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The Reemergence of Nationalism in Central Europe: Woman, Man and the Paradoxes of Democratization

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THE REEMERGENCE OF NATIONALISM IN CENTRAL EUROPE:
WOMAN, MAN AND THE PARADOXES OF DEMOCRATIZATION

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...it is not necessary to argue that women use power differently from men in order to make the case for women's increased political power.

Iva Ellen Deutchman

Classical "textbook" definitions of democracy focus primarily on the interactions of political elites, working through formal institutions, and only secondarily on the manner in which so-called democratic processes affect the masses. A political system is classified as democratic, citing Huntington, if "its most powerful collective decision-makers are selected through periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote." Analysts then add the need for citizen participation, the presence of competitive parties and interest organizations, mechanisms for securing the accountability of the rulers to the ruled and, ultimately, civilian control of the military, the foundation for the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of force à la Weber. As Waylen emphasizes, standard evaluations of a country's "democratic" character make use of a top-down, not a bottom-up approach.

Two recent articles by prominent political scientists, focusing on questions of democratic transition, suggest that the
major challenges to democracy currently rest with a need to secure balanced representation among national and transnational decision-makers (Dahl), on the one hand, and competing qua conflicting political and economic interests (Almond), on the other. The claims these authors make on behalf of democracy are unabashedly normative, yet the indicators they employ to ascertain its presence are fixated on institutional processes and elite roles. Correspondingly, scholars pursuing empirical analysis (that is, "measurable" phenomena and "representative" samples) rarely consider the extent to which their data neglect real-existing power imbalances, e.g. between the sexes, in long established democracies as well as in transitional systems. Nor does the "orthodox view of democracy" consider the significance of unconventional political roles played by women, which ultimately shape the civil society deemed necessary for democratic transitions in the Second and Third Worlds. These are research questions that even the historical-institutionalists among us leave up to "feminist" theorists.

One need not commission a battery of European panel studies of the multiple-regression sort, however, in order to verify two arguments advanced by Waylen. Her first contention is that "institutional democratization does not necessarily entail a democratization of power relations in society at large," with or without the inauguration of new elites. Her second is that there is virtually no correlation "between playing an important part in any stage of the process of democratization and having any particular role during the period of consolidation." The political transformations taking place in Central/Eastern Europe offer a multitude of day-to-day examples.

Operational definitions of democracy deliberately exclude
power-imbalances between women and men in the private realm, as if these disparities were random rather than (almost) universal occurrences. Rather than begin with a belief in women's rights to participation in politics, Pateman has argued, the civic culture concept employed by most analysts assumes their non-participation:

Its political focus is on the role of the upper SES (male) citizens as participants and decision-makers. The balance of the civic culture is one that allows these elites "to get on with governing" in the absence of a politically active people.... Rather systematically structured inequalities appear as individual psychological and personal attributes that happen to be distributed in a particular way. Yet it is exactly this "imbalance" that routinely and globally affects women's ability to compete for public office and influence public policy. We find ourselves confronted with a distracting proliferation of hyphenated-democratic models--e.g., liberal-democracy, social-democracy, and even authoritarian-democracy (in cases like South Korea). More often than not we are consumed with debates over labels, when we should be rethinking the value premises embodied by democracy plain and simple.

Relying as they do on narrow definitions of participation, citizenship, and civil society, the works of mainstream theorists are of limited use to researchers trying to untangle the linkages between the processes of "democratic transition" and the resurgence of ultra-nationalist forces in Central Europe since 1989. The purpose of this essay is to articulate several gender-based paradoxes inherent in formal democratic theory as they relate to nationalistic tendencies in Central Europe over the last five
years. The democratization of once-authoritarian systems has not produced an equitable redistribution of power and resources between millions of East European women and men, no matter what role the former might have played in bringing about their respective revolutions and, hence, regime-change. Nor can one begin to understand the threat that reemergent nationalism poses to the consolidation of democracy in Central Europe without first analyzing the ways in which nationalism is directly tied to the power imbalances of gender. Both gender and nation are socially constructed identities, providing a way of configuring and valuating difference. In addition to organizing a community's links to nature and culture, these two determinants of otherness give rise to specific divisions of labor, as well as to easily recognizable structures of power. This author contends that a majority of the new East European elites, heralding the rebirth of the nation, have used the democratic process to render their female compatriots permanent second-class citizens, equipping them with fewer social and material rights on the basis of their preordained status as the other.

For four decades, the states of Eastern Europe served as the site of a major social experiment in relation to two existential questions: namely, the Women's Question and the National Question. Equality between the sexes has always been a prominent component of Marxist ideology, at least in theory. Gender inequality was viewed as part of a larger system of exploitation under capitalism: eliminate private property, ensure women equal educational and employment opportunities, the heads of Communist Parties declared, and the Woman Question would solve itself. Correspondingly, proletarian internationalism was to provide the framework for a new
world order; workers of the world would unite and overthrow the oppressive classes. Conflict between nations was seen to arise out of a larger imperialistic quest undertaken by monopoly capitalists, who fed their insatiable hunger for profits by conquering new markets and enslaving new workers.

Since 1989 it has become quite clear that state-socialism secured neither the genuine liberation of women, nor did it succeed in wiping out older forms of national consciousness. It did reshape the meaning of gender-identity and national identity in each of the bloc-countries, however, "and (thus) their interconnections." The collapse of those systems has precipitated another deconstruction and reconstruction of both identities, and not only within the East European borders. No less affected by developments of the last five years are the identities of Western Europeans, whose plans for a Europe without borders à la Maastricht have been altered by a series of Great Migrations, the likes of which have not been seen since 1066.

In case the arguments introduced so far are not sufficiently provocative, I will address an even more sensitive subject in order to demonstrate the "interconnectedness" between gender and nationalism, namely, women's reproductive rights. Indeed, the actions of politicians in a wide variety of industrialized states leave me no choice: since 1990, abortion has become the focus of heated national debate in nearly every Central European state except Romania: in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, the Czech and Slovak Republics, in the war-torn Yugoslav federation, in united Germany; let us also add Ireland to the equation. At issue is not how "politics" decides questions of women's reproductive rights but how the issue of abortion rights is being used to define the terrain.
upon which future contestations for political power will be waged.

The controversy over a woman's right to bodily self-determina-
tion lies at the heart of a larger debate over the future course of
the Body Politic, a struggle for symbolic capital, "the shaping of
politics through the coded discussion of reproductive practices."\(^{10}\)
As Susan Gal writes, "the abortion debate is linked most closely to
the political sphere where new elites are forming at the same time
as they construct the cultural grounds to produce, justify and
legitimate their own mobility."\(^{11}\) Debates over abortion policy in
Central Europe moreover reveal "how new groups are being defined,
how interests and justifications for action are being imagined, how
the relationships between citizens and the state are being
conceptualized and contested, as individuals and groups constitute
themselves for political action."\(^{12}\)

Different societies have historically attached divergent
cultural meanings to the subject of abortion. Conditioned by the
Supreme Court's 1973 ruling in Roe v. Wade, the US-American stress
on a constitutional right to privacy proves the exception to the
rule; the US tradition of individualism pits the privacy, autonomy
and responsibility of a given woman against the rights of a given
fetus. Historically speaking, Europeans have always accorded
higher priority to notions of collective identity; some actively
reject the "unhealthy self-serving spirit of individualism" (albeit
only in relation to women). One of the most striking features of
Eastern European politics since 1989 is the self-imposed silence
and/or virtual exclusion of feminists at the formative stages of
the abortion-policy debate.

It makes little sense to sing the praises of political change
without a commensurate look at the economic consequences of
democratization. Gender defines the terrain upon which Central European leaders hope to reconfigure their national economic priorities. There is a consistent pattern emerging under the banner of democracy: the transition to market economics has not been a kinder, gentler one for Eastern women. The last five years have seen the refeminization of many nurturance functions formerly assumed by the state to ease the double (more accurately, triple) burden women faced as workers, mothers and wives; families have also witnessed the termination of subsidies for food, energy, rent, and nurseries. Disproportionately affected by record unemployment, women can now be expected to relieve the state of the enormous costs of caring for children, the elderly and the sick. In short, "the end of socialism means the end of a state that assumed significant costs of biological and social reproduction, instead assigning most of these costs to individual households, as capitalist systems have done."13

Embracing the rationale of the market, the new elites recognize that "the gender organization of the capitalist household cheapens the cost of labor for capital by defining certain necessary tasks--'housework'--as non-work." Hence, "the economies of post-socialist Eastern Europe will be viable only with a comparable cheapening" of domestic services.14 A privatization of care-functions eliminates the need to remunerate this work, rendering it one of the state's essential cost-savings strategies. Just how much capital might be accumulated for other purposes is suggested by a European Community study conducted during the 1980s, which found that "women's work" at home, if paid, would add an estimated 40% to the Gross Domestic Product of the Member-States.15

Consider recent developments in two countries at the heart of
Europe, evincing very different systemic experiences between 1949-1989. Since 1990 both Hungary and united Germany have adopted more restrictive abortion laws, relative to the Eastern experience; Hungarian "Defenders of the Fetus" went to Court in 1992; so did conservative forces in unified Germany. Over the last twenty years, both Hungary and the West German state experienced negative rates in population growth; a declining population is also an aging population, presaging the "death of the nation" in the figurative as well as in the literal sense. An aging population is also one that must be supported, at increasing cost to the state.

New abortion regulations adopted in Hungary and Germany since 1993 mandate the following conditions for terminating a pregnancy: 1) a woman must find herself in a "crisis situation;" 2) she must undergo obligatory counseling (by experts who must be state-certified, affording a material power-base for officials who accredit them); 3) subsequent to counseling, a woman must wait three days before undertaking the procedure; 4) hospitals and doctors may opt not to perform abortions; and 5) the price of procedure, more than double the cost under the previous code, must, for the most part, be paid by the woman herself. Because abortion is opposed by the current government in each case, many state hospitals are exercising their "right" not to offer the procedure.

The irony is that the no longer existent German Democratic Republic, which provided free and legal abortion upon demand for the first trimester prior to unification, had the highest birthrate of the three countries until 1990. Since unification, birth rates have dropped by 50%, and sterilization rates have risen in some regions by 400% (based on interviews with Berlin and Leipzig officials). The all-German "reform-law," approved by the Bundestag
in June 1992, was to be coupled with an extensive social-benefits package. Before the final vote, parliamentarians postponed until 1999 all appropriations for a package that was to have included, inter alia, guaranteed day-care places for children over three, subsidized contraception, and job-reentry programs for mothers who had dropped out of the labor force. Thus old and new FRG citizens who become mothers between 1992 and 1998 will have to do without the infrastructural supports GDR-women used to take for granted, forms of assistance West-German feminists had espoused as key benefits of the new law. The state will save DM 21 Billion (foreseen for 1996) in direct costs, the National Health System will save DM 15 billion per year, since a procedure subsequently declared "illegal but unpunishable" by the FRG's highest court in May 1993 cannot be performed at state expense. The fact that 80% of all abortions performed in Western Germany through the 1980s were based on the social-hardship indicator testifies, in certain respects, to the failure of the welfare-state vis-à-vis its women. Rights are not only gender-based. They are also rooted in major class cleavages, given the fact that women have less access to paid employment, earn significantly lower wages and must rely on lower state pensions (despite the fact that women generally live longer, and thus face higher costs over time).

Under the revised abortion law adopted by democratically elected Polish legislators, women who claim they need to terminate a pregnancy for economic reasons must visit an obstetrician, a gynecologist and a psychiatrist or psychologist. Even if this requirement was not deliberately intended to show women that the economic crises afflicting their daily lives "are all in their heads," it still suggests that women's inability to provide for
themselves and their offspring is merely an individual problem. Women who reject maternity for reasons of financial insecurity or lack of affordable housing, even in the former Wirtschaftswunderland of Germany, are judged to be "materialistic and unethical;" they are charged with putting creature comforts (of child as well as parent) above higher ethical values, such as life and the good of the nation, a proposition clearly at odds with the self-interested nature of both liberalism and capitalism. The redomestication of women is to serve as an antidote to the political impotence of officials vis-à-vis the problems of joblessness, youth violence, rising criminality, and waves of refugees. It is unclear how women are supposed to support more children in the face of mass unemployment, privatization (resulting in the loss of their apartments), hyper-inflation and major cutbacks in social services.

The regendering of democracy is a process made possible by the "triumph of capitalism," an ideology that has long rejected equality in favor of freedom and self-interest. Now that the countervailing forces of socialism have disappeared (as perverse as its Soviet/East European manifestations may have been), there is nothing to stop the multinational forces of capitalism qua competitiveness from undermining the limited forms of legal and social equality that had been cultivated under the old regimes. Refeminizing household labor renders women's work invisible, meaning it will not be counted as a contribution to national well-being (in contrast to "defending the Fatherland," for instance). Yet women's declining economic opportunities are only the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

Also subject to redefinition by way of national abortion
legislation is the concept of rights under the classical paradigm of liberal democracy. This author learned, through undergraduate readings ranging from Locke to Dahrendorf, that liberalism has as its focus the rights of the individual; yet even in Western-democratic states, women's rights are defined largely in terms of their group status. As many a Supreme Court verdict shows, women's rights are neither "unalienable" nor equal, nor automatically linked to formal membership in the polity. Male rights are unalienable, if somewhat restricted in practice by conditions of class and race. Women's rights must be "earned," contingent upon the discharge of an externally defined set of duties, the definition of which (in Catch-22 fashion) excludes the exercise of certain rights.

Liberal-democracy is posited largely in structural and institutional terms (first-past-the-post + single-member-district + some affirmative action), as opposed to social-democracy (presence of activist left-libertarian parties + with some proportional representation + some acceptance of quotas). As classification devices, these terms inevitably fall prey to oversimplification. Yet if one of the purposes of comparing hyphenated-types of democracy is to determine the impact of structures on political participation, then it is imperative that one consider infrastructures and structural barriers as well. Liberalism (including liberal-feminism) asserts the necessity of equality of opportunity, while social(ist)-democracy focuses our attention on equality of outcome. These distinctions nonetheless circumvent the (in)equality of condition that underlies both precepts, viz., the artificial distinction between the public and private lives of women and men who would be political actors.
Women-in-politics may undertake a more concerted effort to promote state support for nurturing-functions, but there are few countries that offer both affordable quality daycare and the kind of family-friendly working hours (consider the late-night votes that are standard-operating-procedure in most parliaments) which would enable women to acquire the experience and seniority they need to become policy-makers in the first place.  

Women's reproductive rights also lie at the heart of efforts to redefine citizenship, be it national, regional or supranational in character. As Judith Shklar observed, the concept is too often construed as a discrete act, not as a process of inclusion. Rather than limiting citizenship to questions of legal-territorial belonging, we need to recognize it as a matter of political-economic standing. Democratic citizenship is meaningless without a recognition of "independent personhood," beginning with (not ending with) the right to control of one's own body and to participate directly in such bodies as might limit that right.

Under state-socialist rule, citizenship was viewed not as an ethnic category but rather as an economic classification, in accordance with its "proletarian-internationlist" objectives; at the same time, the "socialist nation" cultivated citizenship as dependency rather than agency. Since 1989, citizenship itself has been re-gendered; the idea of independent political, economic and national agency has been reinstated for men. Women's membership in the national community, however, has been decoupled from membership in the political community; female rights to independent citizenship have been suspended (for the wives of migrant workers) or, in the worst cases (Bosnia), stripped away entirely. Independent personhood has been superceded by an older, common law emphasis on
the relationship between men and women as a family unit; a wife's status is dependent upon the political-national standing of her spouse, even within the framework of the Single European Act. 22 The New World Order reasserts an ideology, to cite Sapiro, in which "women do not stand for themselves, in which their independent citizenship is not a good in and of itself, but rather in which they are viewed functionally and in relation to others." 23

Feminist theorists like MacKinnon and Young suggest that women's meaningful political participation will only come about when the liberal-democratic notion of the negative state is jettisoned in favor of the positive state. 24 The former seeks to protect individuals who already enjoy a broad spectrum of political and economic rights against the deprivation or curtailment of those rights. The latter is one committed to securing the pre-conditions necessary for an exercise of rights among those who have not historically possessed them for reasons of class, gender or race. All of those new American Express offices in Prague, Budapest and Sofia notwithstanding, membership has its privileges only for the few.

Here we encounter a further paradox: In theory, the liberal-democratic creed, stressing individualism, legal rights, and the inherent uniqueness of human beings, rejects the social engineering employed by Eastern regimes in their 40-year effort to create and mold "socialist personalities." Yet a central feature of diverse re-nationalization campaigns, in countries stretching from Poland to the former Yugoslav federation, is their use of gender, reproduction, and ethnicity as natural-law categories rather than as social constructions. 25 Democratic pluralist politics serves as the vehicle by which new elites can promote an idea of the nation
that is both absolutist and exclusivist in nature. Although Western states have always been inherently suspicious of that irrational "tribal passion" known as ethno-nationalism, the leaders of more established democracies do not seem particularly disturbed by the fact that "the best promoters of the westernizing, anti-Communist values they hope to foster are local nationalists." The universal quality of citizenship embodied in the root word demos is being supplanted by the selective designs of ethnos; the only thing open to debate in places like Bosnia, North-Ireland and the Basquelands is the question as to which group constitutes "the chosen people."

Actual consent of the governed (women do account for 51-52% of the governed in Central Europe) does not appear to be a prerequisite for the national moral bond between state and subject. Eastern women have not been able to maintain, much less to increase the strength of their political representation once new multi-party systems are introduced: their average share of parliamentary seats fell from 33% to 10% in 1990. For individual states the figures decreased as follows after the first round of free elections: in Eastern Germany, from 33% to 20% (now 25%) in the all-German Bundestag; in Hungary, from 21% to 7%; in Romania, from 34% to 4%; in the Czech Republic, from 30% to 9%; in Poland from 23% to 9%; in Yugoslavia, from 19.1% to (overall) 4.6%. It is certainly the case that parliaments under the old regimes were little more than rubber-stamp organs for the dictates of Communist Party elites. But what is "democratic" about regime transitions and new political parties which consciously overlook and/or exclude women at the very moment when parliaments can begin to exercise real power?

The significance of a reduced female presence in the national
parliaments is more or less self-evident. The Polish Senate allowed only one day of debate (August 3, 1990) on its first law proposing a total ban on abortion. Of the ten speakers permitted to take to the floor, seven men favored the proposal, while the three women expressed their opposition to the bill (though one woman favored even harsher penalties).\textsuperscript{28} Women comprise less than 10\% of the Polish Senat and Sejm. The democratic deficit at work in Warsaw parallels the dearth of female parliamentarians in the Irish Republic, which insisted on exemptions from "social rights" that might affect abortion policy as a condition for signing the Maastricht Treaty.\textsuperscript{29} By contrast, increasing numbers of female delegates to the directly elected European Parliament (25\% as of this writing) have, with a little help from the European Commission and the Court of Justice, pushed that body towards a realization of "social rights" and gender equality.\textsuperscript{30}

The fate of women's political movements under recently "democratized" systems has likewise been negative across the board. Having laid the foundation for the creation of civil society through their courageous involvement in a wide array of opposition movements (Solidarity, Civic Forum, New Forum), women now find their participatory roles restricted to home and neighborhood. The opposition parties they helped to create--like Solidarnosc, called into life through the actions of Gdansk crane-operator, Anna Walentynowicz--have openly disassociated themselves from the issue of gender equality. But men are not solely responsible for women's return to the domains of Kinder und Küche: The need to seek "self-identity" and autonomy in opposition to the state, internalized by women prior to 1989, may well have laid the foundation for women's self-marginalization \textit{vis-à-vis} the world of politics since 1990.
The Eastern perception of Western feminists as "anti-family, men-haters" strengthens the position of nationalist forces. Attempts to rally feminist consciousness subsequent to the abortion debate in Poland and Hungary have been modest at best. Yet who amongst us can deny that these women deserve a rest, after the triple burdens of the past forty years?

The reconfiguring of Central European national identities necessarily involves a renewed separation of public and private spheres. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Western feminists mobilized around the motto, the personal is the political. A variety of judicial and legislative organs ordained that they could compete in the public arena for jobs, pay, promotions, and governmental offices, "all things being equal." Of course all things were not equal, beginning with the division of labor in the private sphere. The East provided a mirror image: the political was the personal, encroaching upon most aspects of private existence by virtue of the state's authoritarian character. Few could afford the luxury of staying at home, which is not to say that women failed to develop a sense of personal identity through their productive labor. But "all things" remained far from equal.

Socialism did transfer to the public realm many functions associated with traditional gender roles; it defined "society" as the family, headed by an all-knowing Father-State alias the Paternalist-Party. Women's incorporation into the paid labor force led to a reconfiguring of roles within the nuclear family, enhancing their relative authority and "equality" within the household. Unpaid labor became the domain of pensioners (the infamous grandmother institution), best illustrated by the "feminization" of food lines in Eastern Europe and the former
Soviet Union. State policies "empowering women" were perceived--or are being perceived in retrospect--as having undermined the familial authority of men, usurping their rights to make primary allocative decisions (how does one allocate in a system plagued by chronic scarcities?).

The newly "liberated" states of Eastern Europe are engaged in a process of building civil society, carving out a new set of freedoms under the rubric, "private sector." This is not to say that civil society must be built from scratch, although women's roles in establishing the foundation for a new society, i.e., through bartering networks and opposition groups that took shape around their kitchen tables, have quickly been forgotten. The paradox here is that public power is being used for the purpose of dictating not only the boundaries but also the contents of the private sphere. The remasculinization of the public sphere (politics) in newly democratizing states is packaged and defended as a rehabilitation of the private sphere (family).

Many former "pro-democracy" dissidents who have moved into positions of legislative and ministerial authority since 1989 are eager to consolidate not only civil society but also new capitalist-market relations. Since the family used to constitute the only space available for privacy and solidarity under socialism, it served as the forum for anti-politics. According to Gal, "Anti-politics identified the private sphere as that in which men could act as free agents, and anti-politics implicitly required women to maintain that sphere in material and conceptual terms, insisting that women should want to be havens against the heartless state." Hence, the private sphere under the old regime was not really the preserve of women but rather a space expropriated as an ersatz-
forum for men's oppositional-democratic politics. Where women were once expected to offer support and comfort against the systematic persecutions of the socialist state, they are now expected to serve as havens against the arbitrarily-imposed sufferings of the heartless market.

Dissidents-turned-politicians and communists-turned-nationalists share at least one critical orientation: abortion, in the view of both camps, has little to do with a woman's right to self-actualization and lots to do with the national moral ideal. Whether she resides in Ireland, Poland, Germany or Serbia, a women's nationality is no longer defined in terms of her voluntary allegiance to a particular political system. Rather it is construed as the foundation a larger moral relationship between the state and its subjects (read: women as the objects of state policy). The bond between the state and its female subject is reduced to a restored bond between husband and wife. Former dissidents and old nationalists both appear to "pre-suppose a state built on a moral consensus, one that represents a national/ethnic unity, one in which there is little public debate because someone else decides what is best for the entire community." Both are fighting for the right to be that "someone;" that is, each side struggles for the power, not in order to secure a compromise but to impose its own vision of what the national moral consensus ought to become.

National experts find it hard to believe that average citizens are capable of making decisions for themselves. Members of the legal and medical professions have joined in the debate, eager to secure their own authoritative turf. Liberated from the bonds of Communist Party-justice, lawyers may court one of four autonomous
legal entities: the mother, the fetus, the father and "society." The medical profession, though often split over the wisdom of criminalizing abortion, is similarly interested in reclaiming its own expert-space between family and the state. The claim that doctors, lawyers, former dissidents, or ultra-nationalist politicians "know better" is easily grasped by those who have been subject to the dictates of the omniscient vanguard party over a period of four decades. Herein lies an element of Ostalgie [Eastern nostalgia], a belief that if only a "paternalistic someone" would take charge again, "he" would make the problems of inflation, unemployment, homelessness, criminality all go away.

The regendering of public/private spheres raises another set of questions concerning the relationship between Church and State in post-modernist and post-communist society. Politicians, spiritual leaders, intellectuals, teachers and parents everywhere complain about the breakdown of values in society, usually a code-word for "family values." The constitutional separation of church and state secularized Western society, thereby "delegitimating" the inordinate power of institutionalized religion in the conduct of public affairs during the postwar era. Formerly a channel for fundamental opposition (against godless communism qua totalitarianism), the East European Churches find themselves delegitimized by virtue of the fact that they are no longer the only oppositional game in town. Joining forces with emergent groups of professional-political Christians (the C-parties), religious authorities not only desire to avenge themselves vis-à-vis their former adversary, the "godless state," they also need to nip in the bud the counter-vailing amoral powers of a globalized market promoting the flock's selfish obsession with material success. In order to guard its
authority vis-à-vis the market, the Church must, paradoxically, really itself with the state, while placing itself above the state.

The institutionalized churches on both sides of the old frontline envision themselves as the only force capable of filling the "black hole" of the current value-crisis. This raises a number of interesting East-West comparisons. Christian Democrats in the FRG saw themselves as surrogate Church leaders in the 1992 abortion debate, even if they could not explicitly invoke the teachings of the Catholic Church (outside of Bavaria) without the risk of redividing the not-so-united German population (and perhaps risking another Thirty Years' War, albeit by other means). Unification has brought 15 million potential Protestants (more likely, agnostics) into the national fold; thus the all-German balance between the two religious communities has shifted heavily in favor of the latter, whose teachings allow for individual interpretations of the Bible and, hence, a woman's right to choose.

The power of the Church in Ireland derives from a serious imbalance among the major sectors controlling society: relatively stable "democratic institutions" coupled with very ineffective economic structures give the Church room to maneuver. Concomitantly, very shaky, unconsolidated political structures in Poland, wedded to dire economic conditions, enables the Catholic Church--the symbol of Polish nationalism for over 1000 years--to fill a substantial power vacuum. In Germany one finds, relatively speaking, a very strong economy, an overdeveloped network of judicial institutions, and many decades of governmental experience among the "Christian parties;" hence, there is little "policy space" which the institutional Church can seek to occupy directly. As far as the liberal principle of self-determination is concerned,
the policy outcome is more or less the same for women seeking to terminate pregnancies in Ireland, Poland and united Germany.

One variable is conspicuously, glaringly absent from all official pronouncements regarding abortion and morality on the part of Church and State: Where are the men? The rhetoric of politicians and clerics everywhere leads us to believe that millions of women world-wide, including unwed welfare mothers in the US, are producing their children by virtue of Immaculate Conception (which may be why the Church is so active in dictating the terms of debate). The Croatian Democratic Union [HDZ] has gone so far as to propagate the ideal of the "fruitful virgin-mother" (!) since 1990.36

If governments were truly interested in ending abortion as "the taking of human life," then their primary concern would have to be that of preventing unwanted pregnancies. Leaders in these countries have not been willing to expand access to sex education and contraceptives. Indeed, many have sought to limit women's freedom of choice in these areas as well, e.g., by removing four brands of the Pill without replacement in Poland, and by terminating the provision of free contraception for all women in Eastern Germany.37 Women will not stop searching for ways to terminate pregnancies merely because the procedure is declared illegal: this is precisely the reason why some three million women die each year, according to UN statistics.

The "value debate" foregrounded by the abortion issue is rather duplicitous in nature; it embraces the ideal of gendered morality, also known as the double-standard. If abortion opponents accept the Catholic postulate that life begins at conception, then more would have to admit the logical inconsistency of tolerating
exemptions for abortion in cases of rape, incest or fetal deformity, exceptions found in all of the new national laws. It is well known, however, that such cases inevitably entail higher costs for the state, i.e., in the form of orphanages, foster-homes, and hospital care. All too often the anti-choice forces appear to be more pro-birth than pro-life. Since women who abort may be subject to automatic excommunication from the Catholic Church, would it not be morally consistent to excommunicate those who impregnate women against their will, through deliberate acts of unprotected sex, marital rape or incest?

One recurrent theme in the European parliamentary debates over reproductive rights since 1989 has been that women lack the capacity for moral judgment, with the possible exception of female parliamentarians willing to rescind these rights. This signifies a return to the can't-use-your-uterus-and-your-brain-simultaneously thinking of the Victorian era. Yet women are exhorted to return to their "natural" roles, one of which has always been to bear primary responsibility for the moral education of their children. Can women be expected to transfer moral capabilities and national virtues they themselves do not possess? Alternatively, is it conceivable that whatever "moral" lessons that women impart at home will be internalized by their sons but not their daughters?

Anti-choice politicians in Ireland, Poland and Germany, inter alia, have repeatedly invoked the phrases a Catholic Ireland, a Catholic Poland, in a Christian Europe, as has the Pope himself. Having visited the former Nazi concentration camps of Auschwitz, Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen, and Dachau, I confess that these terms send cold chills down my spine. One hears little about the moral outrage expressed by a Polish-soldier-turned-Pontiff between 1938
(Nuremburg Race Laws) and 1945, when thousands of women were subjected to barbaric sterilization "experiments" (e.g. having their wombs injected with sulphuric acid) at Block-House Number Ten in Auschwitz. How often does the Pope speak out against manifestations of resurgent anti-Semitism in Poland, including statements by the country's leading Catholic, Lech Walesa? How much Vergangenheitsbewältigung has taken place within the Vatican itself, which signed accords with German and Italian fascists, indirectly clearing the way for forced abortions among millions of non-Aryan women, to prevent them from bearing allegedly Lebensunwertes Leben ["life not worth living"]. Will those intent on purging Europe of its non-Christian influences turn a blind eye to abortions among Europe's few remaining Jewish inhabitants, its Islamic "guest-workers," its Romanian Gypsies, its Kurdish and Algerian refugees?

The abortion issue, in many respects, is also embedded in a debate over the end of absolutist ideologies. Like Communism, which draws upon "inevitable, immutable historical laws" and truths, Catholic theology ascribes to an unchallengeable, infallible set of dogmas and moral-absolutes (this author experienced thirteen years of Catholic schooling). The Polish, Irish and Croatian cases illustrate the the Catholic Church's desire to impose its own "consensus" on the voting public; it does not seem prepared to tolerate negotiated "compromises" as the foundation of democracy; indeed, the most recent Papal encyclical exhorts Catholic politicians to violate the separation of church and state.

Consider, further, the initiation of war in the former Yugoslav federation, after 40 years of official atheism: On the occasion of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo in 1989, Slobodan Milosovich made a virtually seamless transition from
"godless Communism," as head of the Serbian Communist League, to chief defender of the Serbian Orthodox faith. His religious rebirth was quickly matched by the renaissance of Catholicism in Croatia, and the sudden importance of one's Moslem heritage in multicultural Bosnia. Catholicism did not stop the Slovaks from seeking a "Velvet Divorce" from the Czechs, however.

Conflicts over reproductive rights moreover reflect a struggle to control the future interpretation of national history. It is quite striking that the very East European policies which helped to secure women's involvement in the paid labor force (meaning they were pro-natalist, not pro-woman) are now being eliminated as the Legacy of Communism. Old and new forms of social chaos and conflict are directly attributed to women's irresponsible, self-serving propensity under the old regimes to work outside the home, significantly impairing the health and well-being of their own families. The (fictional) image of the angry, sexually aggressive feminist, intent on destroying domestic harmony, eagerly undermining her husband's authority and health is juxtaposed—in Hungarian election posters, for example—against the restorative powers of the benevolent wife-mother, nurturing guardian of the peace in the national household. Attempts to preserve subsidized daycare, guaranteed sick leave, free contraception and abortion are discredited, suggesting that women who took advantage of such policies were themselves directly responsible for promulgating these policies, in violation of natural law.

Thus women who insist on maintaining social policies that enabled them to combine career and family must have been the real "Communists" all along: never mind the fact that women in the East held even fewer seats at the highest levels of government than did
those in the West. Women are rendered the other, allies of the Communists; the new state must rescue the nation from the debilitating "mothering" of socialism which made men weak. Restoration of the cult of domesticity becomes a strategy for resuscitating national culture; gender polarity is essential for the reestablishment of the social qua the national order.

If women are to blame for their own exploitation under the old regime, then the Eastern men re-establishing themselves in the new organs of state power, must have been the real anti-Communist resistance fighters [though very few appear to have had significant prison records or experiences with democracy gleaned during years of exile abroad; notable exceptions are Vaclav Havel and a few Bündnis '90 delegates in the German Bundestag]. The net result is that Eastern and Western feminists are denied an opportunity to reconsolidate the political identity of their respective movements: To be pro-nation is to be anti-feminist.

The truth is that women who are blamed for (and also expected to pay for) major economic disruptions of the last five years have had virtually no say in the determination of national economic policies over the last four decades, highlighting once again a substantial democratic deficit. Textbook definitions of democracy specify the principle of majority rule, coupled with the protection of minority rights. Comprising the demographic majority in all of the Central European states, women are treated like minorities, yet the only "protection" they receive is exclusive in nature. The female experience with institutional democracy has been one of regulation and relegation, not to mention, "taxation without representation." The post-communist era is characterized by a strong aversion to state intervention on women's behalf, a delayed
reaction against the interference of the all-powerful state prior to 1989. What is not so clear is why there is so little aversion to state actions when it comes to restricting women's rights and regulating their bodily functions.\textsuperscript{43}

The need to protect the "morally" weaker sex becomes the justification for re-institutionalizing patriarchy. The theme of "protection" reappears in many guises. An alleged need to defend women against their own moral incompetence serves to guard the nation against racial mixing; sexism qua nativism equates the quality of a woman's character with the purity of her offspring's blood. A nation must moreover protect "its" women against the allegedly insatiable, barbaric sexuality of other nations' men—even if authorities refuse to treat rape in marriage as a crime in their own states. Consider the Serbian poster depicting a woman bearing an infant in one arm and a rifle in the other.\textsuperscript{44} Women embody the national Honor, the purity of its causes and, ultimately, the rectitude of the national cause. In reality, women's second-class citizenship is systematically interrelated with the "inferior" standing of foreign minorities or ethnic groups.

The Irish and the Bosnian cases demonstrate most clearly that women's rights are excluded from what are commonly defined as "universal," border-transcending, fundamental Human Rights. Ignoring the fact that women are "human," present conceptualizations reduce "the universal" to notions of a "least common denominator" among men and women, as if none of the "differences" between women and men have any bearing on their prospects for equality.\textsuperscript{45} Equality is globally construed as "sameness." The fact that Eastern women and men had to struggle together against a repressive state for many years now makes it difficult for the
former to transcend this false universality.

This leads us into an ever denser ideological thicket, namely, the propensity of Central European leaders to instrumentalize national identity (defined in terms of jus sanguinis) as a strategy for defending national sovereignty, despite all the verbal homage paid to "interdependence." Long-standing inter- and intra-national conflicts and aggressive forms of economic competition, wedded to self-centered notions of racial/ethnic/cultural superiority, were subsumed for four decades under the bloc-based imperatives of the Cold War: the enemy-without. The Cold War has ended, and the Battle of Births--a form of war by other but likewise antidemocratic means--has begun. National leaders seek to root out the enemy from within; targeted are women who marry outside of their ethnic group, as well as foreigners in their midst inclined to generate more children than the "natives": Albanians, Bosnien-Moslems, Turkish and Algerian workers (who ironically adhere to the kind of strict "family values" of which the indigenous population has lamentably lost sight). Milic explains that "mixed marriages symbolize the possibility of mutual assimilation and integration between different nations, the possibility of transcending the borders of national collectivity with no taboos attached."

Hungarian, German and Irish leaders fan the fear that their respective peoples are "dying out." Yet strength defined in demographic/statistical terms bears little relationship to the real "erosion" [one could say "pooling"] of national sovereignty witnessed within the European Union since 1957.

As Verdery observes, "however radical socialism may have been in reorganizing family structures and roles at one level, at another its paternalism dovetailed perfectly with patriarchal forms
central to national ideas elsewhere in the West." Ceausescu's declaration that "the fetus is socialist property of the whole society" finds its parallel in German Conservatives' linking of pro-choice proponents (insisting that "my belly belongs to me") with perpetrators of the Holocaust. While Romania's methods of promoting national strength through numbers prior to 1989 were more draconian than those employed by the Federal Republic, the principle is the same: women's bodies are to be appropriated as instruments for the attainment of the state's reproductive needs. Women who refuse to comply may be targeted as the new enemies of the state.

The vehemence with which pro-natalist forces reject a woman's right to bodily self-determination "owes its force partly to a vital symbol of socialism's demise: the idea of the nation's rebirth." Consider the rhetoric employed: The Unborn Are Also Croats, Abortion is Genocide, seventeen million fetal Polish citizens, Our Hungarian Holocaust. In Abasar, Hungary, abortion opponents have erected an "Embryo Memorial;" pro-choice feminists are labeled "the murderers of mothers." The nation cannot be born again if fetuses, physical embodiments of the nation's future, are sentenced to death by self-interested women. Nor can the nation, emasculated by communism, "be restored to health if its women refuse to bear and nurture its 'fetal citizens'." From a demographic perspective, permitting more migration from countries with high birth rates would easily resolve the problem of population decline, e.g. in Germany. The nationalist agenda, with its xenophobic proclivities, renders this a politically unacceptable alternative, however.

The Battle of Births is an attempt to restore some mythical,
organic, holistic, blood-based concept of national unity in the face of a potentially explosive redivision of Central European societies into major camps of Winners and Losers, Insiders and Outsiders. Political-economic fragmentation is a function of multiple all-or-nothing turf-wars—over the redistribution of state power, the ability to determine institutional paradigms, the right to define policy priorities, and last but certainly not least, the power to dictate the dominant code of values for the decades ahead.

Woman as Nature is destined to live in the service of the Nation, and she is to be controlled by Man, embodying the Nation-State. Yet the process of national "homogenization" depends heavily upon the bloodline of the father, as demonstrated by the violation of Moslem women in Bosnia. When rape coincides with war it is dismissed as the "unfortunate but inevitable side-effect" of sending men off to make the ultimate sacrifice for the Fatherland. What is unique, unprecedented, newsworthy about the use of rape as a strategy of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is its scale: the EU Commission cited 20,000 cases in its January 1993 report: 3,000 were documented, 800 victims were known by name.52 These crimes are not the work of individual soldiers, a few sexual oddballs out of control; these are gangs of soldiers operating under government orders, abusing women with the explicit intent of violating their "protected status" and, in so doing, violating the norms of national qua racial/ethnic purity.53 These are not acts of "ethnic cleansing" taking place in Serbian holding centers but rather acts of racialized impregnation; abused women are detained long enough to ensure the birth of "Serbian" offspring—one case where it is recognized that women are not parthenogenetic. This defilement of the womb renders a Moslem woman incapable of producing pure-blooded
children for her own race, another reason to blame women for the
death of the nation. The Gebärzwang [compulsory child-bearing] inherent in the denial of a woman's right to abortion and a form of nationalized maternity deliberately imposed through rape are two sides of the same coin.

The leveling of reproductive rights across the newly democratized states signifies a new struggle for "the hearts and minds" of European youth. There is also an attempt to "redress" the evils of Communist education in Poland and Eastern Germany while post-Wall citizens are still an impressionable age; Oaks offers a compelling argument along these lines with regard to the Irish case as well. As their mounting sympathy for extremist movements indicates, younger cohorts are easily manipulated, having been cut adrift by substantial cuts in youth services and recreational centers, and cut off from economic opportunity. Many are still ensconced in national educational systems thrown into chaos since 1989 ["what was black is now white, white is now black"]. Adolescents are generally denied access to meaningful channels of political participation, though they do have some experience at tearing down regimes and changing constitutions by taking to the streets. They are already disillusioned with the "democratic process" as they know it: less than 50% of the eligible Eastern voters between the ages of 18 and 25 participated in the first all-German elections to the Bundestag in December 1990. Voting rates are on the decline across Central Europe, and ex-Communists have been making a come-back in lots of surprising places.

Finally, the incorporation of gender into an analysis of resurgent nationalism highlights The Limits of Euro-citizenship and
complications ensuing from a Europe without borders. Article 8 of the Maastricht Treaty is more significant with respect to those it excludes--over 12 million long-term foreign residents, guestworkers, and refugees in the Member-States--than with regard to the expanded participatory rights it accords those included, EC-Nationals. Women in Germany, Poland and Ireland have long resorted to abortion tourism. National law enforcement agencies are inadequately equipped to monitor the behavior of women without subjecting each and every one to gynecological examinations (the politics of abortion in Ceausescu's Romania) whenever they cross their own national borders. Consider the West German case of Katrin K., which illustrated the "unequal protection" of Germany's dual-system approach through 1992. In 1990, a 22-year old married mother was searched and arrested on suspicion of abortion while crossing the boundary between the Netherlands and the FRG. The young woman was subjected to a forced vaginal exam in a state hospital, becoming a cause célèbre when it was revealed that she had fled to the West from Jena in 1988 (before the Wall's collapse), where the procedure was still considered legal. The case of the 14-year old rape victim in Ireland, denied the right to travel to Britain after she was revealed to be pregnant, further attests to the fact that women's rights of free speech and free association are by no means equal to men's. The European Union's eventual approval of RU486 will pose additional, intractable problems of implementation and control.

The reconstruction of national communities in Central Europe has brought to light the inherent limits of democracy defined in primarily institutional terms. The focus on structural and processual variables (electoral and administrative reform,
constitution writing, selection of new elites, macro-economic stabilization, et cetera) has obscured many anti-democratic elements driving the political transformation of the former East European regimes.54

The feminist lesson to be derived from this analysis is that liberalism and democracy are inherently antithetical concepts: liberalism focuses on "freedom," while democracy seeks "equality." The former, unfortunately, seems to have outlived its usefulness in helping women to secure the latter. Equality of opportunity works only as long as there are sufficient opportunities to go around (see the current US debate over Affirmative Action). Thus, it is the gendered nature of liberalism that imposes gender-limits on democracy. Neither the liberal creed, nor its institutional-systemic correlate, democracy, can be reconciled with a reliance on gender, reproduction and ethnicity as natural-law categories. Social engineering is inherently anti-democratic, irrespective of whether it is the aim of government to mold "socialist personalities" or to mandate a priori gender roles.

Defined in predominantly institutional terms, democracy has indeed meant a restoration of formal political rights for the citizens of Eastern Europe, but it has done so in a way that has remasculinized the public sphere by refeminizing the private sphere. Institutions historically conceived and created for the purpose of fostering societal pluralism are being used to promote an idea of the nation and, with that, a concept of women's citizenship, that is exclusive and inferior in nature. The "democratic dilemma" cannot be reduced to a consideration of System Effectiveness versus Citizen Participation, divorced from a need for "the democratization of relations" between women and men.55
There can be no free men until there are free women.

Endnotes


2. Ibid., 331-32.


4. For one example, see Guiseppe Di Palme, "LEGITIMATION FROM THE TOP TO CIVIL SOCIETY. Politico-Cultural Change in Eastern Europe," World Politics 44 (October 1991), 49-80.


6. The term Central Europe is meant to include united Germany; Eastern Europe is a reference limited to the former socialist states.


8. Drawing on Mary Poovey's work, Verdery notes the parallel nature of these constructs, and the ways in which physical-geographical space is rendered socio-political space by tying the "body" of the state to the "meanings" imputed to gender identity. Katherine Verdery, "From Parent-State to Family Patriarchs: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Eastern Europe," East European Politics and Societies, Vol. 8, no. 2 (Spring 1994), 226-227.

9. Ibid., 225.

11. Ibid., 260-61.

12. Ibid., 258.


17. Because the *Notlage* [hardship] indicator was interpreted more loosely in Länder governed by Social Democrats, it is impossible to ascertain how many women terminated their pregnancies primarily on grounds of economic necessity. At the same time, the economic argument that women were unable to secure affordable housing to accommodate children was regularly discounted by CDU/CSU politicians. See Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokol/Stenograpischer Bericht, 999. Sitzung (Bonn: 25. June 1992), 8233-8284.


20. According to a National Public Radio report in early September 1995, even women in Nordic countries who already hold official positions (over 30% of the national parliamentarians) complain about the inadequacy of various parental support-systems.


34. Ibid., 280.

35. Ibid., 275.


37. Pasini, op. cit.; Mushaben et al., op. cit. German law now provides free contraception, restricted to the Pill and IUDs, only for women under the age of 20.

38. Germany formally eliminated its "eugenic indicator" in 1995 but still allows for this justification under the broader catetgory of "physical and mental health of the mother."


41. For a broader discussion, see Joanna Goven, "Gender Politics in Hungary: Autonomy and Antifeminism" in Funk and Mueller, op. cit., 224-240.
42. Verdery, op. cit., 251.

43. This is an argument pursued by Barbara Einhorn, Cinderella Goes to Market (London: Verso, 1993).

44. The politics of Serbian national-sexism are examined further by Andjelka Milic, "Women and Nationalism in the Former Yugoslavia," in Funk and Mueller, op. cit., 109-122.

45. Young, op. cit.

46. Ibid., 116.

47. Verdery, op. cit., 249.

48. Ibid., 254.

49. Ibid., 250-51.

50. Ibid., 254-55.

51. In addition to contributing over DM 12.8 billion to the national pension fund (from which they received only DM 3.7 billion in benefits), Turkish workers in Germany created 700,000 jobs and invested over DM 6 billion in the local economies in 1991. Figures stem from a report on Right-Wing Radicalism in Germany, issued by the German Information Center (New York) in February 1993.


53. Ibid., 89.

54. For an analysis of the formal-institutional dimensions, see Helga A. Welsh, "Political Transition Processes in Central and Eastern Europe," Comparative Politics (July 1994), 379-394.

55. See Dahl's article, op. cit.; and Waylen, op. cit., 354.