Author Meets Critics Symposium

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Discussion on *Legacies of Totalitarianism*

Krzysztof Brzechczyn

The symposium on the book *Legacies of Totalitarianism* by Aviezer Tucker was part of the conference *Between Enslavement and Resistance: Attitudes toward Communism in East European Societies (1945-1989)* held in Poznań, Poland (June 15-16, 2018). The conference and the symposium was organized by the Institute of National Remembrance, Poznań Division, the Institute of Philosophy at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, The Centre for Culture and the Arts at Leeds Beckett University, and the Poznań Division of Polish Philosophical Society. The organizational and editorial work of the symposium was realized within the framework of the Branch Research Project of the Institute of National Remembrance in Poznań: *The Methodological and Theoretical Problems of Research on the Current History of Poland.* The participants of discussion on the book were: Krzysztof Brzechczyn and Michał Kwiecień (both Institute of Philosophy at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań), Grzegorz Greg Lewicki (Polish Economic Institute), Cristina Petrescu and Dragoş Petrescu (University of Bucharest), Rafał Paweł Wierzchosławski (University of Social Sciences and Humanities SWPS in Poznań), and the author of the book, Aviezer Tucker (Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University) who responded to the remarks and comments.

A Transformation of the Privileges of the Authorities into Property Rights or a Transformation of the Types of Class Rule?

Krzysztof Brzechczyn

The paper is a critical commentary of The Legacies of Totalitarianism: A Theoretical Framework authored by Aviezer Tucker. This book presents the evolution of totalitarian communism, its transformation and an analysis of problems of East-Central Europe societies. Although the reviewed book is a very rare attempt at a synthetic view of the genesis and transformation of communism, its author accepts too narrow an understanding of class and class interest. This leads to an idealistic interpretation of Stalinist purges and an institutionalistic understanding of transformation which does not allow for the economic dimensions of post-communist transformation to be placed in a wider social perspective.

Keywords: stalinism, post-communism, post-totalitarianism, non-marxian historical materialism, Aviezer Tucker, Legacies of Totalitarianism.

Aviezer Tucker's book *The Legacies of Totalitarianism: A Theoretical Framework* contains the germs of four separate concepts: a theory of the evolution of totalitarian communism, and a theory of its transformation (Chapter 1: *Post-Totalitarianism: The Adjustment of Elite Rights to Interests*). The next chapters of this book are the resultant analysis –

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which is actually a separate whole – of the problems of the post-totalitarian societies of Central and Eastern Europe (Chapters 2–5: *Post-Totalitarianism: Rough Justice*: about the rule of law in post-communist societies, *Rough Justice: Post-Totalitarian Retribution*: on the issues of lustration and decommunization, *Rough and Shallow: Post-Totalitarian Rectification*, and *The New Politics of Property Rights*: mainly – but not solely – about the issues of privatization and restitution of property), and reflections on the intellectual use of the heritage of dissident thought (Chapter 7: *Short-Circuiting Reason: The Legacies of Totalitarian Thinking* and *Conclusion: Only Dissidents Can Save Us Now*). Chapter 6 (*Old to New Totalitarianism: Post-Totalitarian Higher Education*), which is about the neoliberal reforms of higher education in Central and Eastern Europe, has a slightly different status.[1] Although the conclusions and observations made in the work apply to the whole post-Soviet and post-communist area, the author illustrates his theses chiefly with the use of examples from the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and – to a lesser extent – Poland; occasionally, he also refers to other countries, including: China, Russia, Romania, and Hungary.

Tucker's book is a quite rare attempt at a synthetic explanation of both the genesis and transformation of real socialism[2]. The author's main thesis in the work is the claim that "democracy in post-totalitarian Central and Eastern Europe was the unintended consequence of the adjustment of the rights of the late-totalitarian elite to its interests."[3] As a result of the October Revolution, the Bolshevik party gained power and eliminated the competing social elites. At that time, the party became divided into "idealists" and "thugs."[4] The thugs took control of the state ministries responsible for the military and law enforcement, especially the ministry of interior and secret police. According to Tucker: "After eliminating all alternative elites, the thugs eliminated the idealists because they were weaker, were cognitively disoriented about the actual totalitarian reality they helped to create and dependent on the thugs to for their power."[5] When the idealists had been eliminated, the competition for power continued among the thugs themselves: "thugs fought among themselves to secure and protect power in the absence of a political mechanism that allowed regulated competition within the unified monolithic elite."[6]

During that time, as noted by Tucker, there was no ruling class or stable class structure, and the ruling elite was decimated by numerous purges – family members were also arrested. Tucker describes the re-

sults as follows: "The purges system kept bureaucrats young, without a seniority system, and insufficiently long in power to develop cliental relations between senior and junior bureaucrats."[7]

It is worth noting that Tucker explains the phenomenon of purges and the first revolutionary stage of the construction of a Soviet system in an idealistic manner, by referring to the rivalry between idealists, who wanted to realize the ideals of a "classless society," and those whose only aim was to increase their scope of power. In the end, the idealists lost to the thugs, and, for that reason, did not play any key role in the further evolution of the system.

Tucker explains the political transformation with the use of a distinction between 'naked liberty' (not covered by a set of laws), privilege, and property rights. He defines naked liberty as a state in which one can act without being restricted by any rules or laws which would protect the results of an individual's action: "naked liberty just allows somebody to act without any rule that protects that action."[8] Privilege, given by those who occupy a higher position in the political hierarchy to those who are lower in it, is a related term. The profits from both naked liberty and privilege are perishable and cannot be inherited. Unbridled freedom is the benefit of one's position in the hierarchy of power, which can be lost, and privilege – a decision which can be revoked at any moment. A political transformation, then, would mean a transformation of the state of naked freedom and privilege into proprietary rights, in agreement with the social interest of communist nomenklatura. Why did this happen in the first place? Tucker believes that the influence exerted by the opposition was negligible because there were not many opponents and because they generally knew very little about (indeed, were not interested in) the economy. The desire of the nomenklatura to secure its interests was the driving force behind the transformation:

> "Totalitarian states have often been compared to armies, with a unified command hierarchy, total mobilization, and discipline. But when officers became disinterested in the campaign, lost faith in mobilizing ideology and interest in disciplining their subordinates, they appropriated assets under and beyond their control. In other words, the officers adapted their institutionalized rights to their personal interest in liberation from domination."[9]

In such a case, one might ask where the idealists of late totalitarianism who lost faith in the mobilizing power of ideology come from

if they were already supposed to have been eliminated by thugs at the revolutionary stage of the evolution of the system. After all, in order to lose faith in an ideology, one must first have it, and those who did were killed during the purges of the 1930s. It seems that the source of that inconsistency is:

(i) too narrow an understanding of class and class interest, which leads to
(ii) an idealistic interpretation of Stalinist purges, and
(iii) an institutionalistic understanding of transformation.

Let us begin with objection (i). In social science, we can distinguish one-dimensional and multidimensional concepts of social divisions. One example of the first approach is Marx's concept, in which the basic criterion of social divisions is control of the means of production. Such an approach leads to economic reductionism because all conflicts and social divisions must be derived from social contradictions which appear in the economy. Max Weber, who distinguishes between classes, parties, and status groups, is a representative of the multidimensional approach. However, in his theory, there are no uniform criteria of social divisions in economy, politics, and cultures. Weber defines class by referring to material features (the relations of possession), status groups – by referring to consciousness-related properties (lifestyle, prestige), and parties – by referring to institutional characteristics (the influence on appointments in the state administration).[10]

Another multidimensional approach, which is theoretically uniform, is Leszek Nowak's non-Marxian historical materialism.[11] In that approach, particular areas of human activity, namely, politics, culture, and economy, are assumed to have the same internal structure – in each of them, there are certain material social means: the means of production in economy, the means of indoctrination in culture, and the means of coercion in politics; they are also all assumed to consist of two social groups distinguished on the basis of their relation to the material means, one group being a minority which has at its disposal the respective material social means and which decides about how they will be used, and one being a majority without such influence. In each area of human activity, there is a conflict of interest between the minority group and the majority group (priests and the indoctrinated in culture, owners and direct producers in economy, and rulers and citizens in politics). It is in the priests' interest to increase their spiritual authority at the cost of the followers' spiritual autonomy, in the

owners' interest – to increase surplus product at the cost of the variable capital available to direct producers, and in the rulers' interest – to increase power regulation at the cost of citizens' political autonomy.

In that approach, then, political conflict is autonomous and cannot be reduced to the social contradictions present in other areas of social life. The abovementioned social divisions may accumulate, and one social class can have at its disposal the means of coercion, production, and indoctrination, at the same time. One example of such a system is totalitarian communism, in which a class of triple-lords (the party-state apparatus) controls the means of coercion, production, and mass communication. The basic interest of such a triple class is to maximize power regulation.

Since separate economic and cultural classes are eliminated in that system, the only driving force behind its internal evolution is the mechanism of political competition[12]. In a sufficiently numerous population of rulers, there will always be some who will expand their sphere of regulation at the cost of citizens' autonomy. The remaining ones, fearing the loss of their position in the political hierarchy, will begin to do the same. Those unwilling to follow suit will, sooner or later, be marginalized and then eliminated from that hierarchy.

When the areas of social autonomy are great enough, the mechanism of political competition operates more rapidly, and the scope of global regulation of the ruling class increases more quickly. However, when the sphere of social autonomy becomes much smaller (which is broadly what happened in the Soviet Union in the 1930s), political competition leads to the overtaking of social areas controlled by other rulers. The mechanism of political competition is as blind as the mechanism of economic competition because no individual person has control over its global outcomes. In those conditions, political competition leads to the self-enslavement of rulers, who eliminate the surplus of candidates for power and, in that way, stabilize the political system. At this point, we should distinguish between the social function of the purges and their ideological justification (that they are carried out to defeat agents or the enemies of the people, to forestall conspiracies, etc.). Nowak explains this in the following way:

> "After a time, however, the expansion again reaches the state of totalization, and a new purge become necessary. That is why there must be periodic purges. This state of affairs, and not 'madness of a despot', explains the fact that the forces of

coercion are periodically directed against certain rulers themselves. On the contrary, if a despot is really mad, he only rules because his rule serves the interests of the class as a whole."[13]

As we can see, the category of political competition makes it possible to explain the phenomenon of social enslavement and the self-enslavement of the authorities without reference to the ethical or ideological motivation of the participants of the political process.

An interesting and inspiring aspect of the change of the form of government is that it was a transformation of the naked liberty and privileges of the nomenklatura designed so as to serve its interests, with democracy being but a side effect. Tucker sees democracy in this process as limited to the economic sphere.[14] It seems, however, that the change was much deeper, and that the interests of the class of triple-lords were transformed as well. The decline of the monopoly of the Marxist world view meant that the class of triple-lords would no longer control culture, and that it would now be a class of double-lords. Moreover, the lower levels of the party apparatus, making use of their connections and relations with the state apparatus, transformed into the owners' class. In politics, there was democratization, and pluralism was rebuilt. Post-communist parties participated in those processes. The transformation also brought about unquestionable benefits to average people – their cultural and political autonomy grew, and they could open their own businesses. Nonetheless, in comparison to nomenklatura members, small owners faced more obstacles in business because they did not have as many political contacts.[15] Tucker notices this and argues that the owners from the nomenklatura were, in principle, indifferent toward democracy and hostile toward the free market and the impersonal rule of law. That state of things was conducive to corruption, clientelism, and nepotism in the economy and the process of lustration.

The book would be of interest to anyone interested in both the course of the change of the form of government in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 and in the broader, comparative and global context of that transformation.

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Notes

1 Aviezer Tucker (2015), *The Legacies of Totalitarianism: A Theoretical Framework,* New York: Cambridge University Press.

2 For other comparative approaches to post-communist transformation, see: e.gr. Zenonas Norkus (2012), *On Baltic Slovenia and Adriatic Lithuania: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis of Patterns in Post-Communist Transformation*, Vilnius: Apostrofa; Dragoş Petrescu (2014), *Entangled Revolutions: The Breakdown of the Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe*, Bucarest: Editura Enciclopedică.

3 Tucker (2015), p. 22.

4 Tucker (2015), pp. 25–26.

5 Tucker (2015), p. 25.

6 Tucker (2015), p. 25.

7 Tucker (2015), p. 26.

8 Tucker (2015), p. 33. In this chapter, he refers to Wesley Newcomb Hohfeld's, Herbert Lionel Adolphus Hart's, Hillel Isaac Steiner's, Matthew McCormick's, and Philip Pettit's reflections.

9 Tucker (2015), p. 30.

10 Max Weber (1978), *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 1048.

11 Leszek Nowak (1983), *Property and Power. Towards a non-Marxian Historical Materialism* (*Theory and Decision Library*, Vol. 27). Dordrecht/Boston/ Lancaster: Reidel.

12 For a description of that process, see: Leszek Nowak (1991), *Power and Civil Society. Toward a Dynamic Theory of Real Socialism*, New York: Greenwood Press. The topic was further discussed in: Achim Siegel (1992), *Der Dynamik des Terrors im Stalinismum: Ein strukturtheoretischer Erklärungsversuch*, Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus; and Achim Siegel (1998), 'Ideological Learning Under Conditions of Social Enslavement: The Case of the Soviet Union in the 1930s and 1940s,' *Studies in East European Thought* 50 (1), pp. 19–58.

13 Leszek Nowak (1987), 'Model of Socialist Society,' *Studies in Soviet Thought*, 34, p. 16.

14 See, for example: "The solution [to the problem of how to secure the privileges of nomenklatura – K.B.] was to transmute privileges/naked liberties into rights in a process that came to be known as privatization," see: Tucker (2015), p. 34.

15 For a description of that process, see: Krzysztof Brzechczyn (2004), 'The Collapse of Real Socialism in Eastern Europe versus the Overthrow of the Spanish Colonial Empire in Latin America: An Attempt at Comparative Analysis,' *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in History and Archaeology*, 1(2), pp. 105–133; Krzysztof Brzechczyn (2011), 'The Forgotten Legacy of Solidarność and Lost Opportunities to Build a Democratic Capitalist System Following the Fall of Communism in Poland,' in: Nicolas Hayoz, Leszek Jesień, Daniela Koleva (eds.) *Twenty Years after the Collapse of Communism. Expectations, Achievements and Disillusions of 1989*, Bern: Peter Lang, pp. 395-416.

Limits of Democratic Consolidation

Subversion of Reason as a Post-totalitarian Syndrome

Dragoş Petrescu

My comments on Aviezer Tucker's book addresses four key issues, which Francis Fukuyama defines as the four levels on which consolidation of democracy must occur: (1) ideology; (2) institutions; (3) civil society; and (4) culture. Tucker's analysis provides insightful reflections on the role played by each of these four spheres in the post-totalitarian setting. By thoroughly examining totalitarian legacies, Tucker concludes that totalitarianism is not dead and has already made a partial return. To resist and even reverse this phenomenon, he sets forth a disarmingly simple solution: the return of dissidents. Neo-dissidents might save their post-totalitarian societies from hate, lies and sheer pragmatism through love, truth and personal integrity. Only time will tell if Tucker's solution will work.

Keywords: ideology, institutions, civil society, culture, return of dissidents, Aviezer Tucker, Legacies of Totalitarianism.

During the miraculous year of 1989, the communist dictatorships collapsed in six East-Central European (ECE) countries and opened a new epoch in the European and world history. With the unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union and the bloody demise of Yugoslavia,

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it looked like nothing would hamper the global spread of democracy. Francis Fukuyama gained notoriety almost overnight when he proclaimed in the summer of 1989 that history was about to reach its end and announced the triumph of liberal democracy and economic capitalism. However, roughly a decade after the 1989 regime changes the high hopes regarding the "end of history" and a "return to Europe" turned gradually into sheer disappointment and many started talking of the "return of history," to which Brexit has added a new dimension, that is, "farewell to Europe."

As the participants to the roundtable on Aviezer Tucker's *The Legacies of Totalitarianism* have stressed, by examining the issue of "totalitarian legacies" the volume actually addresses the manifold aspects of the various democratic transitions, as well as the worrisome signs of the reverse transitions, in ECE.[1] My comments will address the challenging and sometimes iconoclastic ideas of the author, with a special emphasis on what I would call the incipient shift from democratization to autocratization in ECE, keeping in mind that the other roundtable participants will focus on equally relevant and timely issues selected from the very rich material of the book.

It should be stressed from the outset that Tucker addresses the "legacies of totalitarianism" and, one can add, the democratic deficit throughout the region, as a syndrome that characterizes post-communist countries in general. By doing so, instead of looking at variations among individual countries, the author succeeds in building a strong argument regarding a common legacy of totalitarianism. This was not the case with earlier comparative analyses focusing on democratization processes in post-communist Europe. For instance, in his 1998 book, *The Politics of Central Europe*, Attila Ágh makes a sharp distinction between what he calls East-Central Europe (Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia). Ágh employs the term re-democratization when addressing the first group of countries, and the term democratization when addressing the second group.[2] Nevertheless, this raises the thorny question of why the present day processes of re-autocratization seem to have emerged first in countries that experienced, *pace* Ágh, re-democratization and not democratization in the 1990s. As already mentioned, Tucker escapes such a trap by focusing more on commonalities (in terms of communist-totalitarian legacies) and less on disparities.

As for the many challenging ideas Tucker sets forth in his book, I shall concentrate on four key issues, which Fukuyama defines as the four levels on which consolidation of democracy must occur: (1) ideology; (2) institutions; (3) civil society; and (4) culture.[3] I would argue that Tucker's analysis touches upon all these four levels. Therefore, in the following pages I shall briefly address the author's reflections on the role played by each of the four spheres presented above but in a different order, and finish with Tucker's rather surprising solution to the devastating problem at hand. I shall illustrate my comments with four passages quoted from the book under discussion and related to each of the four spheres under discussion.

Quote One – Ideology:

> "The ubiquitous viable, dangerous, and rarely noticed legacies of totalitarian ideologies are not in political utopias, programs, or even parties and movements. They are buried deep in the psyche, in the mentality and forms of thought, discourse, and argumentation of post-totalitarian thinkers."[4]

Tucker identifies two legacies of totalitarian ideology: (1) "the assault on language;" and (2) "the subversion of reason." As he perceptively argues, numerous post-totalitarian authors in the service of power make systematic use of logical fallacies and corrupt language and thus they permanently subvert reason. Furthermore, such messages and texts are disseminated through social networks and controlled electronic media, and thus dishonest discourses have become prevalent in what has been termed "post-truth" in politics.

Quote Two – Institutions:

> "The original sin of the transition from totalitarianism was the failure to construct liberal institutions. The small illiberalism at the very beginning, the scarcity of justice that has not been remedied, led through corrupt political democracy to the larger populist illiberalism that emerged following the economic recession."[5]

A fundamental problem of post-communist societies was the failure to establish sound liberal institutions. Apart from this, contingency played a major role in the sense that the global financial crisis of 2007–2007 provided an unexpected opportunity to closet autocrats to undermine fundamental democratic institutions while claiming to fight corruption and ensure economic growth.

Quote Three – Culture:

> "Turkey is indeed authoritarian and illiberal and its government does not rely on exporting commodities; it also has a common history with Hungary and other countries in Southern Europe. But I somehow doubt that re-Ottomanization will be a successful populist platform. Post-totalitarian societies are modern, urban, secular, industrialized, and with high levels of literacy."[6]

Seymour Martin Lipset argues that cultural factors "deriving from varying histories" are difficult to manipulate, while political institutions are more easily changed.[7] As Tucker argues, it is unlikely that the "mini-Putins" in the region will succeed in building modern autocracies on the Turkish or Russian models. I would add that one can explain this – albeit not entirely – by examining shared understandings of politics, that is, political cultures.[8]

Quote Four – Civil Society:

> "While managerial neo-totalitarianism in Europe has destroyed academic freedom, academic standards, and the usefulness of academics as critical checks on the power of the state, neo-dissidents must pick up the task of telling truth to power. Against the pseudointellectuals who corrupt language and distort logic in the service of power, society needs democratic intellectuals who write clearly and logically, critically and honestly, about politics and society."[9]

On a sobering note, Tucker concludes that totalitarianism is not dead and has already made a partial return. To resist and even reverse this phenomenon, the author sets forth a disarmingly simple solution: the return of dissidents, without a vengeance. Neo-dissidents might save their post-totalitarian societies from hate, lies and sheer pragmatism through love, truth and personal integrity. Only time will tell if this solution has any chance of working...

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Notes

1 Aviezer Tucker (2015), *The Legacies of Totalitarianism: A Theoretical Framework*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

2 Attila Ágh (1998), *The Politics of Central Europe*, London: SAGE Publications, p. 7 and Attila Ágh (1999), 'Processes of democratization in the East Central European and Balkan States: Sovereignty-Related Conflicts in the Context of Europeanization,' *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 32, pp 269–270.

3 Francis Fukuyama (1996), 'The Primacy of Culture,' in: Larry Diamond and Mark F. Plattner (eds.) *The Global Resurgence of Democracy,* Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 320–321.

4 Tucker (2015), p. 206.

5 Tucker (2015), p. 231.

6 Tucker (2015), p. 232.

7 Seymour Martin Lipset (1996), 'The Centrality of Political Culture,' in: Larry Diamond, Marc Plattner (eds), *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 153.

8 See in this respect the discussion on local, bloc, and global cultures in: Piotr Sztompka (1993), 'Civilizational Incompetence: The Trap of Post-Communist Societies,' *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 22 (2) April, p. 92.

9 Tucker (2015), p. 233.

The Hereditary Diseases of Post-totalitarianism

Michał Kwiecień

The purpose of this article is to critically analyze the main theses of Aviezer Tucker's book The Legacies of Totalitarianism. A Theoretical Framework. Tucker's views on the political transformation in East-Central Europe are juxtaposed to the conclusions of Janine J. Wedel, and Andrzej Zybertowicz.

Keywords: post-totalitarianism, political transformation, East-Central Europe, Aviezer Tucker, Legacies of Totalitarianism.

In his book, Aviezer Tucker undertakes the ambitious task of constructing a theoretical matrix which could serve as the foundation for an analysis of the social and political reality of post-totalitarian states. The author claims that the transition from a totalitarian form of government to a democracy was in a large measure a continuation – in a sense it was "old wine in new bottles."

The author perceptively notes that the end of totalitarianism entailed the end a social hierarchy topped by the party elite. At the beginning of the transformation, that elite was replaced by dissidents organized in groups; however, that substitution occurred mainly in the spheres of politics and media, but it did not reach state bureaucracy, public security organization, the legal system, or education. Tucker is right to point to the natural deficit of national elites – which would have the competences necessary for overtaking key positions – after the period of totalitarianism as one of the causes of that state of things. Still, he believes that the main reason for it was that the elites of late

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totalitarianism used their position to further their economic interests and to control especially those areas of the functioning of the state which were vital for the preservation of those interests.[1]

He also puts forth an interesting thesis that the democratic form of government in post-totalitarian countries of East-Central Europe was an unintended outcome of the elites renouncing direct political domination for the sake of economic superiority. In Tucker's view, the elite was indifferent toward democracy – its main desire was to overtake state property, and it was against economic free competition and the rule of law. It preferred a cliental social model based on economic inequalities and maintained close ties with the state apparatus; it appropriated the assets of that apparatus and delegated liabilities to it. Consequently, the elites were unaffected by the form of government.[2] They did not need the government to function. Should the need arise, they could corrupt politicians (for example, by financing political parties) as they had the privilege of being the only significant class (*sic!*) of owners. In post-totalitarian democracy, the electorate did not obtain the right to decide, via elections, about the distribution of property rights and about the granting of privileges for the elites of late totalitarianism. Rather, those decisions were made behind closed doors, during secret meetings of informal groups, bureaucrats, and politicians. In some cases, when there were competing elites, elections boiled down to the choice of a mafia.[3]

The presented vision of intertwined secret groups and state apparatus is congruent with Janine R. Wedel's model. Wedel, however, distinguishes between two types of the infiltration of the state by informal interest groups and speaks about "partially appropriated states" and "clan states." The two types have many features in common, for example, the lack of a clear distinction between the private and state spheres, fragmentation of the state, or the phenomenon of "institutional nomads" (members of a circle who are loyal to that milieu and not to the institution they are affiliated with). Still, as explained by Wedel, there is a fundamental difference between them, namely, in a "partially appropriated state" informal groups use state representatives as an instrument for the realization of their own aims, with the use of broadly defined corruption, while in a "clan state" the group members themselves hold the highest positions in state structures.[4] Such nuances allow for a more accurate description of the problems related to the transformation of the form of government and make it possible to classify states as belonging to one of the two types (Wedel

ascribes Poland to the first group, and Russia to the second one). The lack of distinctions regarding the states or blocs of states in East-Central Europe in Tucker's work could be seen as a weakness of his theory.

The security services of the totalitarian period played a key role in the creation and functioning of informal interest groups in post-totalitarian states, The author notices and emphasizes that they relied primarily on undercover agent networks, which is why political and institutional reforms could not effectively combat that threat to social life. Tucker states that the experience of the cooperation of such networks with the state is a common characteristic of all post-totalitarian states. The weakness of state institutions and the inadequate implementation of the "rule of law" made it easier for informal groups to tighten their connections with the state apparatus than it was in liberal Western democracies.[5] Those connections were asymmetrical with respect to the balance of benefits. Andrzej Zybertowicz called such parasitic groups Anti-Development Interest Groups (ADIGs). He used Poland as an example and described the structures of such groups which have access to the core of the state system, regulate themselves, and build their strength by reaching for the resources and methods of communist security services. According to Zybertowicz, ADIGs prevent the state from promoting the common good. Instead, the impulse to restore that ability must come from outside of the political system: from social mobilization and from the development of the institution of democratic society.[6] That is not an easy task because a totalitarian society suffers from severe scarcity of social capital.

Tucker discusses that issue in his book – he makes an attempt to present the painful ramifications of totalitarianism not only at the institutional level but also at the social one, and he describes the reason for the erosion of society, namely, the activity of secret security services and their informants. The agents operated anonymously, which made it impossible to distinguish a friend from an enemy. Anyone could be an agent or a stoolie, so no-one could be trusted. Moreover, the totalitarian elite, like any minority in power, tried to rule in accordance with the *divide et impera* maxim – it provoked social conflicts (including class ones). That ruling method atomized society, which disintegrated to the level of families and individuals.

Tucker's book is a great treatise, with the apparent goal of encompassing all aspects of the issue of the transition of post-totalitarian states in East-Central Europe from one form of government to an-

other. Hopefully it will become a staple in the debate on the political transformations of the states in that region. It could be a helpful tool in the re-analysis of the meaning of the term (a metamorphosis, a transubstantiation), which does not seem to be common practice in states where the 'thick line' policy applies.

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Notes

1 Aviezer Tucker (2015), *The Legacies of Totalitarianism: A Theoretical Framework*, New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 38.
2 Tucker (2015), p. 22.
3 Tucker (2015), p. 23.
4 Janine J. Wedel (2003), ‚Clans, Cliques and Captured States: Rethinking Transition in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union,' *Journal of International Development* 15, p. 437.
5 Tucker (2015), p. 89.
6 Andrzej Zybertowicz (2005), 'Anti-Development Interest Groups (Preliminary Outline),' *Polish Sociological Review* 1, pp. 69-90.

Simulated Change

Totalitarianism and What Comes Next

Cristina Petrescu

My intervention focuses on Aviezer Tucker's assessment of totalitarian legacies in educational systems. Tucker singles out a major dilemma of post-totalitarian universities: to fundamentally restructure in order to become autonomous or to simulate change while preserving state support. He contends that the Bologna system meant the transformation of universities into state-managed corporations that lowered standards and introduced various mechanisms of measuring performance. Thus, Tucker convincingly argues, the unwanted result of including the former communist countries in the European Union was the return to a familiar model of simulated change in the field of education.

Keywords: totalitarianism, post-totalitarianism, transitional justice, democratization, education, Aviezer Tucker, Legacies of Totalitarianism.

The first question that comes to mind when starting to read Aviezer Tucker's volume refers to the preference for the concept of totalitarianism. Much has been debated in the past sixty years about the uses, abuses and misuses of this concept. In the field of history, its critics have been far more numerous than its proponents, and for good reasons. The diverse sources and research methods employed in the study of the communist regimes illustrated, on the one hand, the failure of those in power to totally control by the means they devised in this purpose, and on the other hand, the ability of the powerless to find

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a multitude of strategies to escape control. Thus, historians have found the black-and-white picture of the communist society as separating the perpetrators in power ("them") from the powerless victims ("us") as inadequate in explaining the survival of those regimes for forty-five years. Yet, political scientists defended the concept of totalitarianism. In a classic volume from 1975, reprinted in 2000, Juan J. Linz redefined this concept and defended its usefulness when proposing a simple but compelling tripartite typology which differentiates democratic regimes from two different types of non-democratic regimes: authoritarian and totalitarian.[1] In the late 1980s, Giovanni Sartori revised his theory of democracy and argued that the concept of totalitarianism is perhaps not adequate enough to account for the complexity and variety of communist societies in the post-Stalinist period, yet no other is better suited to suggest the never-abandoned ambition of these regimes to totally control.[2]

Tucker follows this tradition in political thinking when opting for the use of totalitarianism to refer to the pre-1989 regimes in East-Central Europe and solves the issues of their gradual evolution over the forty-five years of domination by distinguishing between revolutionary totalitarianism, which aimed at fundamentally transforming society, and late totalitarianism, which aimed at preserving a consolidated political regime and social system. "The late-totalitarian regime ceased attempting to change human nature. Instead, it attempted to encourage egoism and manipulate opportunism," points out Tucker.[3] It is a period when not only the ambition to transform society had vanished, but also when the intensity of terror had faded away. Tucker's late totalitarianism more or less coincides with what dissidents once named post-totalitarianism in their critical texts, and thus the author seems to apparently disregard the opinion of these astute first-hand observers of their contemporary societies, whom he has so often analyzed in his previous work. Moreover, he seems to agree with the post-communist opportunists who embraced the indiscriminate use of totalitarianism to describe the forty-five years of communism in East-Central Europe, for this absolved them of any responsibility for complying when defiance was no longer severely punished. Yet, his stake is radically different for his focus is not to explain what was before 1989, but what comes after. This volume convincingly explains the evolution of East-Central Europe after 1989 by shifting the focus from civil society, which Tucker correctly points out was rather insignificant in

all countries before 1989 (with the partial exception of Poland) and, far from causing the regime change, it rather represented its consequence. Thus, he focuses on the ability of the late totalitarian elites to maintain their control in post-totalitarianism and explains the regime change as representing "the spontaneous adjustment of the rights of the late totalitarian elite to its interests, its liberation, the transmutation of its naked liberties into rights, most significantly, property rights."[4]

Tucker's option for using post-totalitarianism as synonymous with post-1989 rather than post-Stalinism is also driven by his ambition to compare post-totalitarian and post-authoritarian regimes. Already in his earlier studies on transitional justice in East-Central Europe, he outlined some major differences between the two. Post-authoritarian societies benefitted from the presence of a rather significant civil society and genuine professionals in many key fields, and thus transitions were the result of a negotiation between the old and the new elites. In contrast, the post-totalitarian societies had feeble civil societies, if any, and lacked democratically-oriented professionals able and willing to support the transition. In short, in post-totalitarian societies "there are no alternative legal, security and bureaucratic elites."[5] A decade later after Tucker made this assessment, the landscape in East-Central Europe has changed for the worst. The transition to democracy paradigm, which tried to explain the difficulties in establishing democratic regimes in this part of Europe has been abandoned, while the resurgence of so-called illiberal democracies has modified the research questions. Accordingly, Tucker develops his previous comparison to explain what makes the post-totalitarian legacies different and far more difficult to overcome than the post-authoritarian legacies: while the late totalitarian elites focus on transforming political power into economic wealth, and privatizing the state to their own benefit, government control over the executive bureaucracy is inefficient, civil society is weak, corruption high, the rule-of-law principle practically alien, the political ideologies non-existent as electoral mobilization tools, former secret police members are still controlling politics, the economy and the media, the perpetrators hardly are punished, and the victims hardly compensated for their sufferings.

As many reviewers have commented more comprehensively, Tucker's volume explores the legacies of totalitarianism in several chapters dedicated to the adjustment of late totalitarian elite rights to interests and the scarce process of transitional justice in terms of retribution

and restitution. I prefer to pay attention to the legacies of totalitarianism in the educational system, which obviously represent a key domain of socialization between successive generations and a laboratory for reproducing old patterns of thinking. Some reviewers claimed that this chapter is less theoretically sound. Yet, it seems to me, as someone who is part of one of the post-totalitarian educational systems, that empirical evidence has led Tucker to insightful conclusions. Apparently, the post-totalitarian universities faced a dilemma of institutional design: to fundamentally restructure in order to become autonomous or to simulate change while preserving state support. Although to various degrees from one country to another, educational reforms in the region were rather substantial, and presupposed the introduction of public and transparent management, the professionalization of the faculty and the modernization of the curricula. Yet, their paradoxical effect corresponds to Hirschman's futility argument.[6] Unlike the previous chapters that explore the legacies of the totalitarian past to explain the post-totalitarian results, the chapter on education argues that the current state of universities in post-communist Europe is rather the direct result of post-1989 Westernization. The Bologna system, which codified an existing trend of expanding the Western European higher education, meant the transformation of universities into state-managed corporations which had to lower standards and introduce various mechanisms for measuring performance. Thus, Tucker convincingly argues, the unwanted result of including the former communist countries in the European Union was the return to a familiar model in the field of education:

> "The new publicly managed university is a parody of a university, a Potemkin village that has the facade of a university. Instead of teaching, there is cheating; instead of Socratic dialogues, there are bullet points; (…) instead of intellectual and spiritual life in truth, academic life is devoted to the implementation of absurd, senseless, immoral, and harmful policies that percolate down from an anonymous and unaccountable bureaucratic hierarchy."[7]

How true!

It is not only because of these perceptive observations that the book should be read. This is a timely and beautifully written book, with a clear argument and many memorable passages, such as: "totalitarianism is not dead, it merely disintegrated."[8] It is a book that will certainly became

canonical in the literature on post-communism, post-totalitarianism and, hoping against hope, democratization in East-Central Europe.

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Notes

1 Juan J. Linz (2000), *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes,* London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
2 Giovanni Sartori (1987), *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.
3 Aviezer Tucker (2015), *The Legacies of Totalitarianism: A Theoretical Framework*, New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 9.
4 Tucker (2015), p. 22.
5 Aviezer Tucker (2006), 'Paranoids May Be Persecuted: Post-Totalitarian Transitional Justice,' in: Jon Elster (ed.), *Retribution and Reparation in the Transition to Democracy,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 182.
6 Albert O. Hirschman (1970), *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States,* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
7 Tucker (2015), p. 203.
8 Tucker (2015), p. 233.

Legacies, Zombies and the Need of Long-Term Basis for Short-Term Foresight

Grzegorz Greg Lewicki

I claim that Tucker's Legacies of Totalitarianism is extremely important for the studies of post-communism in East-Central Europe as well as for philosophy of history, which – from the post-Hegelian times on – has avoided a holistic approach. I argue that Tucker adequately identifies transnational components of the region's current identity, rooted in the abovementioned "legacies" (middle-range processes that started in the communist era). I also argue that the inadequacy of some prognoses that Tucker puts forward based on his own theory stems from his negligence of the prognostic weight of certain socio-psychological laws and long-term processes.

Keywords: post-totalitarianism, post-communist transformation, longue durée, Aviezer Tucker, Legacies of Totalitarianism.

In his book on post-totalitarianism Aviezer Tucker successfully creates a general theory, which can be further developed and applied to generate a novel insight into the current status of many post-totalitarian societies, no matter the developmental, political, geographic, historical or economic differences between them. It seems that hovering above the diversity of post 1989 histories, there exists a set of unifying factors stemming from the common and dreadful historical experience of E-CE (East-Central Europe) countries – namely their legacies of post-totalitarianism (Tucker defines "legacies" as middle-duration processes).[1]

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The author notes that no one thus far has succeeded in framing the post-totalitarian societal experience into a coherent theory. And those who tried in fact overlooked the very important philosophical and political-theoretic content to be found in the writings of European dissidents. As a result, the deeper meaning of 1989-91 events has long been floating in "a philosophical vacuum," only partially filled by works that committed "ahistorical intellectual fallacy" by assuming every society liberated from a tyrannical regime (given enough time) will ultimately achieve mature Western European styled liberal democracy irrespective of its culture, social structure, or history.[2]

Tucker proves such way of thinking is naïve not only by uncovering complex factors that differentiate paths to democracy in E-CE, but going further than that by showing democratic transformation is far from being a dualistic change from one form of government to the other. In a fuzzy logical spirit Tucker seems to show there is a whole spectrum of intermediate "forms" of government stretched in between the idealized poles of totalitarianism and democracy, that feed on the local set of cultural and social variables. By emphasizing this fuzziness of democratic transition Tucker effectively shows that organic remnants of the communist cancer may live on, entangled within the healthy democratic tissue, thus contributing to the risk of pathologies.

More specifically, Tucker claims that E-CE countries still struggle with the legacies of previous epoch, such as economic backwardness,[3] "rough justice" (a system of justice that has not reached the publicly desired level of transparency and fairness),[4] or the behind-the-scenes impact of the post-totalitarian elite (which aimed at transforming their liberties into property rights, thus forming a distinct social class).[5]

Such factors have too often been neglected or downplayed. From my experience as a journalist and a foresight consultant I can tell that many intellectuals, politicians or pundits still fail to recognize these factors as important variables shaping E-CE region. Evident proof of this failure is the astonishment of the elites in some Western European countries and EU-related bodies after the Polish right wing Law and Justice (PiS) party announced the need to reform the judiciary following the 2015 election.[6] The controversies relating to PiS' reforms aside, the very need to reshape the judiciary has been raised throughout decades – albeit shyly – by many members of the Polish elite, in-

cluding the left-wing president Aleksander Kwaśniewski (1995-2005) and Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz, the centrist chief of special forces (2013-14). The reform was never fully implemented, though, as during the first decades of post-1989 democracy the Polish ruling elites believed the positive image of Poland as a country complying with all European norms should not be put at risk due to possible accusations of "tinkering" too much with the court system. Today, however, a legacy of totalitarianism understood as a missed reform of rough justice has re-emerged as a kind of "political zombie" – what was once buried prematurely, now returns as an abomination.

Another proof that the factors elaborated theoretically by Tucker still influence E-CE countries and provide "political fuel" even today is the fact that the economic backwardness of Poland has recently become more irritating for the public.[7] Why only recently? Because economic needs remained supressed during the transitory era (viewed by the Poles as a special era that necessitates sacrifices), but now, thanks to the successful economic linking of Poland to the EU (and Germany in particular) this is not the case anymore. Today, the economic needs of the Poles are instead shaped by self-comparison to economic conditions in the richer Western countries. To rephrase the above thought in Tucker's own terms: it seems that in Polish domestic affairs another legacy of post-totalitarianism has gained political weight only recently – namely, the unbearable awareness of an economic gap stemming from post-totalitarian backwardness.

The coherence of Tucker's treatise with contemporary public affairs in E-CE countries demonstrates the general soundness of the model and proves its great academic value. Indeed, apart from minor lapses (like claiming Spengler's philosophy of history was linear)[8] the theoretical part of the book is outstanding.

Where the work reveals some weaknesses, however, is in its final part, which aims at generating a theoretically informed foresight into Europe's future (chapters 6-7). To start with, in the final, essayistic part on education sometimes the word "totalitarian" is conflated with "authoritarian" or even "corrupt." Although Tucker is right in stigmatizing corruption in the academic system, it is questionable whether this will result in a backdoor return of totalitarianism. Although certainly, if E-CE countries were really to follow in the footsteps of Turkey's president Erdogan, who sacked thousands of academics only because they

were politically "suspicious," then Tucker would be proved right.[9] But were E-CE academia to remain a mediocre system of education struggling with issues like corruption or poor management, then it would be nothing more than a typical case of the academia of (semi)peripheries, to use Immanuel Wallerstein's term.

Similar case can be seen with the illiberal tendencies in some E-CE countries that may be deemed authoritarian, but not totalitarian. Contrary to Tucker's hopes, time has shown they were not "brushed off" easily. Why is this so? This may be related not only to the middle-range legacies, but also to Braudel's long duration phenomena, which Tucker only briefly mentions in the book.[10] In the case of E-CE, such *longue durée* phenomena would include the lack of the morally heavy, traumatized colonial past, which influences regional attitudes to migration and acculturation.[11] Another example of a causal long-term factor would be the centuries-long experience of institutional weakness (many E-CE countries experienced eras of self-perceived greatness centuries ago and these eras were followed by partial or total collapse; the resulting traumas continue to shape their attitude towards strong government). Couple these factors with the international instability related to the end of unipolar, USA-controlled world;[12] with disruptive large-scale migration to Europe from Africa and Asia;[13] with Jonathan Haidt's correlation of the popularity of right-wing parties with the public sense of instability;[14] or with Leszek Nowak's non-Marxian class dynamics in democratic conditions[15] – and you get a foresight-ready set of factors that explain ECE-related trends better than a mere reference to post-totalitarianism.

Instead of summing up, let me refer to the political scientist Christopher Coker, who claimed that we should not regret the passing of the holistic Hegelian era, but that unfortunately we have not constructed anything in exchange to interpret historical processes.[16] Tucker's books goes against this philosophical-historical inertia by demonstrating a bold return of holism. Far from being Hegelian, Tucker reinvents the interdisciplinary philosophy of history by showing there exists a common set of objective formative variables in the case of post-totalitarian cultures. These variables continuously act as explanatory, causal and identity-forming factors above the many cultural differences present in Central and Eastern Europe.

In an anectodal way this elusive community of E-CE can be illustrated by collective reactions to a joke popular during communist times:

"Why are the Russians our brothers?" "Because you cannot choose who is your brother." On hearing this joke today, the middle-aged citizens of the post-totalitarian states tend to laugh right away, whereas the others either do not get it or do not consider it funny. Tucker's exceptional book helps us understand what layers of experience, ideals, beliefs and fears are generally still present in the minds of those who tend to laugh; and what middle-range mechanisms operate in the background of their societies.

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Notes

1 Aviezer Tucker (2015), *The Legacies of Totalitarianism: A Theoretical Framework*, New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 6.
2 Tucker (2015), pp. 2-12.
3 Tucker (2015), pp. 14-15. Cf. Krzysztof Brzechczyn (2008), 'Polish Discussions on the Nature of Communism and Mechanisms of its Collapse. A Review Article,' *East European Politics and Societies* 22, pp. 828-855.
4 Tucker (2015), p. 73-74.
5 Tucker (2015), p. 22, and pp. 33-37.
6 Jennifer Rankin (2016), 'Poland's Changes to Court System 'Endanger Democracy,' *The Guardian*, February 29; see also: Krzysztof Brzechczyn (2016), 'Interpreting Poland,' *The Sarmatian Review* 36 (3) September, pp. 2023-2032.
7 TNS Polska (2013), 'Polacy niezadowoleni z sytuacji ekonomicznej w kraju' (Poles Dissatisfied with Domestic Economic Situation", *Newsweek.pl*, July 25,
8 Tucker (2015), p. 11.
9 Zia Weise and Josie Ensor (2016), 'Turkey Fires 21,000 Teachers and Demands Suspension of Every University Dean in Post-Coup Crackdown.' *Telegraph.co.uk*, July 19.
10 Tucker (2015), p. 6.
11 Although some authors do claim that E-CE countries at some point colonized their neighbours (cf. Jan Sowa (2011), *Fantomowe ciało króla* (The King's Phantom Body), Warsaw: Universitas), the scale of the phenomenon was not comparable to Western European colonial era.
12 Piotr Arak and Grzegorz Lewicki (2017), 'China catching up with the US,' in: Piotr Arak, Grzegorz Lewicki (eds.) *Indeks Mocy Państw 2017* (State Power Index 2017), available at: <www.statepowerindex.com> (accessed 16 January, 2019).
13 Piotr Arak and Grzegorz Lewicki (2018), 'Migracje, wojny oraz inne plagi międzyepoki' (Migrations, Wars and other Troubles of a Transitory Era),

in: Piotr Arak, Grzegorz Lewicki (eds.) *Indeks Mocy Państw 2018* (State Power Index 2018) available at <http://ineuropa.pl/2018/wyniki-globalne/migracje-wojny/> (accessed 16 January, 2019).

14 Cf. Jonathan Haidt (2012), *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion,* New York: Vintage.

15 Cf. Brzechczyn (2016), pp. 2023-2032 and collection of papers: Krzysztof Brzechczyn (ed.) (2003), *Ścieżki transformacji. Ujęcia teoretyczne i opisy empiryczne* (Pathways of Transformations. Theoretical Approaches and Empirical Descriptions), Poznań: Zysk i S-ka.

16 Christopher Coker (1998), *Twilight of the West*, Oxford: Basic Books, p. 175.

Dissidents and Nomads in [Not Only] Post-totalitarian Countries

Why Are There so Many Problems if Things Are Going so Well?

Rafał Paweł Wierzchosławski

Aviezer Tucker's book *The Legacies of Totalitarianism: A Theoretical Framework* can be classified among works which deal with the totalitarian past and discuss the issue of the victory of liberal democracy in post-Soviet states after 1989. From the many issues examined in his book, I would like to focus here on the author's interesting claim that dissidents played an important role not only in the overthrow of communism (real socialism) but also in the preservation of liberal democracy in East-Central Europe, which, in his view, is now threatened by the demons of populism, nationalism, xenophobia, etc. The essential question is whether dissidents have managed to create such an institutional framework as will protect societies against the temptation of populism, by offering citizens – all social groups – a state with stable, effective structures, respect for individual freedom, and the sense of safety (including social security), or whether the institutional problems he mentions results from the negligence and desertion of the elites in the first years of the transformation – a state of things which has lasted until now.

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Keywords: dissidents, elites, nomads, populism, liberal-democracy, transformation, Aviezer Tucker, Legacies of Totalitarianism.

Aviezer Tucker's book titled *The Legacies of Totalitarianism: A Theoretical Framework* can be classified among works which deal with the totalitarian past and discuss the issue of the victory of liberal democracy in post-Soviet states after 1989. From the many issues examined by Tucker in this noteworthy book, I would like to focus here on (and limit myself primarily to) the author's interesting claim that dissidents played an important role not only in the overthrow of communism (real socialism) but also in the preservation of liberal democracy in and East-Central Europe, which, in his view, is threatened by the demons of populism, nationalism, xenophobia, etc.[1]

There are some problems following from his observation, which should be considered.

(1) In Tucker's words, a dissident's (including a philosopher dissident's) attitude is expressed in Havel's postulate of 'living in truth.' The acceptance and social realization of that postulate have definitely contributed to the fall of communist systems. The reference to that postulate underlines the significance of intentional attitudes of people who value personal freedom (in the negative sense) and legal safeguards as regards respect for personal autonomy. We could say that the intuition of living in truth refers to basic (constant) human needs. They cannot be subdued and eliminated by any collective enforcement by totalitarian regimes which would like to dominate free individuals forever.

If such an interpretation is plausible, then it will be of (essential) significance for my further reflections. Having assumed it is, we can put forth a hypothesis that any threat of totalitarianism must, in the end, be confronted with the gene of freedom, which cannot be destroyed, and which will, in the long run, strive to be externalized and realized. Thus, totalitarianism can blind human minds for a time, but afterwards the gene of freedom will become active and will prevail.

(2) When I talk of the gene of freedom, I mean especially the individual level, the sense of having a sphere of individual freedom. However, as some conservative democrats like Yoram Hazony claim the idea (gene) of freedom can also be considered on a national level (free state among other free states). His point avoids charges of populism, since he places some constraints which preclude that the higher level might compromise the lower (basic) level. Such an approach is rather difficult

to define as a populist or xenophobic one, since it respects a variety of individual freedoms of citizens. He overtly supports the Zionist case of the State of Israel, however his arguments may be interesting for all who have in mind national independence and sovereignty against variety of imperial projects and traditions.[2] This aspect should not be forgotten when we talk about liberal democracy in East-Central Europe. The countries of this region have experienced the toughness of postwar Soviet dependency and at the moment of adjusting to international norms and institutions, like the EU framework, they have to balance respect for individual, national, and transnational (supra-national) entities.

(3) Not all who study dissident movements and the post-communism transformations accept Havel's diagnosis of the end of enslavement and the preservation of freedom without reservation. David Ost, who has analyzed the phenomenon of the opposition in East-Central Europe[3] and the outcomes of the transformations after 1989,[4] has recently juxtaposed the category of living in truth (as a passive and essentially elitist one) with civic activism which, in his view, would bring about decidedly greater results in the struggle against the domination of communism. Ost suggests that living in truth would be too costly for anonymous citizens – it would only be possible for those who could pay the price, for example, thanks to the support and protection of foreign media.[5]

(4) The possibility that the changes in post-communist states could be too superficial, to follow Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's dictum in *The Leopard*: "If we want everything to stay as it is, we must change everything." has also been noted by Tucker.[6] Regardless of whether we are inclined to accept the soundness of such suggestions, in my opinion, they are worth noting in the context of the accusations that, disappointed with broken promises, citizens rejecting liberal democracy will give in to authoritarian tendencies. At this point, let us take note of Jadwiga Staniszkis' political analyses, richly illustrated with empirical data, in which she has tried to display the phenomenon of political capitalism within the framework of which the members of the communist nomenklatura were to obtain better starting positions even before the beginning of the transformation, by taking over state assets and social enterprises ('enfranchisement of nomenklatura').[7]

(5) In this context, we can recall both Ost's claims about (the) defeat of Solidarity, that is, its submission to the dictate of shock therapy in

line with a neoliberal strategy of escaping from bleak real socialism,[8] and American anthropologist Elizabeth Dunn's analysis of the process of the privatization of a baby food factory by the Gerber corporation.[9] The point of her research is that those employees experienced radical systemic colonization and became abstract objects represented with the use of charts, tables, and formatted accounting documents. In the light of Dunn's analyses, Ost's critique of the concept of living in truth takes on a new, post-transformation meaning. The commoditization and enslavement may pertain not only to political freedom, but also to economic freedom and the sense of individual dignity as a member of society.

(6) However we can ask if we are not witnessing a similar process in West European to focus on recent events in Italy, Spain, or France. There is also the question about the degree to which the dissatisfaction with the liberal democratic system is an expression of populism (and other 'isms,' which it appears to entail) and the degree to which it is a reaction to the discrepancy between the promises of the elites, coupled with citizens' expectations, and the impossibility of the realization of those promises in the system.[10] It seems that that differentiation should be kept in mind when discussing Tucker's book.

At this point, I would like to mention two recent publications, books written from the liberal perspective by authors working at the same place, St. Anthony College in Oxford: Thimothy Garton Ash and Jan Zielonka. They have both witnessed and analyzed the transformation in the region. They both try to grasp the cogs and wheels of recent processes in Europe and beyond. The first author is scared by the coming changes and, like Moses on Mount Horeb, offers up ten commandments for free speech which are to save the liberal world(s). We could call him a committed moralist (or *le spectateur engagé*).[11] The second one tries to remain an impartial analyst and points to problems, which elicit various reactions of the European *demos*. While he does not diminish the threats indicated by his Oxford colleague, Zielonka does not demonize them, either, as he believes that the liberal elites were in a large measure to blame for not having been able to solve the problems noticed by average citizens.[12]

It looks like states in both Eastern Europe – which have transformed from communism to liberal democracy – and Western Europe from authoritarian regimes (France, Spain, Italy) – which should, in theory, be more stable and resistant to populism – undergo similar processes

which could be called a "transformation [liberal] regression." That observation provokes the question why it is so bad if it was to be so good, why the leaders of the transformation lose their drive and why the successes they used to boast of (and for which they were praised) are not bought lock, stock, and barrel.

In other words, we could ask the question if the (eternal) dissidents – those Tucker hopes would exhibit the virtue of eternal republican vigilance in defense of universal values endangered by short-sighted populism (Timothy Garton Ash) – were able to make use of the obtained freedom and build durable, well-designed institutions for citizens and for the effective functioning of the state machine, regardless of who wields power after democratic change.

One of the explanations of the problem might be found in Antoni Z. Kamiński and Joanna Kurczewska's institutional analysis of the Polish political system. They formulate a thesis about the nomadic nature of the elites which overtake state institutions in order to realize their own (or party) goals and not to serve the whole society. The practice of nomadic parasitism destabilizes the system; the aims of institutions are defined *ad hoc*, and there is a permanent exchange of elites and reconfiguration of the system itself.[13]

Allow me to draw some conclusions now. The essential question is whether dissidents have managed to create such an institutional framework as will protect society against the temptation of populism, by offering citizens – all social groups – a state with stable, effective structures, respect for individual freedom, and a sense of safety (including social security). If that is not the case, the next question is, why? Is it possible that the gene of freedom and the need to live in truth only fulfilled a negative function, that is, prevented the (final) domination by the oppressive totalitarian state, but did not guarantee functional institutions and the fulfillment of a positive role? Are the contemporary perturbations of liberal democracies only caused by factors against which Tucker and Ash are warning us, or are there other reasons for them, including institutional problems resulting from the negligence and desertion of the elites in the first years of the transformation – a state of things which has lasted until now?

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Notes

1 Aviezer Tucker (2015), *The Legacies of Totalitarianism. A Theoretical Framework*. New York: Cambridge University Press; we may notice, that the author worked in the field of philosophy of politics in communist Czechoslovakia (Jan Patočka, Václav Havel), and is undoubtedly qualified to extrapolate both his theoretical works and personal experience of living in a state which was undergoing a transformation of the form of government, see: Aviezer Tucker (2000), *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel,* Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh University Press.

2 Yoram Hazony (2018), *The Virtue of Nationalism,* New York: Basic Books; Yoram Hazony (2019), 'Conservative Democracy: Liberal Principles Have Brought Us To A Dead End,' *The First Things*, available at: <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2019/01/conservative-democracy> (accessed: 03 January 2019).

3 David Ost (1990), *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics*: *Opposition and Reform in Poland Since 1968,* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

4 David Ost (2005), *The Defeat of Solidarity*: *Anger and Politics in Post-Communist Europe*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. On the collapse of communism in Polish literature see: Krzysztof Brzechczyn (2008), 'Polish Discussions on the Nature of Communism and Mechanisms of its Collapse. A Review Article,' *East European Politics and Societies*, 22 (4), pp. 828-855.

5 David Ost (2018), 'The Sham, and the Damage of 'Living in Truth,' *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 32 (2), pp. 301–309.

6 Tucker (2015), pp. 19–23.

7 Jadwiga Staniszkis (1990), ‚*Political Capitalism* in Poland,' *East European Politics and Societies*, 5 (1), pp. 127–141; see also analysis of links between politics and economy in: Krzysztof Brzechczyn (2011), 'The Forgotten Legacy of Solidarność and Lost Opportunities to Build a Democratic Capitalist System Following the Fall of Communism in Poland,' in: Nicolas Hayoz, Leszek Jesień, Daniela Koleva (eds.), *Twenty Years after the Collapse of Communism. Expectations, Achievements and Disillusions of 1989,* Bern: Peter Lang, pp. 395-416.

8 Ost (2005), pp. 34-36, 43-59, 61-78.

9 Elisabeth C. Dunn (2004), *Privatizing Poland*: *Baby Food, Big Business and the Remaking of Labor*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

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Why Legacies Matter

Reply to Readings of *Legacies*

Aviezer Tucker

If the Legacies of Totalitarianism are significant for understanding the present, the global emergence of populism in post-totalitarian, post-authoritarian, and post-liberal societies since 2010 is puzzling. It seems to support some version of economic determinism rather than historical path dependency. I argue that the universal common denominator is blocked social mobility. The elites that protect themselves by blocking mobility and their social and political contexts are local. 1989 was a political, not a social revolution. The continuous late Communist elite transmuted political into economic capital and prevented the establishment of the rule of law. When economies and mobility expanded, the effects of the late totalitarian continuity laid dormant, the recession awoken them.

Keywords: economic determinism, path-dependency, populism, post-communism, post-totalitarianism, Legacies of Totalitarianism.

The emergence of contemporary populism, democratically elected governments that attempt to expand the executive branch of government to reduce or eliminate the independence of other branches of government and use small representative majorities and even smaller popular majorities or large minorities to suppress the rights of minorities, while manipulating incoherent popular passions especially fear and resentment against elites to strengthen their rule, is puzzling from a comparative political perspective.

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"Transformation regression," as Wierzchosławski called it, in post-totalitarian states and societies is not surprising: weak institutions and liberal-democratic norms are legacies of the totalitarian era.[1] Though East-Central European societies had been traditionally multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious, the two totalitarian intervenors in the region made societies uniform and homogenous in less than a decade, and then closed them off from the world. Though they have made significant and indeed impressive economic strides since the end of Communism, post-totalitarian economies still lag behind most fellow members of the European Union, fueling resentment. These explanations are plausible, except that the other countries that succumbed to populism are the ethnically and culturally heterogeneous United States and Brazil, countries of immigrants and have long been open to the world. The United States has had strong liberal-democratic institutions with a quarter millennia of entrenched traditions. Though Brazil has authoritarian (though not totalitarian) traditions, the United States above the Mason-Dixon Line has none.

Another puzzle emerges from comparing the post-Communist populist countries, Hungary and Poland on the one hand, and the Czech Republic on the other hand. Hungary and Poland returned post-Communist parties to power cyclically after 1989. But now, whatever else Victor Orban and Jarosław Kaczyński may be blamed for, their records and those of their party leaders during the Communist era are as pure as the driven snow. By contrast, the Czechs have kept their Communists in political isolation since 1989. Yet, the current populist euro billionaire prime-minister is a child of the Slovak nomenklatura who probably still managed to be a low grade secret police collaborator in his youth before the regime collapsed, while president Zeman is openly pro-Russian, had advisors who were former officers of the Communist secret police, and Russian money paid for his presidential campaign. To make it all even more interesting, all the post-totalitarian populists, Prime-Minister Orban in Hungary, President Miloš Zeman in the Czech Republic, and even Kaczyński in Poland, went through periods in the twenty years following 1989 when they were fairly conventional politicians who played by the liberal democratic rules and even took some painful non-populist economic decisions. The current elected leaders of the United States and Brazil cannot be accused of ever having been "normal."

It could be facile to conclude that legacies and history, long and middle duration factors, have had little influence on recent political history. The lower middle classes, poorer, less educated, older, and provincial voters tolerated liberal democracy unenthusiastically after 1989 because they believed it may make them rich like the Germans. Once the economic recession hit like a tsunami from outer space, this instrumental tolerance of liberal democracy lost its *raison d'etre.* The populist voters returned to their late-totalitarian political homes to roost. Politicians who could smell the political winds adjusted their style to that of demagogues; and the plebs could not care less about the credibility of their demagogue as long as they vented and expressed their passions and annoyed the stagnant elites forcefully enough.

Lewicki reasonably questions in his comments the significance of middle duration factors, which *the Legacies of Totalitarianism* concentrated on, in comparison with short and long duration factors,[2] while Dragoş Petrescu hails the significance of theoretically undermining the long duration historical differences between north and south central-east Europe.[3] Perhaps as much as the fin-de siècle nineties of the previous century were the golden age of economic growth, technological innovation, and international trade that led to a cosmopolitan and liberal *zeitgeist*, the global recession of 2008 somehow affected much of the developed world similarly to generate a new *zeitgeist* of global populism, irrespective of totalitarian, authoritarian or democratic legacies. The rest is history, as the term is used in America rather than Europe, irrelevant rather than inevitable.

Such an analysis is attractively simple. Yet, it is incomplete because it skips over the intermediary causal links that should mediate between the global recession and the local populisms. The link must be universal, yet effective in each of the extremely social contexts. I suggest that the most plausible universal intermediary variable is blocked social mobility. When the recession hit, the economic pie initially shrank everywhere (except in Poland) and then it stopped growing significantly for a decade everywhere. Without growth, upper mobility for some implies lower mobility for others. The threatened elites who did not know how to increase growth and prosperity, closed their ranks to prevent losing their own class position, by blocking social mobility. The formal and informal methods for blocking social mobility differ from society to society, as are the class structures and the characters of the classes. But regulating class mobility out of existence usual-

ly involves some level of state capture to use it to block upper social mobility and protect oligopolies and privileges. The politicians who are coopted by the elites are then perceived as corrupt and the aura of corruption descends also on politicians who are not corrupt. Weak social classes threatened with downward mobility whose upper mobility was blocked under conditions of recession and then stagnation reacted with fear and anger against the elites. The demagogues manipulated these emotions. Since elites usually use codes of politeness to distinguish themselves from the uncouth masses, in the United States this elite politeness is associated with "political correctness," the populist leaders proved their distinction from the elites by being vulgar to transgressively break codes of polite talk and conduct. But anger and resentment do not amount to a social revolution. The power gap is such that bringing down the elites is not just impossible, but even unimaginable. Instead, the imagination runs wild against those the lower classes perceive as even weaker and inferior to them, which is where xenophobia, racism, and scapegoating come from. Here the short term international similarities end and the need for middle-range analysis begins.

I argued in *Legacies* that the political changes that started in 1989 amounted to political revolutions when and only when political elites were replaced, but never developed into social revolutions because the social hierarchy and composition of the elites hardly changed after 1989. The late-totalitarian elite traded its political capital for economic capital, used its naked liberties (liberties unprotected by rights) to appropriate the state and transmute those naked liberties into property rights in the process of privatization. The late-totalitarian judicial system would not and could not establish the rule of law. Ordinary post-totalitarian citizens did not challenge the social continuity and state capture because there was not much they could do about it, while for most of the twenty years between the end of Communism and the global recession East-Central European countries enjoyed robust economic growth that trickled down, albeit unevenly. Economic growth and growing economic role for international and foreign companies and international trade, and new institutions like the free media, offered opportunities for upper mobility that had not existed before the fall of Communism. However once mobility came to a scratching halt, as Lewicki put it, "what was once buried prematurely, now returns as an abomination."[4] Hungarians and Polish citizens started paying

greater attention to the composition of their elites and their political influence. In protest, they voted for populists who appeared clearly dissociated from the previous rapacious elites, and gave them an overwhelming mandate to fight the corrupt elites. Replacing self-serving post-Communist politicians, judges and civil servants who had little respect for the rule of law with another self-serving group with party loyalty and no respect for the rule of law, while curbing the independence of the institutions that underlie liberal democracy, has not been much of an improvement. But then the populist leaders could promise their voters to pre-empt the rising tide of immigration from planet Mars or some other equally likely source of immigrants eager to settle in post-totalitarian East Europe, rather than traverse it on their way to Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

As Wierzchosławski put it:

> "The essential question is whether dissidents have managed to create such an institutional framework as will protect the society against the temptation of populism, by offering citizens – all social groups – a state with stable, effective structures, respect for individual freedom, and the sense of safety (including social security). If that is not the case, the next question is why."[5]

Or, as the same author put it succinctly: "why it is so bad if it was to be so good?"[6] The explanation I proposed in Legacies is the absence of post-totalitarian alternative elites. Totalitarianism is distinct of authoritarianism in attempting to create a single social class hierarchy (Brzechczyn explains this within the framework of Nowak's broader social theory). In the initial revolutionary totalitarian stage this is achieved by the elimination of about 10% of the population, by murder, imprisonment, and exile. Following the elimination of the pre-totalitarian elites, the revolutionary elite turned on itself. As Brzechczyn analyzes, the self-destruction of the totalitarian elite resulted from of its monopoly over power that forced its members to expand their power only at each other's' expense.[7] The idealist true believers among the elite were killed first because their idealism disoriented them. Lower down on the single hierarchical echelon idealists could survive into late totalitarianism when they gradually lost faith (in reply to Brzechczyn attentive quandary about the apparent contradiction between my claim that idealists were killed in the revolutionary stage of totalitarianism and my later claim that idealists became disillusioned during late-totalitarianism).

The late totalitarian regime attempted to freeze its social structure by preventing the emergence of new independent elites, achieved by control of social mobility through the Party, the selection of students in higher education according to political criteria, and the suppression of civil society, the social space between the state and the family where elites can develop independently of the state. Authoritarian regimes, by contrast, eliminate only alternative *political* elites and opponents and do not bother with non-political alternative elites and civil society. This makes totalitarianism unique. As Cristina Petrescu highlighted, one of the main arguments of *Legacies* is that the concept of totalitarianism is indispensable for understanding the twentieth century and its aftermath.[8] As Cristina Petrescu noted, the concept is controversial both in its meaning and its application. The meaning I use, the absence of alternative elites and a single social hierarchy, was never *totally* implemented because the state could not achieve total control of every social nook and cranny, but it got close enough for its purposes, the maintenance of social hegemony. Without extreme violence, small dissident communities did emerge. Yet, these dissident alternative elites were not sufficient for replacing the elites after the end of the regime. Some former dissidents in politics and the media (and not all dissidents were liberal democrats to begin with) did not suffice to reform institutions and establish the rule of law in the judiciary and police, let alone in the regulation of the economy. A fundamental tragic social legacy of late-totalitarianism has been the social problem solving strategy of finding somebody you know to get around absurd and inflexible institutions and regulations that cannot be reformed. This social practice written large meant attempting to achieve social change though personnel replacement rather than by attempting legal and institutional reforms. Instead of designing well-functioning institutions to operate according to good rules, reformers replaced the people at the top with political allies. "Fighting corruption" may mean then ending state capture by one clique only to replace it with another.

I argued that the end of totalitarianism constituted an adjustment of the political naked liberties of the late totalitarian elite to their economic interests. Michał Kwiecień missed in my analysis reference to Janine Wedel's distinction between levels of state capture.[9] I distinguished in *Legacies* between economies where the appropriation of the state required continued control of the government because the main source of cash flow was income from selling natural resources that cannot be liq-

uidated and moved elsewhere, and economies poor in natural resources where the immediate targets of "marauding bandits," in Mancur Olson's terminology, would be the most liquid assets, like those held by banking and insurance monopolies. Once the most liquid properties were liquidated, the ongoing interest of economic elites in government was limited to manipulating regulations to protect monopolies and fixing public tenders, a partial state capture. Putin's nomenklature restoration, by contrast, was of "stationary bandits" in Olson's terminology; they had to capture the state to get the income from selling energy.

Populists have perfected the art of state capture. But the legacies of liberal democracy have kept liberal institutions, most notably the judiciary in the United States, independent and powerful enough to curtail and limit the powers of the executive in ways that have been impossible in post-totalitarian states. Accordingly, the freedom of the press has held as did the independence of institutions such as the Central Bank despite continuous attempts to weaken these institutions and their independence. Middle range path dependency, the legacies of totalitarianism, do matter in the end.

A final comparison between the contemporary United States and post-totalitarian states is more surprising: The Trump administration shares one prominent characteristic with the former dissident governments that took power in the wake of 1989: Extreme scarcity of loyal elites. As much as the dissidents could not generate a social revolution without alternative elites, nor can Trump. The reservoir of elite members able and willing to serve his administration has practically no true believers in populism, not even opportunists, because nobody believes this presidency will last long enough to reward its collaborators. Without such alternative elites, the entrenched elites, the system, protects itself and prevents change, for better or for worse.

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Notes

1 Rafał Paweł Wierzchosławski (2019), 'Dissidents and Nomads in [not only] Post-Totalitarian Countries – Why Are There so Many Problems If Things Are Going so Well,' Central European Journal of International and Security Studies 13, no. 1, p. 230.

2 Grzegorz Greg Lewicki (2019), 'Legacies, zombies and the need of long-term basis for short-term foresight,' Central European Journal of International and Security Studies 13, no. 1, p. 235.

3 Dragoş Petrescu (2019), 'Limits of democratic consolidation: Subversion of reason as a post-totalitarian syndrome,' Central European Journal of International and Security Studies 13, no. 1, p. 209.

4 Lewicki (2019), p. 222.

5 Wierzchosławski (2019), p. 226.

6 Wierzchosławski (2019), p. 230.

7 Krzysztof Brzechczyn (2019), 'A Transformation of the Privileges of the Authorities into Property Rights or a Transformation of the Types of Class Rule?,' Central European Journal of International and Security Studies 13, no. 1, p. 203

8 Cristina Petrescu (2019), 'Simulated Change: Totalitarianism and what Comes Next,' Central European Journal of International and Security Studies 13, no. 1, p. 215

9 Michał Kwiecień (2019), 'The Hereditary Diseases of Post-Totalitarianism,' Central European Journal of International and Security Studies 13, no. 1, p. 212.