

Uprooting Leninism, Cultivating Liberty

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Preface

In October 1987, the Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI) convened an international conference in New York City on the question "Will the Communist States Survive?" Thirty-six emigrés and dissidents, representing twelve Communist countries, made presentations.¹ While no one predicted the rapidity with which the Communist regimes would subsequently fall, the participants did indeed reveal a surprisingly substantial network of independent organizations that in retrospect can be seen as the seeds of communism's destruction.

Following the collapse of communism in the Soviet bloc, FPRI's attention turned to the problems of transition. We divided the issue into two parts. The political part (how do countries make the transition to democracy?) focused principally on East-Central Europe, for the countries of that region, with their varied cultures and histories, furnish a veritable laboratory for political experimentation. The economic part (how do they build free markets?) focused principally on Russia, for its great resources and population make it the economic prize of communism's collapse. In both cases, the purpose was to consider how the West can assist these transitions.

Politics. Vladimir Tismaneanu prepared the first half of the following report based in large part on the proceedings of an international conference convened on March 25-27, 1991, in Timisoara (the Romanian city where clashes between protestors and security forces touched off the Christmas uprising that brought down the Ceaușescu regime). The conference dealt with "Power and Opposition in Post-Communist Societies: Foundations of Pluralism in East-Central Europe," and had four goals: to assess progress toward democracy; consider the obstacles to democracy; formulate specific strategies of democratization; and assess how the West can best assist the process of democratization.²

Participants included East European activists and intellectuals on the cutting edge of reform who spoke from direct experience in building democracy. Represented were many grass-roots democratic organizations, including Bulgaria's Union

¹ For news coverage of the event, see *The New York Times*, October 27, 1987; and Micah Morrison, "Harnessing the Energy of the Former New Left," *The American Spectator*, January 1988, pp. 18-21. Texts of the talks are available in Vladimir Tismaneanu and Judith Shapiro, eds., *Debates on the Future of Communism* (London: Macmillan, 1991).

² Jean-François Revel's contribution appeared as "Resurrecting Democracy in Eastern Europe," in *Orbis*, Summer 1991, pp. 323-26. The complete proceedings will appear in a forthcoming volume.

of Democratic Forces, Romania's Civic Alliance, Hungary's Alliance of Free Democrats, Yugoslavia's Social Democratic League, Czechoslovakia's Charter '77, and Moldova's Social Democratic party. On their own initiative, participants adopted a declaration affirming their solidarity on behalf of democracy and political pluralism.

Economics. Herbert Levine and Patrick Clawson organized, in conjunction with the Kennan Institute in Washington, a series of four workshops to examine the problems of managing the difficult tasks of creating free markets in the ex-Soviet bloc countries. Workshop leaders explicitly addressed the larger contexts of the economic issues. Participants in these meetings included many economists with years of experience analyzing centrally planned systems. The proceedings of those workshops provide the foundation for the second half of this report.

The American role. The practical case for providing assistance is as important as the moral imperative to do so. A return to authoritarianism increases the chances of war while democracy expands the possibilities of peace. Dictatorial rule diminishes the possibilities of European integration and increases the risks of nationalistic rivalries, territorial disputes, and ethnic strife — the many passions temporarily repressed by Communist domination. In both the political and economic areas, we offer suggestions for the U.S. government.

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Finally, many staff members and interns of the Foreign Policy Research Institute participated in some way in Transitions to Freedom. Unable to thank them all by name here, I would like to acknowledge the work of Joydeep Bhattacharya, who worked on the political report; Dorin Tudoran, the editor of *Agora*, FPRI's Romanian-language journal of culture and politics — the Institute's small contribution to Romania's still-incomplete transition to freedom; and Georgina Minda, *Agora*'s production and circulation manager.

Daniel Pipes
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