenyi (1989) and M.Siermiński (2016) are particularly relevant in this context. Thus, in the context of transformation Central European intellectuals played a prominent role in self-organization and promoting social changes. Even though the role of intellectuals in the social structure of modern Central European countries has changed in recent years, we can state they took a major part in the processes of the crystallization of civil society and complex decolonization.

Methodologically significant for the research is the usage of memory as a fundamental communitarian component of the consolidation of civil society in totalitarian countries, an integrator of national community and national mobilization during the revolutions 1989-1991. Commemorative practices are not only an important factor in the development of the national community but also an element of postcolonial symbolic politics in Poland, Hungary, Czechia, and Slovakia. A distinct methodological position is found in the work of Lech Nijakowski, who considers memorial practices as a factor that 'organizes the symbolic order of ethnic and social



groups' (Nijakowski, 2008), as well as the study of Joanna Wawrzyniak and Małgorzata Pakier on the role of memory narratives in the consolidation of diverse social groups and delegitimation of post-communist social order (Wawrzyniak, Pakier, 2013). The role of memory narratives in the events of the Velvet Revolutions has attracted the attention of a wide range of intellectuals, and in particular researchers at the Prague Institute of Public Opinion (Kilas, 2013).

Central European discourse of civil society historically emerged as interdisciplinary, bringing together writers, literary critics, historians, philosophers, and sociologists (from Miloš Havelka to Zdenek Konopásek) (Konopásek, 2000). As noted by a Prague scholar Jiří Šubrt, the sociological analysis of Czechoslovak society in the 1970s provided evidence to a clear distancing of Central European communities from the Soviet occupation version of memory (Šubrt, 1995). The result of the publication of this study was a long-standing ban of communist power to conduct memorialization studies in Czechoslovakia. Total censorship on this issue existed until the overthrow of the communist regime in 1989 when a wide range of intellectuals in society updated the debate on the reproduction of memory in caste and paternal societies, and Shmuel Eisenstadt's studies became a significant event for the practical modernization of former totalitarian societies (2009).

One of the leaders of Polish Solidarity, Jacek Kuroń points out that in Central Europe the construction of social ties as horizontal networks sharply contrasted with the Soviet version of anti-totalitarianism. In this context, the value of liberty and sovereignty of a human person are of the utmost importance for all Central European countries. The author of 'Political Letters 1969-1989' emphasizes the 'transcendent nature of human dignity, the absolute value of human being, its non-submission to a totalitarian social order' and notes that 'individual values are inalienable human rights' (Kuroń, 2010).

One of the founders of the dissident resistance movement points out that anti-totalitarian choice as natural for a national community can be implemented through the individual distancing from the framework of official life imposed by the communist system and the parallel affirmation of a person in informal life that does not intersect with communist norms and



rules. In this context, Ukraine's cultural and historical distance from the European experience of social reflection is notable. Yuriy Andruchowytsh states that the consequences of post-colonial trauma have not been overcome yet, no choice has been made between the status of the colony and independent state, between Central Europe and Russia, East and West. 'We managed to say goodbye to our colonial past. But the past never became the past Ukraine still cannot fit in Europe' (Andruchowytsh, 2002: 6).

### Liberal Dimensions of Central European Transformation

The revolutionary events of 1989 in Central Europe became part of a common European process of liberal social transformation that began in the 1970s. The main idea of anti-totalitarian transformation was not so much in the delegitimization of the totalitarian regime as in social emancipation through enlarging the individual rights and freedoms (human rights) and strengthening the unique European institution of civil society, which has significant liberal connotations.

It is worth recalling Akkerman's words that 'the aim of the liberal revolution was not individual truth, but individual freedom', which is confirmed in the social theory of Polish liberalism (1992). Already at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, the totalitarian system that existed in the countries of the former Soviet bloc was doomed in the eyes of various social groups and it was perceived by public opinion as a 'smoke curtain that destroys historically suffering national order and cannot remain unpunished' (Bob 2005: 23). Despite a strong national and communitarian component of the Velvet Revolutions, many social theorists consider the events of 1989 as primarily a liberal revolution of civil society. The famous proponent of post-communist transformation was Polish intellectual M. Dzielski, whose creative works, despite his untimely death, became the driving force of the liberal version of modernization. A Krakow researcher notes on close links between national transformation and the 'restoration of a trade civilization' (*restauracja cywilizacji handlowej*), which has been impossible in the period of Soviet political domination (Dzielski, 1985: 267). According to one of the leaders of the Krakow intellectual environment, strong foundations of private property, trade civilization, division of labor, social well-



being, moral and normative foundations related to the Christian tradition provide a person with the individual resources and objective means to implement a free choice. In accordance with Dzielski these are the grounds on which we observe the 'last battle with communism' for a new Poland, which should not be militarized and bureaucratic, but a moral, civilized and trade society (Ibid.: 292-293).

In the context of achieving a 'political compromise' in the second half of the 1980s, intellectuals, leaders of Solidarity, representatives of the Catholic church as driving forces of civil society were proposed a conditionally liberal version of social change: with pronounced economic motivations and a combination of divergent trends of free market, planning and self-government. 'The road that liberals are looking for has nothing to do with totalitarianism; instead, we must find a way to a compromise that will change the next government dramatically' (Dzielski, 1985: 293). A compromise for the researcher did not mean the rejection of broad public debate and defense of one's own value position, but rather clarifying these positions of social actors in civil society: forming a society with a clearly defined economic and socio-political motivation, separated from Soviet period.

In the late 1980s the urgency of liberal modernization for countries of Soviet Bloc was so obvious that did not undermine even by representatives of the left political camp – in particular, a well-known Marxist social theorist Jerzy Wiatr, who notes that the socialist society – unlike Hegel and Marx civil society – does not rely on private property structures and is separated from the state economic relations.

When the state has total control over the means of production and is the organizer of social activity in the economy, education, culture and other spheres of life, the essence of society cannot be regarded as autonomous from the bureaucratic intrusion (Wiatr, 1988). By liberal trend, Central European strategy for destroying the existing model of state socialism was incompatible with the logic of democratic social processes. Liberal reforms happened due to the introduction into the public life of the concept of 'humanitarian intervention', which undoubtedly became a marker of the inevitability of liberal change and value rejection of totalitarian system by intellectuals in post-soviet societies (Załęski, 2012: 223).

It is evident that the liberal and generally intellectual component of



the Central European transformation was combined with the social criticism of Soviet totalitarianism, as well as the anti-Soviet human rights activities of Jiří Pelikán of Czechoslovakia and Leszek Kołakowski of Poland.

At the academic level, the most ardent supporters for the liberal transition were representatives of the dissident environment and the bright representatives of the Central European resistance movement Adam Michnik and Václav Havel.

The dissident essays 'New Evolutionism' and 'The Power of the Powerless' became not only significant theoretical explorations but also powerful civil challenges to the totalitarian system: socio-cultural and intellectual 'a priori velvet revolutions' and confirmation of the importance of individual resistance to a totalitarian system. The presentation of these brilliant intellectual manifestations exacerbated social contradictions between the authorities and civil society in the 1970s and 1980s. The striking speech of the Polish intellectual in 1976 during the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the events in Hungary in 1956 as well as a published report by the future President of Czechoslovakia Václav Havel at the Polish-Czechoslovak Seminar in 1977 became a severe sentence for the totalitarian regime and a marker of the struggle against 'ritualized ideological lie' (Havel, 1985).

For Havel, the greatest crime of communist ideology was the suppression of social life and colonization of the living world by the system. The keynote of the struggle against the communist system was the words of his philosophical mentor Jan Patočka, who emphasized that the concept of human rights is nothing more than the common conviction of the citizens of Central Europe that communities should rely on common moral and normative principles, admit something more unconditional, something more absolutely important than authorities, to create and guarantee legal norms (Bolton, 2014).

Symbolic for the liberal public of the 1970s and 1980s as well as the dissident community, became the literary image of a 'vegetable seller' (Havel, 1985: 27-28). It is a typical image of a person in the totalitarian Soviet regime, who, while drawing on the window of its own home the slogan 'Workers of all countries unite!', remains socially unmotivated. Homo So-





vieticus reproduces oneself as a small piece of the system that only automatically and formally supports the ideological delusions of communist power. At the same time in everyday life such a person is far from stable beliefs, values, he is motivated only by his own private peace and does not care about socio-political issues or ideological problems at all. Within Havel's theoretical approach, totalitarianism has become the embodiment of total social alienation, pseudoscientific ideology, and the 'irrational monument' of anti-human bureaucratic power (Bob, 2005).

For the famous writer and leader of the dissident movement, it is axiomatic that the totalitarian system is not only the implementer of a particular political line but rather a source of conflict with civil society. Havel states that in the countries of the Soviet bloc there was the struggle between life and system, that attempts to bring under absolute control everything that lives its life, that is free and spontaneous (Havel, 1985: 31). According to the intellectual, the stakes in this struggle are not the difference in political approaches and decisions that have become unimportant in the conditions of disruption of the system of life but the creation of an 'authentic human existence', of which the persons of the communist state is deprived (Ibid.: 31-32). He emphasized the existential and moral rather than the political character of the revolution, owing to which people learn to live following true and voluntary social cooperation.

The values of freedom were no longer linked solely to the liberal frame or political sphere, but rather to the existential and moral changes in society, functional and moral capacity of communities and groups to implement social change.

### **Intellectuals as a Community of Memory**

It is difficult to explain the social changes that took place in 1989-1991 in Central and Eastern Europe without the comprehension of the communitarian component of social changes. It is important to emphasize the role of intellectuals as an important basis for national unity. If, according to Max Weber's works, in the West civil society emerged from Protestant tradition that emphasized the emancipation of the individual, civil society in Central European countries emerged on the collective basis of community revival. It is a community of free individuals, closely linked to issues



of national and central European memory. It is a community that denies the value of a totalitarian state that tried to destroy the common cultural heritage of Central European peoples within Austria-Hungary, and memory of the shared experience of fighting for the establishment of a society free from totalitarian influence.

Adam Seligman emphasizes that in the East of Europe, civil society has a strong communitarian connotation. It is distant from the state and so from individualistic assumption, on which the western concept of civil society is based. It is emphasized that the intellectuals, which is an integral part of civil society in Western Europe, in this part of the region is firmly rooted in the context of a community that defines its attitude to the state (Seligman, 1995: 202-203).

In the process of resistance to Soviet occupation civil society emerges as an ideal community based on fundamental traditional values. The importance of values in the development of civil society is highlighted by John Paul II, who, while fulfilling his historic mission in the 1970s and 1980s, criticized both the communist regime and liberal principles, and offered his own version of social change related to value revival of the community. Modrzejewski focuses on the role of John Paul II who made a 'serious input into the world intellectual discussion' and whose intellectual heritage as a philosopher and theologian had a strong influence on social changes not only in Poland but also in Central Europe as a whole at the end of the XX century (Modrzejewski, 2016: 6). In this context, it is hard to overstate the role of the Pope in the crystallization of values as well as in the delegitimation of the colonial system. (Górski, 2006: 29)

The experience of eliminating the communist system was inseparable from the rethinking of the past by the national community, which proved to be able to offer a post-communist, reflexive path to its own future. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, emphasizing the importance of Poland's socio-cultural autonomy from the Soviet inheritance, noted that it was of fundamental importance for the establishment of the Third Commonwealth to reach an agreement in society itself on joint actions between intellectuals and the church, which emphasized it is unacceptable to have constitutionally defined dependence on the Soviet Empire (Dobrzański, 2013: 259).

For Jacek Kuroń, Václav Havel, and other civil society leaders, it was



fundamentally important to distance the national community from the institutions of government perceived by civil society as unacceptable and incompatible with the free functioning of the private and public spheres.

During the 1970s and 1980s, intellectuals in Central European countries created a special cultural memory space, crystallized not so much in a consistent political standpoint, but rather in historical narratives, values, and virtues. Consistent social critics of the Soviet historical framework were prominent Polish intellectuals – Bronislaw Geremek, Barbara Szacka, Andrzej Szpaczyński, Piotr Kwiatkowski, who became mentors of the anti-communist movement, provided interesting empirical material on the attitude of the Poles to the past, emphasizing attitude towards Soviet cultural symbols. Important for the awareness of the role of civil society in the events of 1989 was the updating of not only the national but also the Central European historical and cultural context, which was incompatible with the Soviet framework of historical memory.

Václav Havel in his speech on the twentieth anniversary of the Velvet Revolutions in Central Europe noted that memorialization became an important component of uniting these peoples based on shared historical identity and national experience. At a conference in Gdansk, ‘Solidarity and the Fall of Communism’, a well-known intellectual and last president of Czechoslovakia, paying tribute to the successes of democracy in post-communist countries, said that honoring the memory of those involved in the 1989 events uniquely brings us to a common tradition of freedom, with the direct civic impact on the formulation of memorialization policies (Havel, 1985).

Barbara Szacka emphasizes that it was the moral and regulatory dimensions of the Polish community that prevented them from accepting the Soviet version of historical memory, the heroes who were imposed within the Soviet official history (Szacka, 2006: 54). The marginalization of Soviet cultural symbols became especially noticeable in the 1980s, when, amid the degradation of communist regimes in Central Europe, the process of simultaneous recovery of traditional Central European peoples’ patterns of the collective memory became increasingly apparent. Confirmation of this fact is the heroization in Hungarian history of the twentieth century of not only political and military leader Miklós Horthy, but also a



prominent religious figure for several generations of Hungarians, Cardinal József Mindszenty, who was reburied in Esztergom in 1991. This event demonstrated the national unity of the Hungarian people, centered around pre-modern identity principles. His image as a religious leader of the national community, despite a quite cold perception by liberals and post-communists, embodied in the society the connection of historical memory with moral normative principles, displacing the marginal, at a certain historical stage, other heroic figures of the Hungarian people, ruler of Hungary Miklós Horthy, the Liberal Democrat Oscar Jászi, and former Prime Minister István Tisza. Profound interest in historical symbols is also observed in Poland, which during the 1980s saw an increase in the historical role of not only Józef Piłsudski but also Czesław Miłosz and John Paul II, whose activities became a factor of Polish unity.

In this context, Robert Traba emphasizes that the memory of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe continues to be 'unique, hot, extremely conflictual and traumatic, and it is premature to expect it to become less acute' (Traba, 2009: 33). Traditional values are the social and cultural pillars of the community, a prerequisite not only for processes of decommunization but also for further national mobilization in Central European countries. Not only an appeal to national and Austro-Hungarian institutional experience but also a denial of the Soviet memory policy of 1945–1989, was a crucial part of community life. The occupying Soviet state acted as a value opponent: trying, on the one hand, to minimize the role of the historical experience of Austria-Hungary, to prevent any unfavorable cultural and historical comparisons, and on the other, to create a 'new proletarian' alternative to a national community. Confirmation of such a policy is the symbolization of important cities of proletarian memory, in particular Huta Częstochowa, symbols that did not conform to national markers. Such a model was seen as a challenge and was not acceptable to civil society.

David Ost notes that the events of 1989 would not have been possible without radical changes in the early 1980s, when not only intellectuals but other social groups recalled that *burgerliche Gesellschaft* had not only traditional but also modern foundations, and was interpreted as a bourgeois society formed through the functioning of the market (Ost, 2014: 253). While



comparing the Central European and Ukrainian models of social transformation, it is important to understand the fundamentally different points of support and historical symbols of Central European and Ukrainian communities in the events of 1989-1991. If 'institutional transformation in Poland was accompanied by huge mobilization' (Marszałek-Kawa, Plecka, 2015: 30), activation of civil society, and widely spread support of European integration ('return to Europe'), the Ukrainian society due to weak intellectual reflection lacked theoretical conceptualization and socio-cultural preconditions for successful social change.

In the process of public debate there emerges a powerful Central European discourse that questions Ukraine's belonging to the intellectual and political space of Europe. Skepticism about Ukraine's links to the European memory tradition is particularly displayed in the statements of a well-known Polish historian Jerzy Jedlicki, who points out the incompatibility of Ukrainian specificity with the 'Central European vision of historical memory' (Jedlicki, 1999).

### **Discursive Prerequisites of Ukraine's Transformation: 1989-1991**

The role of intellectuals in national transformation can be better understood within the framework of the theoretical approach by a known Czech historian Miroslav Hroch (1990). He identifies three main phases in the nation-building process of the 'small nations' without proto-nationalist tradition which typically occurred on the territory of an imperial state: A) the scholarly phase, B) national agitation phase, and C) the era of the mass national movement (Hroch, 1990: 109). At Phase A, culture, language, customs become the object of scientific interest. During Phase B intellectual community becomes a producer of national consciousness, which systematically spreads to other ethnic and social groups. Final Phase C is characterized by a transition to political realities and a mass movement for political self-determination. (Hroch, 1990: 109).

This scheme is relevant in the context of realizing the close links between the intellectuals' consciousness and activity and the practical formation of the Ukrainian nation, which is going through an important stage of its development: transformation and decolonization. It should be noted that in Ukraine, in contrast to Central European countries, the post-



communist and post-colonial transformation did not take place in full. This happened primarily due to a complex ideological conflict between the oppositely oriented intelligentsia of the west and east of the country. Conceptual contradictions within the intellectual discourse of Central European countries, in particular between the ideas of ‘evolutionism’ represented in the journal *Cultura* by Juliusz Mieroszewski and Jerzy Giedroyc versus the discourse of neo-positivism associated with the journal *Znak* figures such as Stefan Kisielewski, Stanisław Stomma, and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, discussions between supporters of ‘socialism with a human face’ and liberal representatives of the informal ‘Budapest school’, did not question the general European orientation of intellectuals who agreed on one thing: the need to transform and dismantle the totalitarian system. (Trencsenyi et al., 2018: 85). Laurens Peter King and Ivan Szelenyi pointed out that ‘intelligentsia saw its New class project’ as a community of the social transformation in Central Europe (2004: 137).

In Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the intellectual community was aware of its leading role in uniting society, overthrowing the communist system, and forming a new social order in which European values and political priorities, accession to European and Euro-Atlantic structures were shared by the elite as a whole already in the 1980s. Intellectuals in these countries acted as a catalyst of democratic change, orienting other social groups to the marginalization of the communist regime as incompatible with the development of civilization. It was paradigmatically unacceptable for the Central European intellectual ethos to reconcile with the occupation political regime imposed from outside.

In Ukraine, from the very beginning, there were significant contradictions in the views among the most influential leaders of public opinion. In this context, the controversy between Ivan Franko and Lesya Ukrayinka is important for understanding the role of intellectuals in the life of society, the ideological fluctuations of the intelligentsia between Europe and Russia. The outstanding Lviv writer, emphasizing the central place of intellectuals in social change, accentuated their weakness and inability to change the situation for the better. Franko noted that “the Ukrainian intelligentsia now faces ... a huge effective task – to create from the huge ethnic mass of the Ukrainian people the Ukrainian nation, a



continuous cultural organism capable of independent cultural and political life". (Franko, 1910: 107-108).

Ukrainian *Prometheus* emphasized the special nation-building mission of the intelligentsia which should bring Ukraine closer to Central European nations. Meanwhile, Lesya Ukrayinka, more influenced by Russian culture and holding social-democratic political views, put stress on the futility of intellectuals' work in then alienated social space and had no illusions about Ukraine's European-free European future. (Ukrayinka, 1977).

In fact, prominent intellectuals have outlined radically different paths of national transformation for the Ukrainian community in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: national, Central European, and pro-Russian, in which the role of the 'Ukrainian question' is limited and the functions of civil society are minimized. The public controversy between representatives of the Ukrainian intellectual elite has revealed significant contradictions in the domestic social discourse, which still remain unresolved.

It is worthwhile noting that the Galician intelligentsia most consistently supported the complete break with the Soviet and Russian imperial legacy, which through the program documents of the Ukrainian National Front written by Zinoviy Krasivs'ky and Dmitro Kvetsko prepared the Galician community for Ukraine's independence (Ukrayins'ky natsional'ny front..., 2000).

At the same time, there was no consensus among the representatives of this regional community on the ways of future social transformation. Some Ukrainian intellectuals, who were under the influence of Levko Lukyanenko, were inspired by the idea of expanding rights and freedoms and tried to realize the hypothetical possibility of the withdrawal of a Soviet republic from the USSR declaratively guaranteed by the Soviet constitution (Lukyanenko, 1994).

The other part consistently advocated a cultural policy of demarcation with the Soviet heritage. The national agitation of Ukrainian intellectuals peaked at conferences on linguistic and cultural issues in the mid-1960s, during Khrushchev's Thaw. Viacheslav Chornovil, Yevhen Sverstyuk and



Ivan Svitlychny played an important role in the formation of Ukrainian national identity as a major socio-cultural constituent of decolonization (Chornovil, 1967).

They became central figures of the intellectual dissident movement to unite the Ukrainian-oriented communities of Lviv and Kyiv as well as to crystallize strong ties with the Ukrainian diaspora in the West. This social group significantly strengthened its position during Gorbachev's perestroika, when 'a prominent place in the post-communist transformation was occupied by the notion of civil society, which became an important factor in the delegitimization of the Soviet political regime.' (Załycki, 2008: 364).

The first real steps towards the development of civil society are taking place at the Lion Society and the Ukrainian Cultural Club, which in the 1980s sought to consolidate the Ukrainian intellectual community around national identity. The first consistent steps towards the formation of civil society in Ukraine began in 1989 with the formation of the mass People's Movement initiated by prominent intellectuals of those times – Ivan Drach, Dmytro Pavlychko and Myroslav Popovych. In the first phase of its existence, the movement, like similar mass political societies in Central Europe, tried to co-operate with the existing state under the Central European scenario, putting forward rather limited democratic and national-cultural demands, and trying to choose a gradual and balanced position of demarcation with the imperial state. Attempts have been made to consolidate society based on traditional national values. The leaders of national movements in Ukraine, likewise neighboring Central East European countries, represented the humanitarian intelligentsia.

In 1987-1988 on the initiative of the Writers' Union, the processes of communist regime victims' rehabilitation were launched. Initially, they encompassed artists and writers repressed by the Soviet regime in the 1930s. This not only brought back the good name of the repressed but also highlighted the historical memory shared with Central East Europe and crushed by the imperial totalitarian machine. The national orientation of the intelligentsia was noteworthy since a considerable part of the society remained typically Soviet and distant from Ukrainian identity. However, in general, the national intelligentsia, unlike their counterparts in countries





of Central Europe, has not become a driving force for social change in Ukraine. There has been no deep and comprehensive rethinking of the past that would create strong socio-cultural preconditions for societal modernization, and to eliminate the dysfunctional and morally degraded system of government.

The lack of social responsibility of the intelligentsia for the future was clearly demonstrated by the refusal of the political wing of Ukrainian intellectuals ('People's Council') in the first national parliament to seek free democratic elections, which was crucial after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Ukraine's independence in 1991. Instead, a strategy of joint actions with the former communist nomenclature was chosen which proved to be flawed and did not allow for implementing comprehensive reforms. It has led to the crystallization of the country's corrupt post-Soviet clientele that has retained power in Ukraine for decades. Undoubtedly, this regime, together with the aggressor country, is also responsible for the degradation of the social sphere and the complete delegitimization of Ukrainian institutions of power in certain parts of the East. One cannot deny the positive aspects of intellectuals' activity who became a driving force of the formation of civil society in Ukraine, which at the turn of the 1980s-1990s united representatives of different ideological views: from nationalists to supporters of the liberal political camp.

It is worth noting the leading role of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, particularly the community 'December 1<sup>st</sup>', in the cause of national revival, in strengthening the moral and normative factor in the struggle during the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity. On the other hand, intellectuals very often were unprepared to fulfill the high mission of moral authorities, to unite regionally fragmented Ukrainian society based on the common good, competence, and social responsibility. A society that badly needed systemic changes was not offered a comprehensive model of renewal in various spheres of development.

Obviously, there are many examples of excessive and often unjustified optimism, and utopian thinking that hindered the necessary changes that have taken place in Central Europe. A significant obstacle to social development, especially after 2014, was resentment as hostile to the neighbor-



ing state, its cultural and historical past, which can be seen as a consequence of colonial domination, a legacy that determines society's inability to form established ethical principles.

The consequence of this phenomenon is not only the predominance of political rhetoric over rational action but also the preponderance of a very dangerous and irresponsible policy that excites a country with historical and socio-cultural divisions.

It is worth noting that certain signs of resentment can be found among those Ukrainian intellectuals who are committed to the Central European choice of Ukraine. One of the consistent inspirers of the Central European path for Ukraine is Yuriy Andrukhovych, who notes the fundamental cultural and historical significance of this region for the peoples enslaved by the Soviet empire. According to the well-known writer and public intellectual 'Ukrainians need the myth of Central Europe because we are erased from the consciousness of Western societies... The myth of Central Europe puts our people in a completely different position of values' (Andrukhovych, 2007: 127).

This position is supported by both Ukrainian writer Mykola Ryabchuk, who emphasizes that civil progress in Ukraine has proved difficult without changing the position of the state, its 'imperial totalitarian orientation' (2015: 127), and by writer, philosopher and dissident Yevhen Sverstiuk, who underlines the common religious and cultural roots of Ukraine and Central Europe, which, in his view, should shatter the foundations of an 'officially binding Marxist-Leninist discourse' for the average Soviet individual (Sverstiuk, 1999). In her reply to Kundera's essay, Bilotserkivets states that the isolationist position appears to be a consequence of the illusion that the third path between Russia and Europe is possible for Ukraine (Bilotserkivets', 1998).

The spectrum of successful rethinking of the totalitarian historical inheritance can also be attributed to the works of Tamara Gundorova and Oksana Zabuzhko dealing with the comparison of Ukrainian and Russian culture, the orientation of Ukrainian community to the formation of European-like social institutions, and the development of civil society (Zabuzhko, 2007). However, Ukraine failed to address the basic East-West dichotomy for greater awareness of civil society issues. The indifference of



Ukrainian society to the events of 1956, 1968, 1989, which are significant for Central European consciousness, is very eloquent. The Ukrainian political class was unprepared for change. The words of the prominent Czech writer Milan Kundera, who lives in France for many years, remain extremely relevant and prophetic for Ukraine: 'The war declared by communism to Western culture is a total war. It can lead to the complete cultural annihilation of the states of Central Europe through the Soviet Union... that is, to the amputation of the living part of Western civilization' (Kundera, 1996: 222).

Kundera's ideas fit perfectly into the logic of promoting civil society in Ukraine at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. This idea has not been put into practice. Unlike Central East Europe, Ukraine lacked a coherent social modernization strategy. Even during the revolutionary 1989-1991 period relations between social groups and communities remained weak and rigid, leaving the Ukrainian person depressed and enslaved in moral and psychological terms.

The rest of the intellectuals of Eastern Ukraine were inspired by two other discourses that only partially intersected. Anti-bureaucratic discourse, which was traced in the rhetoric of Lev Trotsky and was associated with the Russian community of dissidents, consistently opposed the 'Soviet system of totalitarian oligarchy as an instrument of domination by the communist ruling caste. (Proniuk, 2012).

Within this approach, the concept of civilians was seen as a modern tool of social criticism of the bureaucracy and the system of total censorship. In the late 1980s, this discourse became a major integrating idea of all oppositional political forces centered around the idea of civil society. The latter was understood as a priority of equality over freedom, social rights over political and civil ones. In a certain period (1986-1990), civil society within the USSR included representatives of various ideologically unrelated intellectual groups: from orthodox nationalists to supporters of the Donetsk-Kryvyi Rih Republic who spread the idea of nowadays Novorossia. Hatred for the Soviet regime, which could no longer meet the minimum needs of its citizens, was so strong that it united ideological opponents under its umbrella: from supporters of Stepan Bandera and Yuriy Shukhevych to intellectual supporters of Vladimir Lenin, who accused the



communist leadership of discrediting the idea of socialism. The break of the totalitarian system brought to the fore a new and very powerful intellectual project in the East of Ukraine, which was crystallized at the political level during the dramatic events of 2014.

This is a universal imperial discourse that is simultaneously combined with a transnational one. Its theoretical founders were the brothers Dmytro and Volodymyr Kornilov, who gathered around the magazine 'Donetsk Ridge' (*Donetskiy kriazh*) critical of the Ukrainian nation-building and post-communist transformation of intellectuals. The idea of the Novorossiia myth, which was fueled by anti-Western and pro-Russian civilization orientation, was crystallized around the political project of the Interfront of Donbass. Within the framework of this project, both cultural and political components were laid down: imperialist sentiments were formed based on imperial and Soviet military history (Minakov, 2017: 78).

In the context of separation from the Ukrainian national idea, attention was focused on (1) linguistic, cultural, and historical differences of Eastern-Ukrainian communities with the rest of the country; (2) the ability to bring civilization to the rest of the country (federalism is seen as a sign of a 'higher political urban culture' than the 'Ukrainian agricultural oligarchy'); and (3) a specific regional identity based on a colonial and imperial past (Minakov, 2017: 80).

It is obvious that this intellectual segment was politically supported by the Russian Federation and to some extent was also focused on another, a transnational social group in eastern Ukraine which focused on the autonomy of Donbas within Russia and the possible formation of an independent state close to Russia. Vladimir Kornilov's book *Donetsk-Kryvyi Rib Republic* became the worldview foundation of this would-be new state, as a socio-cultural and historical a priori for the spread of the Russian political project in the East, a guide for future separatist rebels in Donbass (Kornilov, 2011).

Thus, one can state that in recent decades, not only in Donbass, but also in other parts of Eastern Ukraine, powerful 'imperialist' and 'transnational' communities have been formed, which by creating an alternative social reality to the Ukrainian national project not only formed utopian sentiments but also pushed society to civil conflict. It was these groups



that became the conservative social base that supported Putin's policies in 2014-2015 in the east of the country, supporting separatist projects in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The implementation of the Russian project in eastern Ukraine was correlated with the opinion of the intelligentsia of eastern Ukraine, which never became autonomous from the power of regional political elites. It is a created colonial-dependent image of a 'barbarized, brutalized and Sovietized symbol of the Ukrainian quasi-intellectual which turned out to be an instrument of political manipulation, unprepared for productive social activity. "Presently we have a phenomenon of quasi-intelligentsia. They are extremely provincialized and ignorant. They have no existential experience of freedom, they've never experienced freedom as an internalized feeling of autonomy and dignity of an individual. Even in those dark times of the Soviets, the situation was not so acute. One should also probably blame the postmodern situation with its relativism... Another feature of these Ukrainian quasi-intelligentsia: they are extremely lazy in a spiritual sense. They are like a hopeless sentimental dreamer..." (Narvselius, 2012: 114).

It was due to his passivity, laziness, and ideological dependence on vulgar Marxism, which served as the main instrument of the ideology and official policy of the totalitarian state, that a large part of the population of eastern Ukraine was unprepared to resist Russian propaganda.

One can state that the essential difference between Ukraine and Central Europe was that Ukrainian intellectuals, unlike the Central European model, were not unified in terms of values, socio-cultural and regional dimensions, they had a foothold in different civilizational paradigms. Within one community we can observe the struggle of two contradictory transformation strategies. The first one focused on the shared experience of decolonization with Central Europe and the strategy of post-communist liberal change. The second one was closely connected with the historical prolongation in Ukraine of the principle of Byzantine absolutism, the 'symphony', the transformation of Ukraine in accordance with the principle of Caesarism.

One can posit that there is no consensus on the role of intellectuals in the transformation of Ukrainian society in 1989-1991. But there is no doubt



that, unlike in Central European countries, intellectuals were not the leading force in civil society and did not take responsibility for the processes of de-Sovietization and lustration, and Ukraine's development by European civilization's standards. Without these processes, the changes were blocked and unrealized.

### Conclusion

The processes of Central European and Ukrainian social transformations, despite the long shared totalitarian and colonization experience within the same empire, were brought about by radically different socio-cultural preconditions. The influence of the Austro-Hungarian constitutional heritage and the lengthy experience of nationalization in the countries of the former 'socialist camp' led to the formation in the 1970s and 1980s of powerful national and European identities, incompatible with the Soviet totalitarian form of social organization. The important social role of the church and intellectuals in the public life of Central Europe has never been questioned and provided the basis for the preservation and development of traditional ethos. Society was fully aware of how important it is for communities and groups to form strong communitarian principles and moral normative virtues, which directly contributed to the intensification of social criticism of the societies of 'people's democracy', to social reflection, the actualization of the role of historical memory, which in many aspects became a catalyst of communism break-up in 1989-1991. The proposed strategy for social transformation in Central Europe was grounded on several fundamentally important factors the existence of which favorably differentiates the countries of this region from post-Soviet states, including Ukraine. We emphasize them as follows:

1) the Central European strategy of social self-restraint based on the leading role of intellectuals and their responsibility for social changes, pragmatism and harmonization of the socio-political algorithm of actions with the existing reality, notably: the need for not only political compromises of national communities with the occupying power but also – and first of all – the unity of intellectuals and other groups of civil society around the strategy of post-communist social change;

2) awareness of the importance to combine traditional and modern



values, which ensures the simultaneous promotion of one's own national identity with the implementation of the liberal algorithm of social development, the enhancement of individual and collective motivations, and respect for human rights and traditional components of historical memory;

3) the denial of Russian and Soviet experience within the national and Central European discourse not only at the moral-normative level but also at the descriptive one, which would not be possible without social reflection, understanding of the value incompatibility of totalitarian experience with the life-world of the human being;

4) adherence to a well-developed public sphere in society, which not only provided opportunities for dissident circles to promote consistent political and value positions, but also promoted an integrated economic strategy for social transformation, and emphasized the importance of the functional role of private property;

5) consistent justification of the integrated idea of 'return to Europe' directly connected with the promotion of a unique European institution of civil society and the de-legitimization of Soviet legacy.

Unlike Central European countries, in Ukraine, social changes were determined not so much by their importance for the development of social rights and freedoms as by external influences and, above all, significant changes in the political class itself during the Soviet 'Perestroika' period. Due to the cultural and social dependence on the metropole political class in Ukraine focused primarily on cosmetic changes without rethinking totalitarian experience. Significant contradictions in Ukrainian society itself limit the possibility of applying European experience, and Central European historical markers of social resistance to totalitarianism remain alien to a large part of Ukrainian society. In contrast to Central Europe, Ukraine created neither strong individual and communitarian dimensions, nor national or European identifications, which could become a prime factor of positive developments in a post-genocidal society.

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**Öz:** Arařtırmanın odak noktası, 1989-1991 yıllarında Orta Avrupa ve Ukrayna'daki devrimci olayların sosyo-kültürel önkoşullarının yanı sıra teorik ve tarihsel arka plan üzerindedir. Güçlü geleneksel ve modern bileşenlere sahip olan orta Avrupa'daki sivil toplum, siyasi hedefleri şekillendiren kültürel olarak şartlandırılmış bir Avrupa Sosyal kurumu olarak hareket etti. Aksine, zayıf entelektüel yansıma nedeniyle, Ukrayna toplumu derin siyasi deęişimler için teorik kavramsallaştırma ve kültürel önkoşullardan yoksundu. Sivil toplumun gelişimi için ahlaki düzenleyici ve tanımlayıcı koşullar tam olarak uygulanmamıştır. Aydınlar, Orta Avrupa ülkelerindeki sosyo-kültürel ve tarihi deęişimlerde öncü güçtü. Ukrayna'daki entelektüel topluluğun zayıflığı, sömürge söylemine bağımlılığı, komünizm sonrası yenilenme süreçlerinin ve yeni kurulan Ukrayna Devletinde sivil toplumun temellerinin kristalleşmesinin ciddi bir komplikasyonuna yol açtı.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sivil toplum, Kadife devrimler, komünizm sonrası dönüşüm, Doęu Orta Avrupa, Ukrayna.

