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Understanding media change in East Central Europe

Colin Sparks and Anna Reading

CENTRE FOR COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

The fall of communism is, or should be, a central focus of enquiry for social theory. We are witnessing sharp dislocations of societies which operated in ways different from those which are familiar to the inhabitants of developed western capitalism. Before 1989, they differed, for example, in the nature of social stratification, in their allocation of public and private provision for a range of activities, in the relations between their political system and the population. They also differed in the nature of their media systems.

These societies, it seems, have now ended, and with them have ended some of the central ideas of modern social theory. There is less agreement on what the implications exactly are, but there is certainly agreement that 1989 marked an ending. One can, in fact, select from a range of different endings. It is generally agreed that this was the end of communism, and perhaps the end of socialism as well. It may be something even more profound, since it has been argued that: 'the fall of communism signalled the final retreat from the dreams and ambitions of modernity' (Bauman, 1991: 37). In the grandest perspective of all, it is the end of history (Fukuyama, 1992). The end of these forms of social organization, and the process of the birth of new forms within a relatively short period of time, provides very considerable opportunities not only for general social theory but also for those concerned with more specific topics.

In this article, we are concerned with trying to understand the changes in the television broadcasting systems of a narrow group of formerly communist countries. Such a focus both limits and deepens our analysis. We are limited first of all in the range of experience which we consider. Our chosen countries are the so-called Visegrad Group. These were originally Poland, Hungary and the Czechoslovak Federal Republic. The three have now become four, with the splitting of Czechoslovakia into the separate

Media, Culture & Society (SAGE, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi), Vol. 16 (1994), 243-270

Czech and Slovak Republics. While we would be the last to underestimate the degree of social dislocation that the end of communism has produced in these four countries, they do not exhibit some of the extremes which have occurred elsewhere. Ethnic tensions are certainly present, but have not so far produced the kinds of military conflicts which mark the former USSR or the former Yugoslavia. There has been the formation of a new independent state, but it was not born in bombardment and massacre. The countries of our study are examples of relatively peaceful transition.

They are also countries of relatively complete transition, compared with the slow processes reported in Bulgaria, Rumania, Belarus or the Ukraine. That is not to say that they have completed the teleological transformation beloved of western commentators and are now stable, prosperous and wholly contented bourgeois democracies. On the contrary, we will show below that there remain considerable instabilities in the media systems of these countries. Leaving aside the special case of the former DDR, however, they are the countries which have moved furthest, politically and economically, from their original communist mould.

Thirdly, we have concentrated only on the television systems in these countries. The evolution of the press and of radio broadcasting has been very different, and often much swifter. The wholesale privatization of the press, particularly in Hungary, has frequently been remarked and it certainly illuminates another aspect of the complex reality which is not analysed here. That process, however, was often a 'wild' one, in which possession came to constitute ten tenths of a retrospective law. The changes in television have been a much more considered and regulated business, and thus have illuminated aspects of the new realities rather more sharply.

These limitations, we wish to argue, also constitute the strength of our analysis. We have here explored a set of cases which fall within what we may call the normal pattern of post-communism. The influences of outside takeover, as in the former DDR, are not present in what are essentially autochthonous developments. The exigencies of war, invasions and military coups did not shape the events under consideration. The new order is not simply the old order repainted from red to white. We are examining the changes to a television system which is responding to new economic, political and social circumstances just as we would be if we were examining a western country.

It goes without saying that the implications of the questions under review are much wider than the mere regulation of television. Broadcasting, and particularly television broadcasting, is generally held to be central to political life in modern societies. A television system that is open to political debate and discussion, which informs its audience and illuminates the society it serves, is generally held to be central to, if not actually constitutive of, a contemporary political democracy. The frequently-repeated claim that what we are witnessing is the transition from com-

munist totalitarianism to capitalist democracy can be tested most easily and most fully by an examination of television broadcasting.

One of the most obvious ways in which the old system departed from the norms of democracy was the fact that the *nomenklatura* system meant that those who held the decisive positions in the media were of necessity the direct dependants of the ruling power. It was partly against this restriction of political power to a tiny elite that the oppositions in many communist countries developed the idea that their main task was to empower 'civil society'. By this rather ill-defined and slippery concept they tended to mean that, in an ideal and democratic society, power over the direction of important social institutions like broadcasting would be dispersed among ordinary citizens rather than concentrated in the hands of professional politicians and their assistants. Since these oppositions are today the people who are shaping the new order of things, one of the tests of the extent of democratization is the degree to which these ideals have been put in to practice.

Theories of the end of communism

There have been a large number of different accounts of the end of communism, each with its own particular features, but we can group them into three broad kinds of theory, to each of which it is possible to assign a representative thinker. There are, of course, important differences of emphasis within each of these groups, but they can be distinguished from each other in that they differ in essentials. They have divergent accounts of what they consider to be the nature and extent of the change which is going on, and what its implications are for the major organizations in society.

The most far-reaching claims are the dominant ones. The changes are total. Most famously articulated by Fukayama, and accepted in essence even by many of his sharper critics, this is what we may almost term the official view, both in the west and in the former communist countries. According to this line of thought, the revolutions of 1989 were profound social transformations at every level from the spiritual to the economic. The older order was simply and entirely communist and there has been a political and social revolution in which the ruling order was swept away in its entirety. The ruling principle of this order was the subordination of the individual to the needs of the state as the expression of the collective will. The political and social order, and the eventual collapse of these systems, were thus the direct and inevitable result of their founding ideas, which ran directly counter to human nature. The old order is being replaced by a free market economy which is better in accord with the essence of humanity. It will necessarily be accompanied by a democratic, or at least a pluralistic, political order. Within this general framework, there are important

differences of emphasis. For Fukayama, writing in a self-proclaimed mode of philosophical idealism, the revolution was essentially spiritual and thus already completed. While it may be some time before the promise of 1989 is fulfilled, history has already come to a full stop. For other writers, particularly eastern Europeans like Kornai and Klaus, who are intellectually much more indebted to Hayek than to Hegel and are therefore very much more 'materialistic' in their outlook, the revolution is still radically incomplete and requires political action in order to realize its promise (Klaus, 1991; Kornai, 1990).

Slightly less sweeping in its claims, but still a theory of substantive change, is the view held by many on the left, and best theorized by Miliband (1991). In this account, the old economic order was essentially socialist, but political power was held by a bureaucratic elite. Economic and social life was, in principle at least, the result of a process of planning which constituted a radically different order of life to the anarchy and exploitation existing in capitalism. While the level of production, and thus the standards of life available to the mass of the population was lower than in the advanced capitalist countries, the distribution of what social goods there were was relatively egalitarian. This healthy body was deformed by its undemocratic political structures which were designed to ensure the continued rule of the privileged party hierarchy. The horrors of the old order were the product of this alien encrustation. The 1989 change in the political order has provoked a wave of 'capitalization' in which a leading role is played by members of the old *nomenklatura*, who are busy transforming themselves from bureaucrats into true private capitalists. These people, or their close relatives, are in the process of finding ways of looting state property for their private gain, and establishing a political order which will legitimize and perpetuate their depredations. Given the general nature of capitalist social relations, and the extremely unfavourable circumstances under which the transformation is taking place, there must be a real doubt about the long term substance even of the democratic gains of 1989. The record of capitalist societies throughout the world does not seem to demonstrate any ontological link between private property and political democracy. The real revolution is thus not political but social, transforming socialism into capitalism.

The theory which offers the least far-reaching account of change is very much a minority view and is best expressed by the philosopher Callinicos (1991). According to this view, the old order was not fundamentally different from that prevailing in the west: it was state capitalism rather than private capitalism. Both political and economic power were held collectively by a bureaucratic class, roughly identical to the *nomenklatura*, who ruled societies driven to accumulation by the necessity of competition with the west, primarily through military rivalry. The revolutions constituted radical changes in the political order, but at the social level the shift

was far less fundamental. The destruction of the one-party dictatorship and its replacement by democratization was a change in the way in which the economically dominant class ensured the continuation of its own rule over society. Since this process is a complicated one, and involves the sacrifice of some individuals in the interests of the ruling class as a whole, a degree of political pluralism and democratic forms are a valuable, if not essential, vehicle for realizing the change. There was thus a political revolution in the sense that the old mechanisms of political life were destroyed. There was not, however, any social revolution, since the actual relations of production have not been fundamentally transformed. The capitalist class is undergoing a recomposition from collective to an individualized form, but the relations between capital and labour remain essentially the same. The control of the labour process still lies in the hands of a small number of unelected individuals driven to organize the labour of others by the compulsion of competition. The vast mass of the population continue to have no control over this aspect of their lives.

We can compare these three positions across a number of dimensions of change. The first two take the view that the societies of Eastern Europe were, before 1989, radically different from those of Western Europe and North America. Since then, they have started to become much more similar. Consequently, these writers tend to stress the discontinuities between past and present. The third position sees the Eastern societies as having been special variants of the same general capitalist model as those of the West, and thus tends to stress the degree of continuity between old and new. Following Fukayama and regarding the changes as deep and extensive transformations of the whole of society, we would expect to encounter radical discontinuities of structure and of personnel, particularly in the most important economic, social and political organizations. In the case of Miliband, we would expect the changes to be less thoroughgoing, but still fairly substantial. The radical discontinuities would be of the key social and economic structures by not of personnel. While there might be change at the political level, these would not be a necessary element of the revolution and might well prove to be transitory. Following Callinicos, we would expect to find the least extensive changes. On the contrary, the dominant theme would be one of continuity both of structure and of personnel in the social and economic sphere. Changes would be expected in the political sphere, which would tend towards a degree of plurality and might well take recognizably democratic forms. We may represent the key elements of these three positions in abstract form by means of Table 1.

Changes to television

There is as yet little writing which makes a conscious attempt to explore the relationship between television and ideas about the nature of the revolu-

TABLE 1
Three theories of changes to post-communism

Theorist	Old economic system	Old political system	Nature of revolution	New economic system	New political system
Fukayama	socialist	totalitarian	political and economic	capitalist	democratic
Miliband	socialist	totalitarian	economic	capitalist	indeterminate/authoritarian
Callinicos	(state) capitalist	totalitarian	political	(private) capitalist	indeterminate/plural

tions of 1989. We can, however, make some extrapolations with regard to television from the general theories we have reviewed above and place some of the writers who have addressed this particular issue within such a framework. This classification will be extremely tentative. It is unlikely that the writers on television would wish to align themselves quite so unproblematically with the positions to which we have assigned them. They may well have arrived at positions on television through theoretical routes which fall outside of any of the views we have outlined above.

In the case of Fukayama, we would expect to find the old state socialist system replaced by a new commercial system. At the political level the old, party-directed policies and party-approved personnel would be replaced by independent, commercially-oriented policies and that staff would be appointed on a non-political and purely professional basis. The new broadcasting system would be independent of political parties. Writing on television which falls clearly into this category includes two reports by US authors (Dogan, 1990; Dennis and Van den Heuvel, 1990). Both of these reports suggested that there was a rapid, complete and unprecedented change going on in all of the media, particularly television, and that the task of the US government and other equally benevolent organizations was to ensure that the emerging institutions and practices were based as closely and as firmly as possible on American models. Among the writers from Eastern Europe following this line of thinking, the most notable are Manaev, who argues in the case of Belarus that the best way to complete the changes instituted by the collapse of the former USSR is the privatization of the mass media more or less along US lines (Manaev, 1993), and Pryliuk in the Ukraine who places a similar stress upon private ownership (Pryliuk, 1993: 285).

The implications of the Miliband position are that the old state broadcaster characteristic of a socialist system of television is replaced by a

TABLE 2
Three theories of changes to television

Theorist	Old structure	New structure	Old personnel	New personnel	Old politics	New politics
Fukayama	state	commercial	political	professional	dependent	independent
Miliband	state	commercial	political	professional	dependent	contingent/dependent
Callinicos	state	state or mixed	professional	contingent	dependent	contingent

new commercial system. At the political level, there would tend to be a continuity of senior personnel who would now pursue a professionally-determined set of policies commensurate with the shift towards a market economy. The broadcasting system would probably, but not necessarily, be controlled quite closely by the political elite. The writer who seems to come closest to this position with regard to television is Splichal who, writing generally about the experiences of Eastern Europe, argues that the end of communist control has been followed by a combination of an over-political attitude to television and a surrender to large commercial interests. He terms this process 'Italianization' (Splichal, 1993).

In the case of Callinicos, we would expect to find important continuities between the past and present structures of broadcasting, particularly since state-owned and regulated broadcasting is not at all specific to communist countries. The fragmentation of the ruling class would be likely to lead to those sections excluded from direct political influence attempting the establishment of commercial alternatives. There would tend to be a continuity of personnel, since the present incumbents already performed an essentially professional function with regard to broadcasting. Relations with political power would be contingent upon circumstances. Writers whose work seems to fit this model best include Prevrátil, Jakubowicz and Kováts, all of whom identify ways in which, in different countries, the broadcasting structures remain relatively unchanged and how the new governments have tended to adopt many of the techniques of media management of the old order (Prevrátil, 1993; Kováts and Tölgeysi, 1993; Jakubowicz, 1992b).

Following the same pattern of contrasting the different positions by means of a table showing the main propositions of the groups of writers, we obtain the results summarized in Table 2. Taken together, these represent different sets of hypotheses about the nature of television in the transition period which are sufficiently concrete as to enable us to examine their relevance to the actual processes themselves.

Television before 1989

Any concrete study of the restructuring of television must perforce start with a clear picture of the initial state of affairs from which any changes are departures. There is a standard and very well-known account in *Four Theories of the Press* which has informed the views of generations of students of the mass media. It presented the Soviet media system as heavily didactic, heavily propagandist and heavily biased: 'here is deadly serious broadcasting, missionary broadcasting' (Siebert et al., 1963: 137). The problem with this picture is that, whatever merits the model may have had for describing the Soviet system around 1950, it departs rather seriously from the reality of broadcasting in the Visegrad countries in the 1980s.

Most commentators from the countries themselves tend to date the decline of the classical Soviet model from very early on. Jakubowicz argues that the pure 'communist totalitarian' system in Poland began to decay from the moment of its birth. The process accelerated after 1971 and was only briefly interrupted by martial law (Jakubowicz, 1992a). Kováts and Tölgeysi argue that in Hungary the long term effects of 1956, and the impact of the economic reforms of 1968, had already gone a long way towards undermining the classic communist model well before 1989 (Kováts and Tölgeysi, 1990). The situation in Czechoslovakia was different. The equivalent attempt to 'marketize' the system in 1968 was defeated by the Soviet invasion and that resulted in the reimposition of an only slightly modified version of the classic model. The fact that the indigenously evolving process was blocked by foreign intervention helps explain some of the distinctive features of the change in this country which we will examine later.

We can identify three important areas in which the television systems of the Visegrad group departed substantially from the classic model. The first of these is in the nature of the programmes shown. Contrary to the image of a tightly controlled and wholly propagandistic output, all three of the countries broadcast television programmes they had purchased on the world markets, just like any other broadcasting system. The most closed system was that of Czechoslovakia, which attempted to impose quotas upon the import of 'non-socialist' programmes: the third channel, for example, was entirely devoted to the rebroadcast of Russian TV. Overall, however, the preference for 'socialist' imports was very hard to sustain, even though, according to the then programme-buyer, these were often very much cheaper than their Western rivals (Smid, July 1993, personal interview). In 1983, for example, Czechoslovak TV imported 24 percent of its overall programming, of which 50 percent was from East European countries and 50 percent from the rest of the world. Forty-one percent of Czech entertainment programmes and 36 percent of cultural programmes were imported (Tesar, 1989: 138).

The other two systems were in principle more open. Financial, rather than political, constraints seem to have been the limiting factor on the purchase of Western programmes by Polish television (PRTV). The growth in foreign programmes in the 1970s was curtailed after 1982 in order to conserve hard currency. Within these budgetary constraints, the Polish television system was more or less completely open to foreign entertainment programming. By 1986, 42.8 percent of feature films and 47.1 percent of series shown on Polish TV originated in the West (Jakubowicz, 1989: 154). The government had more or less abandoned the attempt to give a 'socialist' content to the entertainment aspects of television and, from 1987 onwards, it increasingly relaxed its control, even over news and current affairs.

The most open of the systems to foreign programming was that of Hungary. A substantial part of the broadcast output, both factual and entertainment based, was purchased from a range of Western sources. In 1986, MTV (Hungarian Television) purchased 601 programmes from Western sources out of a total of 864 foreign acquisitions: that constituted almost 70 percent of the total. The largest supplier of programme units was the UK, with 228 items. West Germany accounted for 122. The largest 'socialist' supplier was the USSR with 116 items (MTV, 1991: 19).

The second major area in which the systems departed from the ideal model was their readiness to carry advertising. The amounts carried in both Poland and Czechoslovakia were relatively tiny but in Hungary advertisements accounted for 3 percent of air-time from 1980 through to 1991 (MTV, 1991: 12-15). The content and meaning of advertising before 1989 was, of course, different from what has come since and what we are used to in the West. It is sometimes said by Eastern commentators that the common effect of advertisements was to convince the audience that the items advertised were utterly worthless and should be avoided at all costs. Certainly, the systems were very far from depending upon revenue generated in this way. We can say that, however small the quantity of such material, its presence signified an attitude towards the nature and functions of television which would still cause a major debate over issues of principle if proposed in some well-known western broadcasting organizations. It signified a very small but real adjustment of broadcasting away from political and cultural ends towards those dictated by its economic position.

The final area of departure from the alleged norm was in the openness to foreign signals. Unlike radio transmissions, there was never any attempt to jam or obstruct television signals even when they were quite widely available. Terrestrial signals from Austria and Yugoslavia could be received by around 30 percent of the Hungarian population. Bureaucratic obstacles to the construction of community cable systems were dismantled in the mid-1980s, making the reception of satellite signals easily distributable. There were no attempts to make the import of video recorders

illegal, although customs tariffs had the effect of rationing these through price (Szekfü, 1989a; Szesckö, 1986).

The Polish state attempted, in the mid-1980s to make it illegal to own a satellite dish, but by 1986 had fallen back on a strict system of permits. The first SMATV systems did not appear until 1987 and in the following year the permit system was dropped. These obstructions had an effect: in 1989 only 0.1 percent of the population officially had access to a satellite signal and by 1991 this had only risen to 10 percent (PKRT, n.d.). Video recorders were never illegal, and ownership seems to have been quite widespread, although figures fluctuate wildly. The major area of conflict here was over the supply of pre-recorded videos, where there was a three-way struggle between the central state, local government and private entrepreneurs over issues of piracy and revenue.

Overall, a picture emerges of television systems which depart widely from the classic 'Soviet' model. The construction of this model was always part of a rhetoric which depended very heavily on a contrast between an essentially commercial system like that of the USA and that alleged to prevail in the communist countries. In a broader international comparison, the contrast appears much less stark.

Many of the features taken to be central to communist systems were in fact recognizably common to state broadcasters operating both in western and eastern countries. In particular, financial dependence upon the state and subjection to continual political intervention, are not unique characteristics of a communist broadcasting system. If we eschew the temptation to make cheap capital by adducing John Birt's ideal of the BBC, we can still cite de Gaulle's ORTF as exhibiting many of the same elements (Thomas, 1976: 10-26). The evolution of the systems, too, has some similarities with those of western non-commercial broadcasters. During the course of the 1980s, the television systems of all three countries attempted to make themselves 'more efficient' and more 'responsive to the audience', albeit at different speeds and to different degrees. These involved a degree of incorporation into the world market, but upon terms limited by the general economic situation of the different countries. At the same time, and necessarily connected with the purchase of programmes from the west, there was a relaxation of attempts at ideological control over entertainment and even, to some small extent, over news and current affairs.

It is tempting to suggest that these developments constituted a degree of convergence between the broadcasting systems of Western Europe and those of the East. This would be to exaggerate the importance of the evidence that we have reviewed above. While the similarities with the ORTF are evident, the differences are equally important. For example, however closely controlled the output of French television was during normal times, it was constantly forced to compete with a relatively free press and, during elections, obliged to concede air-time to the opposition.

Differences such as these reflect the real content of the much-abused distinction between the 'authoritarian' and 'totalitarian' systems. Whatever scientific value such terms may have, and it is not in our view very substantial, arises from the fact that regimes existing independently of, and often against, any popular mandate may differ substantially in their internal composition. In the case of the communist systems, the condition for the rule of the bureaucracy is the fusion of economic and political power in its collective self, which is obliged to resolve its difference internally and to present itself as a monolithic unity toward the population. Even extremely repressive regimes basing themselves upon private property concede very considerable elements of power to the individual property owners. In broadcasting terms, the television systems in stable communist regimes are obliged to respond to a univocal power, whereas in other systems there are other sources of potential influence.

For these reasons, we prefer to consider the changes of the 1980s as 'pre-adaptations'. By this, we mean that they were responses of the communist media system to the pressures which they were experiencing during this period. They had specific functions for those systems in those circumstances. They constituted limited adaptations to the pressures, on the one hand of the world market, and on the other of popular discontent. These are pressures which are common to all media systems, whatever their provenance, and, to that extent, the changes appear to constitute evidence of a convergence with western systems. Similar kinds of pressures and similar kinds of responses are commonplaces for western broadcasting systems. In the Visegrad countries they were present to an even greater degree after 1989. Then, however, they were functional in different ways to different systems. The innovations of the 1980s were, therefore, changes to the communist system rather than changes of system.

The character of the break

The revolutions of 1989 were changes of system. Political forces and ideas which had struggled in the margins for half-a-century were propelled into power by relatively free elections. The revolutions affected television, but just as the events in the wider arena of political life were marked by negotiation, so the changeover here was controlled and limited. The old broadcasting structures were nowhere torn down and instantly replaced by new and more democratic alternatives. Civil society was nowhere empowered in broadcasting. On the contrary, both personnel and structures showed a surprising ability to survive the break and to thrive in new circumstances.

The break was sharpest in Czechoslovakia, where the system was most rigid and there had been least pre-adaptation. Although there had been

some contact between elements of the communist regime and oppositional intellectuals, the legacy of the Russian invasion meant that there was no visible reformist communist wing which could negotiate a transfer of power. The reformist communists of 1968 had been jailed and driven into exile or opposition in the aftermath of the Russian invasion. Consequently what took place there was much more like a 'real' revolution (albeit a velvet one) than what occurred in the other two cases.

The change in television certainly involved a direct challenge to the existing structure and there was a direct mobilization of the workforce against the old regime. Student demonstrations started in Prague on 17 November 1989 and the television system predictably failed to cover them. This led to an angry response from the workforce, who met on 21 November in the vehicle garage. They threatened a strike and elected a strike committee, which took its name from the meeting place. The Garage then began negotiations with the management over their non-coverage of the developing political situation. By 25 November the Garage had become the governing body of Czechoslovak Television and provided live coverage of the huge demonstration in Prague. Havel appeared on television for the first time (Smid, 1992: 2-5).

This strike committee did not long remain as the governing body of television. It merged with the old official unions and together they assisted in the reconstruction of the management hierarchy. There were some rapid changes of personnel in the early days: there were three general directors of television in the first three months or so. Other senior managers and around 60 percent of journalists were also replaced. However, even this relatively extensive purge left the basic structures intact and the old hierarchy remained substantially in control. In late 1992, the then Secretary of the Czech Broadcasting Council, Milan Jakobec, stated that: 'There have been some changes in TV management, but mainly it is the same people. . . . The same mafia are still running things' (Jakobec, October 1992, personal interview).

In both Poland and Hungary, the transfer was much more controlled. In neither case was there any internal challenge to the hierarchy of television management. There was no mobilization of the workforce against the shortcomings of the old regime. The whole process was conducted by means of discussions between the elite representatives of government and opposition. The result was that there was a steady and undramatic change of control from the communists to the new powers.

In Poland, the transfer was begun through 'Round-Table' negotiations between the Communist government and the Solidarity-led opposition in early 1989. The 'sub-table' on the media, which opened on 12 February 1989, was taken very seriously by both sides. The government sent the well-known spokesperson Jerzy Urban and Solidarity sent Michnik and Mazowiecki. The two sides began with rather different conceptions. The

authorities proposed some easing of controls over the media, including the legalization of the underground press, but its plans included continued Communist Party domination over radio and television. For its part, Solidarity had moved back from its earlier desire to establish direct 'social control' over broadcasting. It now proposed a three-stage plan, starting with the setting-up of Solidarity departments in radio and television and the observance of rules governing fair and equal air time for the main political forces, to be followed in stage two by the transfer of one national TV and one national radio channel to 'social groups and forces'. In the third phase, a National Broadcasting Council, a non-governmental body with a variety of different representatives from both political and social movements, would take control of policy and supervision of all broadcasting matters (Jakubowicz, 1991). This was completely unacceptable to the government and Solidarity quickly backed down, demanding only the right to broadcast its own short programmes on the government channels.

An agreement was eventually reached in March 1989, which gave Solidarity an autonomous production department with the right to broadcast between 30- and 45-minute programmes once a week. Censorship, however, remained in force. The elections of 4 June were conducted under this agreement, which allowed all social movements and parties the right to their own broadcasting slots. The government kept to some, but not all, of the Round Table agreements. Solidarity was allowed to broadcast, but its time was very limited compared to the deluge of pro-government propaganda (Goban-Klas, 1990). In response to this, and bolstered by its electoral victory, Solidarity, in July, changed its demand to control over the news and current affairs programmes on the second national television channel and a change in the composition of the Polish Broadcasting Council in line with the new balance in parliament.

In the event, once the new parliament met and Solidarity entered into government, there were no immediate structural changes to television. There was still verbal commitment to the ideals of opposition. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the new prime minister, said in an address to the Sejm on 12 October 1989: 'There must be an open flow of information between the government and the people. The right of access to radio and television must be equal for all. Television and radio must be pluralistic in character' (Oledzky, 1991: 163). There was, however, little immediate action to realize these noble sentiments. Some senior managers and those journalists most closely connected to the old regime were purged, but the numbers involved were relatively limited. One of the heads of agreement in the Round Table talks had been that there should be no 'anti-communist witch-hunt' and the first post-Communist Head of Broadcasting, Andrzej Drawicz, upheld that agreement. According to one writer: 'Very few individuals have lost their jobs and certain presenters who were strongly associated with martial law have stopped appearing in front of the camera

but retain back-room jobs' (Witkowska, 1990: 14). A special commission was established by the Committee for Radio and Television in October 1989 and was charged to consider the future of television and to prepare a report to the Senate, but no immediate structural changes were implemented (Jakubowicz, 1992b). Even three years later Leszek Wasiuta, Head of Channel One of Polish Television, was able to say that: 'The structure is the same as under Communism, because it is a very good structure and it works equally well under Communism or Capitalism' (Wasiuta, September, 1992, personal interview).

The two important changes which did take place very quickly both had far-reaching but rather different implications. The first was the abolition of the censorship in broadcasting in January 1990. This certainly allowed the possibility of far greater freedom in covering the political and social life of Poland than had previously been the case, and many broadcasters were keen to utilize their new liberty to address the kinds of topics which they knew western television regularly addressed. The second change, which had implications running counter to the ending of censorship, was an alteration in the position of the Roman Catholic Church with respect to broadcasting. The Act on State Relations with the Roman Catholic Church in the Republic of Poland, dated 17 May 1989, had recognized the right of the Church to have access to the airwaves. This was interpreted in an agreement between the Church and the Radio and Television Committee, then headed by Jerzy Urban, as allowing independent organizations run by people appointed by the Catholic bishops to work inside radio and television. After the election, the new Mazowiecki government modified the Act on State Relations by means of the Post and Telecommunications Act of 23 November 1990, Article 88 of which reads:

1. The Church has the right to broadcast through the mass media the Holy Mass on Sundays and holidays and its programmes, particularly on religious, moral, social and cultural issues. . . .

3. The Church has the right to install and operate radiocommunications equipment for broadcasting radio and television programmes and to the allocation of the necessary frequencies for this purpose. (Ustawa o Łączności [Law on Telecommunications], No. 504, 23 November 1990)

By September 1992, the Catholic Church had established a network of 18 radio stations and had one television station, which was still then the only legal alternative to PRTV.

The case of Hungary was, in the first instance, even more gradual than in Poland. The grip of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) on the media began to relax substantially after the fall of Kadar in the summer of 1988. In August 1988, the Central Committee dissolved its Department for Agitation and Propaganda. In January 1989, the Minister of State, Imre

Pozsgay, gave an interview to Hungarian Radio that neatly expressed the contradictions and uncertainty in the HSWP position:

Radio and Television, albeit operating under the direct supervision and orientation of the government, should serve and express the entire public sphere of society of the nation. This means that the government does not consider these media exclusively its own political instrument; in the programmes the most varied social views and efforts could be expressed. The government must take care of keeping this expression of views within the constitutional limits in accordance with the press law stipulations. (quoted in Szesckö, 1991)

The pace of change quickened in March 1989, when the 'list of competencies' — the basis of the *nomenklatura* system establishing who the Central Committee thought was fit to hold senior posts in the media and elsewhere — was abolished. The Trilateral National Round Table negotiations between the government and opposition, conducted during the spring of that year, formed a sub-group on the mass media. Three main positions were put forward. The government wished to keep television under state control but was prepared to loosen its grip by allowing what it called a 'responsible social body' to exercise some influence. The main opposition party, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF), also saw TV as essentially a non-commercial organization. While it was prepared to consider the possibility of private television channels, it saw MTV as a 'national institution' under the control of the government. Among the main tasks of broadcasting, it identified the task of reaching the large numbers of ethnic Hungarians outside of the national boundaries. The third main position was that advanced by the Alliance of Free Democrats (AFD). They proposed that MTV should remain a non-commercial organization, but argued for a greater degree of self-government, and accepted the need for other forms of broadcasting organization, some of them commercial (Kováts and Whiting, 1992).

No easy agreement could be reached on these policies, or upon the thorny question of the role of broadcasting in the forthcoming elections in March–April 1990. Eventually, a moratorium on changes to broadcasting was agreed, and each of the 54 registered political parties was granted the right to broadcast on the main TV and radio channels during the first round of the elections. However, the distribution of results meant that only twelve parties gained the right to national lists and thus to broadcasts during the second half of the campaign (Köröseyi, 1992: 76). The third major point of agreement was the classification of the projected new media law as one of that class of fundamental laws which required a two-thirds majority in parliament for their adoption. This decision was to have very important consequences later on.

The elections produced a government dominated by the HDF. In negotiation with the AFD, they discussed the basis for amendments to the

constitution. Among the points agreed was the need to 'aim for the establishment of party-neutral national media' (Bozóki, 1992: 69). As a step towards this, Law LVII of 1990 specified that the heads of state television and radio should be appointed by the President of the Republic (under the constitution necessarily a representative of the opposition) on the nomination of the Prime Minister (speaking, of course, for the government). The new director general, Hankiss, was appointed under this law.

As part of the agreement, he would retain senior staff loyal to the existing regime, in particular the editors of the main news and current affairs programmes. He embarked upon a top down restructuring of television which did not involve any very extensive purges of staff held to be implicated in the running of the old system. As Hankiss put it, his aim was: 'to destroy the old power structure without a witch-hunt' (Hankiss, November 1992, personal interview). He was not, as it turned out, able to realize that goal.

Overall, then, the evidence suggests that what occurred in all three of the countries under review was that the television systems survived the revolutions of 1989 with only relatively minor disturbances. This was the case even when, in Prague, there was a genuine challenge to the existing hierarchy. Some of the top individuals who were most compromised by their collaboration with the old regime lost their jobs, others were moved to less prominent posts, but overall the management of the television systems remained intact. The changes were deepest in Czechoslovakia, but even there informed local observers claim that the change was far from fundamental. There was everywhere a partial change of personnel, but an unbroken continuity of the organizational structure.

Towards new legal frameworks

It could be argued that the failure to achieve any substantial changes to broadcasting systems which had been vilified by the new government when they themselves were in opposition reflects the political compromises which were necessary to achieve a smooth and non-violent transfer of power. Given the commitments of the new governments to the rule of law, we would not expect to find sudden and spontaneous transformations of major social structures. On the contrary, we would need to look at the legislative process of reform to discover the true dimensions of the radical changes which had been instituted in 1989.

There is, of course, an element of truth to this: no revolution completes its tasks on Day One. In this case, however, there are two objections to accepting such a position without modification. In the first place, there are

other examples, notably in the press in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, of sudden and unofficial transformations of a radical nature. These suggest that in certain circumstances the dominant groups perceived their best interests as being served by transforming collective into individual property by means of simple seizure, irrespective of any legal sanction. In other circumstance like television, such actions did not appear, for whatever reason, to be a viable option.

The second objection lies in the nature of the legislative process and its outcomes for television. Given the centrality of television to any modern theory of democracy, one would expect that legislation governing broadcasting organizations would be one of the central priorities of any new government. Reorganizing one of the central ideological instruments of the former tyranny in such a way as to ensure a role for the citizen in its governance and a plurality of viewpoints in its output would seem to be an urgent task for any government claiming to adhere to democratic principles. In the case of government whose members, when in opposition, had been devoted variously to the empowerment of civil society, or the realization of anti politics, or other theories of radical democratization, one would expect legislation on television to be one of their urgent priorities.

The most striking feature of the broadcasting legislation in the Visegrad countries is how long it has taken to reach the statute books. The quickest adoption was that in the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, where a new Law on the Operation of Radio and Television Broadcasts was passed on 30 October 1991. Of course, this shared the fate of the other federal laws when the realities of economic and political development rendered the federal attempt unworkable: the new separate Czech and Slovak laws were rushed through their respective parliaments in the run up to the division of the country into two separate republics on 1 January 1993. The Polish parliament took until 29 December 1992 to pass a law. The Hungarian parliament has not, at the time of writing, been able to agree on any new general law. In May 1993, a Frequency Allocation Act was passed by the Hungarian parliament which governs the distribution of broadcasting frequencies but which says nothing about the general issues of controlling television.

In the absence of fresh legal regulation, the broadcasters have operated under the framework inherited from the old regimes, except in the very important respect that the censorship has everywhere been abolished. This has meant that the new governments have enjoyed very considerable powers over television, to some of the uses of which we will return later. At this point we need to note that at the same time as there has been a slow legislative process formulating the legal framework for television, the establishment of custom and practice in the relations between government and broadcasters in the new situation has proceeded on a daily basis. The

outcomes for television will be the result of the two pressures of legislation and precedent.

Public service broadcasting?

The legislation which has begun to emerge is marked by the institution of dual systems of broadcasting. In every case, there will be at least one non-private channel alongside at least one private channel. The substance of these two elements, and their relations to one another, differ in detail from country to country, but we can note common themes across all four instances.

There has everywhere been a rejection of the US solution of the complete privatization of broadcasting: the European tradition of substantial non-private broadcasting has been preferred despite some international pressures. The actual content of this European tradition of broadcasting is, however, problematic. There are, in recent western European experience, two possibilities for such institutional arrangements. On the one hand, there is the public service model of relative autonomy of television from the government of the day, exemplified by the legendary theory, if not the real contemporary practice, of the BBC. On the other hand, as we have remarked above, there is the model of state television acting effectively as the mouthpiece of government, exemplified by de Gaulle's ORTF. In terms of funding, there are at least four major models. One, again exemplified by the old ORTF, is of broadcasters' dependence for funding on the state budget. The second, a small but significant variation on this, has the broadcaster dependent upon taxation for funding, but with direct dependence mediated through a licence fee: this is the BBC model. The third has the broadcaster partly dependent upon some form of direct or indirect state funds but also enjoying the monopoly sale of television advertising: this was the model pertaining in Federal Germany before the introduction of private broadcasters. The fourth has the broadcaster gaining at least part of its revenues from the competitive sale of advertising. The future of the broadcasting system in the Visegrad countries remains indeterminate along both the political and the economic axes, which is why we have opted for the ugly formulation 'non-private broadcasting'.

Reflecting in part the intellectual predilections of the experts asked to formulate the new legislation, and in part a deference to the pronouncements on democratic media of that extraordinarily hypocritical body, the Council of Europe, the new legislation, and in Hungary the most recent draft of the proposed legislation, all contain ringing commitments to public service ideals in television. For example, the Article 21.2 of the Polish law enjoins public television programme services to, among other things:

1. Be guided by a sense of responsibility and the need to protect the good name and reputation of public broadcasting.
2. Provide reliable information about the whole diversity of developments in Poland and abroad.
3. Promote the free formation of citizens' views and public opinion.
4. Enable citizens and their organizations to take part in public life by expressing diversified views and orientations and exercising the right to supervision and social criticism.

In addition, public television is required to present the political views of organizations 'contesting elections to the Diet, the Senate and local government' (24.1) and to candidates for election to president (24.2). They are also enjoined to undertake various cultural and educational programming tasks.

Perhaps the most detailed stipulations are in Articles 13 and 14 of the November 1992 Hungarian draft law, which state:

13.1 The public-service broadcaster shall give regular, comprehensive and manifold objective and impartial news coverage of national and foreign events, facts and disputed issues of public interest. In performing this task, he [sic] shall ensure transmission of notices of public interest.

13.2 Within his broadcasting services as a whole, the broadcaster shall, in undertaking his obligations under 13.1, ensure presentation of views and ideas, including minority ones, in their diversity. . .

14.1 The public-service broadcaster shall, through the totality of his programmes, meet the most multifaceted needs possible of the widest possible groups of listeners and viewers, including minorities living in his receiving area, particularly by:

- a) Presenting literary and artistic works as well as cultural, religious and philosophical values;
- b) Disseminating knowledge oriented towards education and training;
- c) Covering scientific life and activities;
- d) Disseminating useful knowledge furthering daily living habits, a healthy lifestyle and environmental protection;
- e) Offering, on a regular basis, varied entertainment of high standards;
- f) Offering programmes for children and minors;
- g) Offering programmes for, and in the languages of, national and ethnic minorities living in the receiving area;
- h) Offering programmes for groups of persons seriously disadvantaged on account of their age, physical state or social circumstances or for other reasons.

These admirable intentions are, of course, very close to the formulations of the mission of public service broadcasters in the West — reading to British eyes like an amalgamation of the best of the BBC and Channel 4.

The concern for political and social fairness and diversity which is so eloquently expressed in the Hungarian draft finds a briefer but equally well-intentioned formulation in the clauses of the Czechoslovak Federal Act which have been incorporated into current Czech and Slovak law. Article 9 of the Federal Law dealt with 'The Special Obligations and Rights

of Public Television and Radio Operators'. Among the provisions still operative are:

The operators' basic mission is to serve the public interest, contribute to the realization of a democratic society and reflect its pluralistic outlook by assuring that their transmissions are not oriented toward a one-sided viewpoint, one religious denomination, or single world view, or one political party, movement, group or segment of society.

At the level of the overall legal framework, then, there is in all four cases an obligation on non-private television to behave as public service, rather than as state-controlled, broadcasters.

In line with such commitments, these broadcasters were all originally granted the two channels that it is usually thought are essential to the proper operation of a public service remit. In Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, this remains the case, but in the Czech Republic the government has already granted one commercial franchise out of the two channels with national distribution and plans to commercialize the third channel, which has only limited geographical reach, by the end of 1995. This will leave the non-private broadcaster with only one television channel. Despite this, however, it is clear that, overall and at least for the foreseeable future, the new broadcasting legislation in the Visegrad countries will encourage the continuation of the large non-private broadcasting organization inherited from the past.

Television and politics

One of the key elements in determining whether a non-private broadcaster is actually fulfilling a public service remit or is in practice a state broadcaster is the extent of its autonomy from the political process. No large organization can ever be insulated from the political life of the society within which it exists. Broadcasting is no exception: states, governments and political parties will always exert some influence over a broadcasting system. There is, however, an important difference between a broadcasting system which is able to exercise a degree of relative autonomy from direct control and one in which the political elite is able, if it should so wish, to determine the precise content of programming, in particular of news and current affairs programming. The inherited television systems of the old regime were, of course, examples of state broadcasting in which, although the scope and degree of control had begun to erode, the key decisions and the key appointments were still the province of the leadership of the Communist Parties.

In examining the new situation, we need to distinguish between two

types of political pressures which can be exerted over television systems. The first is what we might call incidental. It involves relations such as pressure on the broadcasters to cover particular stories in particular ways, and to ignore other stories. It also involves political interference in the hiring and firing of senior personnel responsible for the shape and content of television programming. This kind of pressure was a commonplace in the old regimes, and there is plentiful evidence of it being equally present in the new order.

It is sometime argued, in defence of the more grotesque interventions of the new governments, that these are the result of their lack of experience of power, or of bad habits learned under the previous regime. The implication of this argument is that, as the new systems mature, the politicians gain experience and security and will learn how to control their inclinations to meddle. The political problems of the last few years are thus a combination of a hangover from the past and the teething problems of the future. In time, this curious medical condition will pass and a healthy body will emerge in which there is the sort of independent space for broadcasters which is common in the west.

The alternative account is that the effect of continual political interference in the early years of a new system is to sediment certain patterns of behaviour, habits of mind, and routine expectations, in both politicians and broadcasters. Once patterns of dominance and subordination are established, overt political intervention becomes redundant, since all of the key actors are well aware of the limits to their powers. If the politicians succeed in dominating the broadcasters, then self-censorship will do most of the work of control, as in fact was the case in the old systems.

The evidence in the case of the Visegrad countries tends to support the latter interpretation. This is particularly clear in the case of the Hungarian Media Wars, the first phase of which was essentially a struggle between the government, who sought to subordinate television to their own political and ideological programmes and those, led by the General Director Elemer Hankiss, who sought to achieve at least some independence from the state. The government has been victorious in this struggle and the precedent is established that if the Prime Minister tries hard enough, he can remove a broadcasting executive of whose policies he does not approve. Having gained that advantage, the government is at the time of writing attempting to conduct a wholesale purge of dissenting voices as part of an attempt to ensure their point of view gains wide dissemination in the run-up to the parliamentary elections in 1994.

The second, and more substantial and enduring form of political relations, is what we may call the structural relation between broadcasting and the political elite. Again, it would be naive to pretend that in any political system there are not such relations or deny that power ultimately lies with whoever holds political power. There are, however, a range of

possible relations from direct dependence to relative independence. In the old regimes, the character of these relations was one of effective dependence, whatever the formal legal and constitutional position might have been.

Most of the old oppositions in the Visegrad countries were committed in principle to much more open and democratic forms of government in general. In so far as they considered broadcasting, they were committed to a much more representative form of governance. In government, they have retreated from these oppositional ambitions and instituted regulatory authorities for the control of television which are directly dependent upon the political elite for the appointment. In the Polish, Czech and Slovak cases, the governing bodies are appointed by various combinations of President and the parliamentary chambers. They may not be the representatives of any particular interest group. While this has its positive side, in that it distances the appointees from being 'interested parties', it also means that they have no natural constituencies outside of the political elite. They are empowered to supervise television as individuals, not as the representatives of 'civil society'.

The actually-existing situation may be contrasted with two concrete alternatives. The first is the various drafts of the broadcasting laws drawn up by Solidarity at the height of the mass opposition in 1980-1. These displayed a concern with making the governance of television independent of politicians and vesting control in the representatives of the workforce and of various interested groups of consumers. By the time Solidarity came to wield real power after 1989, these concerns had disappeared from even the earliest drafts of the Broadcasting Law.

The other is the fate of the Hungarian Broadcasting Law. The various drafts of this, up to the most recent, were conscious attempts to empower the representatives of civil society. At least half of the members of the governing body of public television was to be appointed by various groups in society like churches, women's organizations, youth groups and so on. The conscious model was West German and the intention was at least nominally to 'empower civil society'.

None of these proposals have become law. In the place of any substantial broadcasting law, there is the Frequency Management Act and the existing communist-era Press Law. Under this Act, which presently governs the award of local television franchises, a frequency is granted by the Ministry of Transport and Communication to those applicants who have satisfied the Ministry of Culture as to their suitability. This, in turn, is advised by an Inter-Ministerial Commission with a representative from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Transport and Communication and the Office of the Prime Minister. Decision-making rests very firmly in the hands of the government and the state apparatus.

Both in terms of the precedents being established and the structural

relations which are emerging, the evidence strongly suggests that we are witnessing a continuation of state broadcasting. The intention to establish a new relation between political power and television which is enshrined in the idea of public service broadcasting has been stillborn. The control of television remains in the hands of government and state.

Sources of revenue

The other axis which determines the independence of broadcasters is the nature of their revenue sources. Public service broadcasting best flourishes in situations where it does not have to compete for its revenue. This is true whether the revenue is raised from some form of taxation or from the sale of advertising. It is also independent of the nature of the broadcaster: privately-owned television companies granted a monopoly of advertising can behave as public service broadcasters.

Security of revenue is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for public service broadcasting. The old state systems had a monopoly both of subsidy and of what advertising revenue they could raise. Competition for revenue, on the other hand, necessarily leads to different broadcasting strategies. Again, this is independent of the nature of the broadcaster: a publicly-owned company can behave as a commercial broadcaster if it is forced to compete with commercial broadcasters for advertising revenue.

The position of the non-private broadcasters in the Visegrad countries is weakened by an uncertainty about the main sources of their funding. In all cases, the non-private channels will be permitted, indeed encouraged, to raise a proportion of their revenue from advertising. For the moment, they all do this as the effective monopolists of the sale of television advertising, but all of them will sooner or later face competition from privately owned channels. The remainder of the income of the non-private channels comes from various mixtures of licence fees and direct state subsidies.

These broadcasters will thus face a dilemma. One option will be to attempt to maximize their revenue from advertising, partly at least to distance themselves from direct financial pressure from the government. This strategy could be complemented by attempting to minimize programme costs by using a high proportion of imported popular programmes. In this case, the non-private broadcasters will effectively be acting as commercial broadcasters.

The freedom of the broadcasters to adopt this strategy will be constrained by three factors. The first is the size of the advertising markets, which are likely to be small by western standards. They will thus yield relatively little income even when exploited ruthlessly. In this situation two or more terrestrial television channels will be competing for limited revenue, and perhaps satellite channels attempting to gain a share as well.

It will certainly not be easy for any broadcaster to raise a great deal of revenue from this course of action.

The second obstacle is that all of the broadcasters, both private and non-private, will operate under restriction as to the amount of time they can devote to advertising. In the case of the non-private broadcasters, this is very much less than applies to their putative rivals. Thus, in the Czech case, the law restricts Czech Television (CT) to an overall 3 percent of advertisements during total broadcast time, and 6 percent per hour during prime time (19.00–23.00).

Such restriction obviously means that, in a competitive situation, a broadcaster wishing to maximize advertising revenue will be under increasing pressure to find ways of circumventing the letter of the law at the expense of programming. An example of this, even before the introduction of competition, is that Czech Television has taken to concentrating its advertising into blocks around the peak viewing period: six minutes scheduled at 18.54; six minutes scheduled at 19.24; six minutes scheduled at 20.00. The law has been respected, but within 72 minutes of broadcasting, 18 minutes (25 percent of the total) are advertisements (Smid, 1993: 1).

The third obstacle which could prevent the non-private broadcasters freeing themselves from economic and thus political pressure coming from the government is the obligation they are under to support local production. This is a normal feature of the remit of a public service broadcasting organization and in the context of the nationalism which is such a marked feature of the political life of all of the countries under consideration, it is particularly important. This pressure finds expression in formal obligations even upon private broadcasters to achieve quotas of home programming: the first Czech licensee, for example, is licensed to ensure that 'starting from the beginning of the second year of broadcasting, no less than 40 percent of broadcast time shall be given to indigenous domestic production' (Czech Broadcasting Council, 1993: 2). In the case of the non-private broadcasters, this pressure finds expressions in explicit quotas written into legislation. Since home produced products are usually more expensive than imports of an equivalent kind and quality, the attempt to fulfil public service programme criteria and the attempt to minimize expenditure in order to establish public service financial criteria point in diametrically different directions.

Conclusion

Overall, it seems that the conditions do not exist in any of the countries of the Visegrad group for non-private broadcasting to break free of political and economic dependence. It is likely to be, admittedly to varying

degrees, closely supervised by the government of the day. Although it is still very early in the process of establishing commercial broadcasters, the signs are that the awards made even in this area will be subject to political scrutiny and pressure. The award of the first private Czech TV franchise (made by a Broadcasting Council appointed by the previous government) was strongly attacked by the Deputy Chairman of the ruling party, Petr Čermák: 'It is absolutely unacceptable that so mighty and important a medium like television should be controlled by bankrupt politicians'. He added that he would 'do his best to change this decision' (quoted in Smid, 1993: 8). In the event, the most he could do was to force the resignation of the chair of the Broadcasting Council, but the future of the Council itself remains uncertain.

In the light of the evidence reviewed here, we can draw some tentative conclusions as to the explanatory power of the three groups of theories which we reviewed above. There is very little to support the view of those like Fukayama who see the events of 1989 as a fundamental transformation of the social structure. The belief that what has occurred constituted a sudden and complete transformation may well be a popular view but it bears very little relationship to the empirical evidence. There are substantial continuities in the structures and personnel of broadcasting which contradict the theory's implicit predictions of discontinuity and change. The official view does not illuminate reality.

The second group of theories, associated here with Miliband, does fit rather better. There has indeed been the start of the process of introducing market mechanisms into broadcasting. The stress upon the economic character of the revolution as its distinguishing characteristic however, fits rather poorly with the substantive continuity of the broadcasting structures and the continuation of a strong state element in the system. The old state systems have not been privatized wholesale and replaced by a free market system. On the contrary, the introduction of market reforms into broadcasting has been a slow and controlled process in which political factors have played an important part.

The view which fits best is that advanced by Callinicos, which theorizes much more clearly the limited nature of transition and has its primary focus on the political character of the revolution. Other evidence not reviewed here, for example the marketization of television production, the dramatic reductions in the size of the workforce and the continued, if not increased, exclusion of women from senior posts, all also points to continuity. While some of the leading figures of broadcasting may well have been removed from their former positions of power, the bulk of the broadcasting 'second and third layer *nomenklatura*' appear to have survived the change and to have adapted to the new situation.

The main criticism which might be advanced of the implicit predictions which we have ascribed to this view is that it is presented as a little too

optimistic about the association of the new order with democratic political life, and thus of the political independence of the broadcasters. In fact, as we have seen, the systems which are emerging continue to have quite strong elements of political dependence. This serves to emphasize the fact that while the norms of political democracy might be extremely effective for modern capitalism under conditions of stability and security, they are not the natural and inevitable accompaniment of the market. In the rather uncertain conditions which pertain in the Visegrad group of countries, these norms are at least flexible if not entirely dispensable.

It may be that the development of commercial broadcasting will add an element of plurality to the systems, which could evolve in the direction of some form of political independence, but this is at present uncertain. It is much harder, given the legal and economic framework that is evolving, to see how there will be any great extension of the power of what is often called 'civil society'. The direct beneficiaries of the new and genuine openness of the systems are the political elites, not the ordinary people.

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Equality for the downtrodden, freedom for the free: changing perspectives on social communication in Central and Eastern Europe

Karol Jakubowicz

UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

If one really thinks about it, the most surprising thing about the events of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe was not the downfall of communism (such as it was at the time), but the (re)-introduction of capitalism that followed it.

In Poland, the fundamental tenets of socialism had long been accepted, for one reason or another, by most groups opposing the Communist system. Their main approach was an evolutionist one: they looked for a 'Third Way', 'combining the positive features of socialism and capitalism' (Ogrodziński, 1991: 74).

The about-face towards economic liberalism, the free market and privatization began in the mid-1980s, but until 1989 it involved but a small part of the leadership. So, once freedom had been won, the fact that precisely this strategy of socio-economic development was adopted marked a sharp departure from the long-standing views of the democratic opposition and caught a great majority of 'Solidarity' members by surprise. (Friszke, 1991: 18)

We propose here to examine the effect this change (which indeed caused surprise and even shock)¹ has had on plans for reforming social communication once developed by the opposition. To put this in perspective, we also examine the process of media evolution in some Central and Eastern European countries under the Communist system which preceded and to some extent foreshadowed what is happening now.

In view of the nature of developments in Central and Eastern Europe, we seek to apply here McQuail's (1992) proposal that a set of basic