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# Legitimacy and the Making of the Post-war Order

Final version – November 2005

Mark Pittaway and Hans Fredrik Dahl

In November 1953 the governor of the eastern Austrian province of Burgenland, Lorenz Karall, attempted to explain the relative political stability in his province despite continuing economic insecurity and international tension caused by its position on the border with the Soviet bloc. Karall argued that this political stability was in part a product of the fact “that the Austrian population has learned from the hard school of the past thirty-five years to be discriminating and seems thus to be immune to demagogic rhetoric”. Behind this lay a more profound shift in the nature of popular expectations of their political leaders in that “Austrians today have more profound material than ideological needs”.<sup>1</sup> The deep seated materialization of popular expectations of politics occurred as part of a reproduction of continuity in the first decade following the end of the Second World War, which saw the re-assertion of social democracy<sup>2</sup> and political Catholicism<sup>3</sup> as the two dominant political traditions in the new republic, as they had been prior to the disappearance of political pluralism in 1934. While political polarization had marked relations between these two political traditions between the wars, in the circumstances of occupied post-war Austria this was replaced with a durable politics of consensus. Karall, as the most prominent local beneficiary of this shift, was uniquely placed to observe the changes in popular attitudes that underpinned this transformation. Originally a political representative of Burgenland’s Croatian minority Karall had risen to prominence in the late 1920s as a member of the Catholic Christian Socials. He served as a member of the last elected government in the province between 1930 and 1934, and was a prominent local advocate of the party’s authoritarian turn thereafter, only to return

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<sup>1</sup> - Burgenländisches Landesarchiv (Burgenland Provincial Archive, hereafter BgLA) Archiv der Landesregierung seit 1945, Sicherheitsdirektion für Burgenland (Archive of the post-1945 provincial government, Papers of the Burgenland Security Directorate, hereafter A/VIII)-14/II-3; Brief, d.Hptm.u.Ld.Parteiobermann Dr. Lorenz Karall, Wien, den 25.11.1953

<sup>2</sup> - I have used “social democracy” as a synonym for the post-war non-Communist left, which referred to itself as often as “socialist” as it did “social democratic”.

<sup>3</sup> - The inter-war Social Democrats were reconstructed as the Sozialistische Partei Österreichs (Socialist Party of Austria, or SPÖ), while the Christian Socials re-emerged as the Österreichische Volkspartei (Austrian Peoples’ Party, or ÖVP).

after Nazi rule to serve as the provincial governor from 1946 managing a grand coalition of Catholics and Socialists.<sup>4</sup>

The dynamic of continuity and change visible in post-war Austria was discernible right across Europe. In the six years that followed the end of the Second World War many of the political traditions that had shaped political identities across the continent from the end of the nineteenth century re-asserted themselves. They did so in a new context in which the experience of economic crisis, brief recovery and even war had re-shaped popular expectations of both politics and of government. Populations demanded that politics and state action should focus on the immediate needs of local communities for physical and material security. Post-war publics were most comfortable with a protective state, which limited the space for overly ideological, transformative politics. This chapter argues that these complex and sometimes contradictory dynamics shaped a particular notion of legitimacy and thus the contours of a discernible political culture across Europe. While it was in north-western Europe, transformed politically by the dynamics of “liberation” and the creation of limited liberal democracies during the early years of the cold war where this shift was most visible, the reproduction of political cultures and the materialization of popular demands of the state could also be seen elsewhere. In traditionally catholic and conservative western Hungary, for instance, political Catholicism not only mobilized majorities of voters behind centre-right parties in elections in 1945 and 1947, just as it had ensured the loyalty of rural populations to the Horthy regime in the inter-war years, but participation in church processions during the early 1950s provided a focus for populations in conservative villages and small towns to express their opposition to the policies of the country’s socialist dictatorship.<sup>5</sup> While

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<sup>4</sup> - “Karall, Lorenz Dr.” in Gerald Schlag (eds.) *Burgenland: Geschichte, Kultur und Wirtschaft in Biographien. XX. Jahrhundert* (Edition Rötzer, Eisenstadt, 1991), pp.142-3; Roland Widder “Volkspartei im Burgenland” in Robert Kriechbaumer & Franz Schausberger (eds.) *Volkspartei – Anspruch und Realität: Zur Geschichte der ÖVP seit 1945* (Böhlau Verlag: Wien, Köln & Weimar, 1995), pp.489-526

<sup>5</sup> - For the 1945 elections in one western Hungarian town see “Döntő fölényrel győzött a Kisgazda Párt”, *Soproni Újság* (5 November, 1945), pp.1-3; for the 1947 elections see *Soproni Újság* (2 September, 1947), p.1; for church processions as a focus of popular protest in the region see Győr-Moson-Sopron Megyei Győri Levéltár (Győr City Branch of the Győr-Moson-Sopron County Archive, hereafter GyMSMGyL.) Magyar Dolgozók Pártja Győr-Moson-Sopron Megyei Bizottság iratai (Papers of the Győr-Moson-Sopron County Committee of the Hungarian Workers’ Party, hereafter X fond. 402)/2/Agitprop/32ö.e.; Jelentés. Győr, 1953.április 6-án

renewed political cultures could provide a focus through which opposition was expressed, it was discontent about material circumstances in the face of the shortages of food, basic goods and heating during the era of socialist industrialization in the country that proved most corrosive for the legitimacy of the regime.<sup>6</sup>

The dynamics that lay behind these phenomena were difficult to discern as the post-war order was constructed across Europe during the late 1940s, for they lay in a semi-visible sphere somewhere between the realm of high politics and the everyday concerns of ordinary Europeans. They did, however, play a profound role, albeit with other factors, in defining the constraints under which political actors operated, creating hidden boundaries that forced political projects to move in directions unintended by their originators. The dynamics of legitimacy generated by the interaction between political projects and transformed popular expectations also created opportunities for political actors. Exploring these dynamics is essential to an understanding of the development of the various post-war settlements that arose across the continent. Hitherto the historiography of the development of Europe's post-war order has been dominated by writing on the origins of the early cold war in the continent as if, after the mobilizations of the inter-war years and the Second World War, the shaping of political regimes was determined by the interaction between domestic political elites and the victorious great powers.<sup>7</sup> At the same time the history of the social realm in the immediate post-war years is still relatively under-researched, though historians have begun to focus on the social consequences of the violence of the war for the stability of the post-war era.<sup>8</sup> Yet there

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<sup>6</sup> - For the material roots of popular discontent in 1950s Hungary see Mark Pittaway "Retreat from Collective Protest: Household, Gender, Work and Popular Opposition in Stalinist Hungary" in Jan Kok (ed.) *Rebellious Families: Household Strategies and Collective Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Berghahn Books: New York & Oxford, 2002), pp. 199-229

<sup>7</sup> - Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, (William Heinemann, London, 2005), pp.13-164; James E. Cronin *The World the Cold War Made: Order, Chaos and the Return of History* (Routledge, New York and London, 1996), especially Chapter 2; William I. Hitchcock *The Struggle for Europe: A History of the Continent since 1945* (Profile Books, London, 2003); David Reynolds (ed.) *The Cold War in Europe: International Perspectives* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1994); Melvyn P. Leffler & David S. Painter (eds.) *Origins of the Cold War: An International History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Routledge, New York and London, 2005)

<sup>8</sup> - For excellent attempts to do just this see the essays in Richard Bessel & Dirk Schumann (eds.) *Life After Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe During the 1940s and 1950s* (German Historical Institute Washington D.C. and Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003); see also Pieter Lagrou *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945-1965*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 2000)

has been relatively little concentration on how the dynamics of changing political attitudes and expectations with their roots in the war years contributed to the development of post-war political settlements, expressed in a marked shift from relations between political traditions that was characterized by conflict to ones characterized by bargaining, despite the potential this approach has for understanding the distinctive character of the post-war order.<sup>9</sup>

From the perspective of international history the immediate post-war years seem to constitute a transition from the military outcome of war to the creation of the bi-polar order across Europe. When the immediate post-war years are examined from the standpoint of the struggle for legitimacy, however, a different, more complex and uneven picture of Europe's post-war political order emerges. The interests of the different military victors, occupation authorities and new domestic political elites interacted with political cultures and traditions that were reconstructed in the post-war context. These political cultures reflected above all the differing patterns of political identification in post-war Europe, as they re-shaped the fabric of national civil societies within the states of the continent, influencing the patterns of unity and diversity between them. When viewed from the perspective of legitimacy, the history of the immediate post-war years is about the influence that reproduced political cultures had on political development both within and between states. The outcomes of the political conflicts that emerged would have consequences for decades to follow.

It was north-western Europe where the strength of established notions of legitimacy and their relative survival during the war years enabled the early reconstruction of legitimate state authority; in these states the political contours of domestic post-war settlements were visible within five years of the end of the war. The longer-term impact of war on the social and cultural fabrics of north-western European civil societies was less than that present in either central or south-eastern Europe, thus enabling the smoother reproduction

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<sup>9</sup> - For a stimulating attempt to explore the potential of this approach for north- and central-western Europe see Martin Conway "The Rise and Fall of Europe's Democratic Age, 1945-1973", *Contemporary European History*, 13, 1 (2004); 67-88

of political continuities than elsewhere in the continent.<sup>10</sup> Consequently national states were reconstructed around democratic, consensual, but very definitely bourgeois polities that drew on notions of legitimacy that emerged from the social transformations of the war years. In Switzerland this transformation could be said to have been at its smoothest in view of its relative containment from the upheavals of war, and the anchoring of its political system in strongly localist, participatory structures that bound populations tightly to established patterns of government.<sup>11</sup> In similarly neutral Sweden, the indirect impact of war cemented the welfarist settlement constructed by the political alliance of Social Democrats and Agrarians during the 1930s, through generating a high degree of political and social consensus, required to maintain neutrality during the war years, that in turn provided the basis for a continuation of the construction of the welfare state in the post-war period.<sup>12</sup> Ireland had remained formally neutral and informally supportive of the United Kingdom. This had necessitated exceptional political measures and economic deprivation that stimulated the rise of the left in the country's major cities. In the immediate post-war years the left was quickly beaten back, while a political system based upon the hegemony of Fianna Fail, punctuated by occasional periods of diverse centre-left coalitions, the first of which took power in 1948, was established.<sup>13</sup> In the United Kingdom the war strengthened the legitimacy of dominant national identities and established political institutions which were seen to have proved themselves to be resilient in the face of war. Demands for social change were successfully absorbed by the Labour Party, propelling it to victory in 1945. While Labour was to remain stronger throughout the post-war period than it had been in the inter-war years, its victory did not mark a lasting break with previous forms of political affiliation. The Conservatives, dominant in the inter-war years, had re-asserted themselves by the time of the general

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<sup>10</sup> - This point is well made in relation to Belgium, France and the Netherlands, see Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*, pp.1-18

<sup>11</sup> - Jonathan Steinberg *Why Switzerland?* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge & New York, 1996), pp.65-72

<sup>12</sup> - Nils Elvander "State Intervention and Economic Freedom" in Erik Allart et al. (eds.) *Nordic Democracy: Ideas, Issues and Institutions in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden* (Det Danske Selskab, Copenhagen, 1981), pp.280-2; James Fulcher, "Sweden", in Stefan Berger & David Broughton, (eds.), *The Force of Labour: the Western European Labour Movement and the Working Class in the Twentieth Century* (Berg, Oxford & New York, 7-38; Kurt Samuelsson, *From Great Power to Welfare State: 300 Years of Swedish Social Development*, (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1968), 241-8

<sup>13</sup> - Henry Patterson *Ireland since 1939* (Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2002), pp.51-115

elections of 1950 and 1951, and ruled the country between 1951 and 1964.<sup>14</sup> Even in formerly occupied north-western Europe, which unlike Britain, saw their party system change, the political orders that emerged by the late 1940s were marked by a considerable degree of restoration. In Denmark and Norway established political elites were able to absorb the appeal of the resistance to restore the political system after the end of German occupation.<sup>15</sup> In the Netherlands the reconstruction of the post-war political order was marked by a dynamic of restoration and renewal, as patterns of pre-war political identification within society rapidly re-emerged.<sup>16</sup> Belgium was similarly marked by a rapid restoration of pre-war political traditions, that were in turn, forced to adapt to the more individualistic and material climate that had emerged from their supporters as a consequence of the war years.<sup>17</sup>

Elsewhere the nature of the state had been more contested. Post-war transitions were consequently more protracted, conflict-ridden and messier, ensuring that political instability, and in some cases open social conflict, often persisted into the 1950s, with some form of viable post-war political settlement only emerging at the end of the decade. While transitions in legitimacy in the rest of the continent were characterized by these common elements, they were far from uniform, either in nature or in outcome. The transitions in south-eastern Europe presented a particularly extreme manifestation of the impact of inter-war crises of legitimacy and war on post-war events and eventual outcomes. These generated social revolutionary pressures, which in some states produced social revolutionary outcomes, and in one state in particular in the region violent political polarization resulted in a civil war. In Yugoslavia the events of the war had both discredited the pre-war monarchy and the politics of ethnic exclusivity that had led to

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<sup>14</sup> - Kenneth O. Morgan *The People's Peace: British History, 1945-1990* (Oxford University Press, Oxford & New York, 1990), pp.3-70

<sup>15</sup> - Niels Wium Olesen, Paper on Denmark, ESF workshop Ghent (I need a precise citation); Hans Fredrik Dahl "Behind the Fronts: Norway", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 5, 3, 1970, pp.47-9

<sup>16</sup> - Peter Romijn "Niederlande – "Synthese", Säuberung und Integration" in Ulrich Herbert & Axel Schildt (eds) *Kriegsende in Europa; vom Beginn des deutschen Machtzerfalls bis zur Stabilisierung der Nachkriegsordnung 1944-1948* (Klartext, Essen, 1998), pp. 223-4

<sup>17</sup> - Nico Wouters "New order and good government: municipal administration in Belgium (1938-1946)", Final draft of article for *Contemporary European History*, pp. 24-5; Martin Conway "The Cultures of Belgian Patriotism, 1944-47: Legitimacy, Patriotism and the Political Order", Paper presented at the Workshop "Legitimacy in the Realm of Culture", Jachranka, Poland, September 2003, p.4

civil war following the first Yugoslavia's collapse after the German invasion in 1941. Tito's partisans had been able to mobilise support, particularly in parts of Bosnia and Croatia, but also Slovenia, on the basis that the Communists offered a clear alternative to both during the mid-1940s. While the creation of socialist dictatorship in Yugoslavia between 1944 and 1946 was a violent process, the new regime sought a viable settlement based on the co-operation of nationalities, institutionalised in the 1946 constitution, that rested on a formula of "the brotherhood and unity" of peoples building a new socialist order.<sup>18</sup> The weakness of the inter-war state, dismembered in 1939, opened the door for a strategy of revolutionary legitimation in neighbouring Albania.<sup>19</sup> In Bulgaria, Communists and their supporters, backed by a partisan movement connected to that in neighbouring Yugoslavia moved in 1944 and 1945 to seize power and institute their own social revolution, and were only prevented from doing so by the presence of the Red Army and the desire of Moscow for the pursuit by Bulgarian Communists of a more moderate course.<sup>20</sup> Elsewhere in south-eastern Europe, political groupings seeking to reconstruct the state on revolutionary lines were able to gain a considerable degree of legitimacy from society for their vision of transformation, though they clashed with groups that sought a different form of political order, generating extreme political polarisation. In such societies no agreed definitions of a legitimate political order emerged. In Romania, the withdrawal of the country from the war in August 1944, produced a revolutionary wave that the country's Communists were able to exploit that generated considerable political polarization. The presence of the Red Army was crucial to ensuring that those who adhered to a revolutionary vision of the post-war state persevered.<sup>21</sup> Different visions of the nation and the post-war social order led to civil war in Greece, and the eventual violent defeat of those who supported social revolution.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> - Carol S. Lilly *Power and Persuasion: Ideology and Rhetoric in Communist Yugoslavia 1944-1953* (Westview Press, Boulder CO & Oxford, 2001); Andrew Baruch Wachtel *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* (Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 1998)

<sup>19</sup> - Miranda Vickers *Albania: A Modern History* (I.B. Taurus, London, 1999)

<sup>20</sup> - Vesselin Dimitrov "Revolutions Released: Stalin, the Bulgarian Communist Party, and the Establishment of the Cominform", in Francesca Gori & Silvio Pons (eds.), *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1945-1953*, (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1996), pp.272-89

<sup>21</sup> - Keith Hitchins *Romania 1866-1947* (Oxford University Press, New York & Oxford, 1994); Gábor Hunya (ed.) *România 1944-1990: Gazdaság- és Politikatörténete* (Atlantisz Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1990); Thomas Kunze *Nicolae Ceaușescu: o biografie*, trans. Alexandru Teodorescu (Editura Vreimea, București,



In view of the violent outcome of Greece's struggle for legitimacy, the defeat of its social revolution, and the persistence of the weakness of legitimate state authority in Greece well into the post-war years, it belongs as much to a southern European variant of the transition in legitimacy, as it does to a south-eastern European one. In Spain, the crisis of legitimate state authority had resulted in the explosion of political conflict a decade before that in Greece. While power was formally occupied by the victorious nationalists in 1939, the Franco regime was only able to consolidate its victory through politics of cultural isolation and repression by the late 1940s. Yet even this was insufficient to bring about a durable consolidation of the regime, based upon a partial legitimacy, which came about as a result of policies of economic liberalization and modernization launched at the end of the 1950s.<sup>23</sup> Another variant of the southern European pattern was provided by Portugal, where an inter-war crisis in legitimacy had been resolved through the creation of a right-wing authoritarian regime after 1926. Geographically isolated from the rest of the continent, the upheaval of war had no immediate effect on the regime, though post-war transformation elsewhere brought a slow decay in the ideological cement that bound the regime to its social base.<sup>24</sup>

Thus the south-eastern European and southern European transitions in legitimacy represented extreme manifestations of the effect of the weakness of legitimate state authority on political transformation in a period of intense conflict. In between these and the more clear-cut north-western European transitions, lay those in Central Europe.

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2002), pp.68-111; Alfred J. Rieber "The Crack in the Plaster: Crisis in Romania and the Origins of the Cold War", *The Journal of Modern History*, 76, 1, pp. 62-106, March 2004

<sup>22</sup> - Mark Mazower *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44* (Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1993); Mark Mazower (ed.) *After the War Was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation and State in Greece, 1943-1960* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ & London, 2000); John S. Koliopoulos *Plundered Loyalties: World War II and Civil War in Greek West Macedonia* (New York University Press, New York, 1999)

<sup>23</sup> - Mike Richards, *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco's Spain, 1936-1945*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1998); Mike Richards "'Terror and Progress': Industrialization, Modernity and the Making of Francoism" in Helen Graham & Jo Labanyi (eds.) *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Oxford University Press, Oxford & New York, 1995), pp.173-82; Angela Cennarro "Elite, Party, Church: Pillars of the Francoist 'New State' in Aragon, 1936-1945", *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 4, pp.461-86, October 1998

<sup>24</sup> - António Costa Pinto *Salazar's Dictatorship and European Fascism: Problems of Interpretation*, (Social Science Monographs, Boulder CO, 1995), pp. 147-208

Across Central Europe civil societies were characterized by majorities who supported forms of democratized and renewed conservative politics, and minorities who supported various forms of left-wing, revolutionary projects akin to those pursued in south-east Europe. In Hungary and Slovakia, these revolutionary minorities were stronger than elsewhere in the region, given the relative weakness of the alternative left-wing project of social democracy/socialism.<sup>25</sup> This was not true in Germany where the Communists, supported in the Soviet zone by the occupation authorities, faced the restoration of the local variant of social democracy with a broad base of support, that rested on continuities inherited from the pre-1933 period.<sup>26</sup> Nor was it the case in Austria where the Communists' marginal position in so far as its support base was concerned was clear from 1945, even though the presence of Soviet troops in the country's eastern provinces meant that a transition to a political order based on revolutionary strategies of legitimation was something feared by the anti-communist majority well into the 1950s.<sup>27</sup> While political outcomes in these states differed, with West Germany and Austria developing political orders that conformed to the north-western European pattern by the mid-1950s, as Hungary, Slovakia and East Germany joined the Soviet bloc, their transitions can nevertheless be grouped together. The dynamics of a struggle for legitimacy characterized by a clash between conservative majorities and a more radical political project – which enjoyed varying degrees of support in each of the states – shaped the political cultures that underpinned the post-war order despite the differing political outcomes in the various states.

The states that bordered these countries all experienced variants of these Central European transitions. Finland's transition, like many in Central Europe, was characterised

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<sup>25</sup> - For a history of post-war Czechoslovakia that treats the Slovak and Czech parts of the state as distinctive entities see Martin Myant *Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1948* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge & New York, 1981); for Hungary see Mark Pittaway "The Politics of Legitimacy and Hungary's Postwar Transition", *Contemporary European History*, Vol.14, No.4, pp.453-75, November 2004

<sup>26</sup> - Jörg Echterkamp *Nach dem Krieg. Alltagsnot, Neuorientierung und die Last der Vergangenheit 1945-1949* (Pendo Verlag, Zürich, 2003), pp. 111-32; Gareth Pritchard, *The making of the GDR: From antifascism to Stalinism*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 2000)

<sup>27</sup> - On the Communists in post-war eastern Austria see Hans Chmelar "Partei ohne Chance. Die KPÖ im Burgenland 1945/46" in Johann Seedoch (ed.) *Beiträge zur Landeskunde der burgenländisch-westungarischen Raumes. Festschrift für Harald Prickler zum 60. Geburtstag* (Burgenländischen Landesbibliothek, Eisenstadt, 1994), pp.50-68

by a deep split between those who sought a reconstruction of the state based on revolutionary legitimacy, and those concerned to protect Finland's autonomy from its Soviet neighbours. The polarization that characterised the early cold war years bolstered Finland's anti-communist majority, providing the social base of a political system akin to its Scandinavian neighbours, underpinned internationally by guarantees of neutrality.<sup>28</sup> Poland's clash between different political visions was accompanied by violent civil conflict, that to some extent, made it as much like south-eastern European states, such as Romania or Bulgaria.<sup>29</sup> In the Czech Lands, Communists advancing a strategy of revolutionary legitimation found themselves in a position of power and with a substantial base of support as a result of an anti-fascist national consensus. This consensus, which non-Communist political parties bought into, gave the Communists political cover to lay the foundations of future social revolution. The anti-fascist consensus supported social revolutionary goals only to an extent, however, limiting the extent of the Communists' exercise of legitimate power and leading to growing political polarization, which in turn led to the creation of overt dictatorship. This particular transition can be characterized as the temporary acquisition, then erosion of legitimacy, that in turn led to dictatorship.<sup>30</sup>

The Italian and French cases were more complex still in that they combined aspects of the north-western, central and southern European transitions. As in southern Europe, social revolutionary pressure produced social polarization which led to the defeat of post-war demands for radical change. Unlike in the rest of southern Europe, however, this defeat did not represent the creation of a dictatorship that sought the outright elimination of the left, but merely a set of political arrangements that rested on nominally democratic institutions, which contained the left. However, hegemonic notions of legitimacy that rested on concepts of republican nationalism were shared by the Communists and other political actors alike. These hegemonic notions of legitimacy provided the cultural

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<sup>28</sup> - Osmo Jussila, Seppo Hentilä, & Jukka Nevakivi, *From Grand Duchy to a Modern State: A Political History of Finland since 1809*, translated by David & Eva-Kaisa Arter, (Hurst & Company, London, 1999), pp. 217-51

<sup>29</sup> - John Coutovidis & Jaime Reynolds *Poland 1939-1947* (Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1987)

<sup>30</sup> - Bradley F. Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism*, (Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2004); Benjamin Frommer, *National Cleansing: Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge & New York, 2004)

backdrop that allowed the Communists to behave in ways which bolstered the legitimacy of a political system that sought their containment. The experience of the collapse of fascism, Italy's formal withdrawal from the war, and the subsequent German occupation of northern and central Italy produced a specific set of circumstances at war's end. In the north of the country, resistance provided the base for the hegemony of revolutionary strategies of legitimation that spread from the industrial centres of Lombardy and Piedmont through Central Italy. This was, however, contested by an alternative centre-right, Christian-democratic grouping centred on the agrarian populations of the south and north-east. The outcome of political struggle remained unclear throughout the mid-1940s, and while the occupation of the state by the Christian Democrats was sealed by the 1948 elections, the construction of a form of legitimate state authority through which the left was contained, based upon the left's paradoxical acceptance of this containment and thus the integration of a previously potentially revolutionary constituency into the political system, was a slow, protracted and partial process, which continued throughout the 1950s.<sup>31</sup> In France, meanwhile, as in much of north-western Europe transition was underpinned by a project of the restoration of a "renewed" nation and state after the humiliation of military capitulation in 1940. The meanings of national renewal were profoundly contested within French society, with actors on the left advancing a revolutionary notion of national renewal that clashed with alternative, more conservative projects. This clash produced social polarization, and as in Italy, the exclusion and containment of the Communists. Though, just as in Italy, the hegemony of a notion of legitimacy that rested on a republican nationalism was bought into by both left and right, allowing the left, to an extent, to buy into a political settlement, which paradoxically reinforced its containment. Furthermore the projects of national renewal confronted, especially in so far as decolonization was concerned, the relative weakness of the French state, and social polarization produced political instability throughout the 1950s. The consolidation of a form of partial, legitimate state authority – which, as in Italy, excluded

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<sup>31</sup> - Paul Ginsborg *A History of Contemporary Italy, 1943-1988* (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1990), pp.39-185; Frederike Hausmann *Kleine Geschichte Italiens von 1945 bis Berlusconi* (Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, Berlin, 2002), pp. 11-43

those who supported the radical left – was only brought by the creation of the Fifth Republic after 1958.<sup>32</sup>

When transitions in legitimacy are added to our consideration of the dynamics of the construction of the post-war order in Europe a more complex picture of political change emerges, than is suggested by a simple concentration on the realities of geo, or elite politics. Yet, behind the patterns of diversity that existed between different European states and regions, what is more striking when one examines these changes from the perspective of legitimacy are the patterns of unity within the transformation of political culture that lay behind these divergences. In order to explore these patterns of unity and to analyze the operation of legitimacy in concrete terms we wish to concentrate on four areas: First, the attempts of actors to seek degrees of democratic legitimation through the mechanism of election. Second, the use of retributive justice by new post-war governments in order to distance themselves from the regimes of fascist and occupation Europe. Third, the issues connected with military occupation and fourth, those connected with economic reconstruction.

With the end of the Second World War, Europe's political elites, of both right and left, committed themselves rhetorically to a nominally democratic system of government, emphasizing their wish to hold elections in which the people at least nominally chose their governments as soon as possible after the end of the war. Europe's new political actors differed about what they meant by a democratic system of political rule; in north-western Europe it meant a restoration of the kinds of liberal democratic institutions that had existed before the onset of fascism, albeit in a modified form. This deep-seated commitment to a liberal interpretation of democracy based on competitive election was shared across Europe by political actors on the reconstructed centre-right and by most of the continent's social democrats. Austria's Social Democrats, reconstructed as the Socialist Party (SPÖ) affirmed their commitment to "a democratic country" even if there

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<sup>32</sup> - Robert Gildea, *France since 1945*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2002), pp.35-64; Andrew Sherman, *Rethinking France: Plans for Renewal 1940-1946*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989); Richard Vinen *Bourgeois Politics in France, 1945-1951*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1995)

was “no majority for socialism” within it.<sup>33</sup> Yet even at the level of the rhetoric of political elites it was clear in 1945 that democracy was a concept that was contested by different political actors, as for Europe’s communists it had a distinctly more radical content. For Mátyás Rákosi, secretary for Hungary’s Communists (MKP), it meant as much a state which led to the “full economic and political realization of the power of the working class” as one based on representative political institutions.<sup>34</sup> This tension between different concepts of democracy was already shaping differences in the attitudes of political leaders to elections during the first two years of post-war Europe. In Yugoslavia and Albania in late 1945, Bulgaria in October 1946, Romania in the following month, Poland in January and Hungary in August 1947, elections were more about ensuring that communist parties achieved the outward semblance of democratic legitimacy than ensuring that the citizens of those countries had any meaningful choice of rulers.<sup>35</sup>

The very fact that such political actors used elections as legitimating mechanisms, even as they planned to create dictatorships, was testimony to the influence of a profound change in popular expectations regarding the proper relationship between rulers and the ruled brought about by the war. Notions of popular sovereignty were central to the political cultures of post-war Europe, as a result of the general discrediting of right-wing authoritarianism. In defeated axis states this stemmed from a perception that the dreams of leaders for territory had led the populations to disaster. In eastern Austria in early 1945, as the political authority of the National Socialist regime collapsed in the face of the imminent arrival of the Red Army, the population blamed the regime in Berlin for the impending disaster they believed would overtake them.<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere the slow crisis of occupation regimes profoundly discredited collaborationist right-wing authoritarian

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<sup>33</sup> - See Fritz Weber “Die Angst der Parteiführung vorm Klassenkampf. Die SPÖ 1945-1950” in Peter Pelinka & Gerhard Steger (eds.) *Auf dem Weg zur Staatspartei. Zur Geschichte und Politik der SPÖ seit 1945* (Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, Wien, 1988), pp.16-7

<sup>34</sup> - Quoted in Mark Pittaway “The Politics of Legitimacy and Hungary’s Postwar Transition”, final draft for *Contemporary European History*, p. 15

<sup>35</sup> - See my overview of fraudulent post-war elections in Mark Pittaway *Eastern Europe, 1939-2000* (Hodder Arnold, London, 2004), pp.47-8

<sup>36</sup> - Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv St. Pölten (Archives of the Province of Lower Austria, hereafter NÖLA), Gau Niederdonau, Ia-10/B.nm.208/Karton 63 Lageberichte 1945; Der Landrat des Kreises Eisenstadt, Zl.Präs65-1945. Betrifft: Lagebericht für den Monat Jänner 1945

movements right across the continent.<sup>37</sup> Even in those states marked by extensive “collaboration” such as Hungary, the memory of the wartime demonstration of the power of the state directed against its own citizens, especially its Jewish citizens, provoked a sense of both shame and unease – even among those who had held anti-semitic opinions - that stimulated in turn protests against actions of the state that were perceived as violent and arbitrary in the post-war years.<sup>38</sup> This led to a marked shift in popular perceptions of what constituted legitimate political authority. War experiences threw up demands for the placing of limits on state power, that state intervention be re-focused on the immediate needs of communities and that it be justified through a notion of popular sovereignty that formally subordinated leaders to the ruled. In view of this shift those political movements or charismatic leaders that either aimed to lead by consent or were able to present themselves as servants of the “people” found themselves able to access legitimacy to a greater degree than those that did not. The marked illegitimacy of certain socialist leaders’ in the eastern half of the continent that was revealed by Khrushchev’s denunciation of “the cult of personality” in 1956 was testimony to a shift in these societies that occurred a decade earlier.<sup>39</sup> This shift in popular expectations of political leadership, in which charismatic leaders were forced to justify their rule with reference to popular wishes rather than ideological programmes, was accompanied by a popular demand that responsibility for government be shared by rulers and ruled. This particular shift created a climate which allowed free and competitive elections to be seen by populations as the norm; it underpinned the way in which fraudulent elections in states like Hungary in August 1947 came to symbolize for neighboring populations, like those of Austria, the kinds of political system they did not wish to see created on their soil.<sup>40</sup> Even after the institutionalization of socialist dictatorship in Central and Eastern Europe,

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<sup>37</sup> - See Romijn “Niederlande – “Synthese”, Säuberung und Integration”; Wouters “New order and good government: municipal administration in Belgium”; Denis Peschanski “Legitimacy/Legitimation/Delegitimation: France in the Dark Years, a textbook case”, *Contemporary European History*, Vol.13, No.4, pp.409-23, November 2004; Hans-Fredrik Dahl *Quisling: A Study in Treachery*, trans. Anne-Marie Stanton-Ife (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1999)

<sup>38</sup> - See the language in which Hungary’s local non-Communist (in this case social democratic) press used to protest the expulsion of local ethnic Germans - “Akiket elvittek, és akik itt maradtak”, *Mosonmagyaróvári Barátság* (2 June, 1946), p.2

<sup>39</sup> - Mark Pittaway “Industrial Workers, Socialist Industrialization and the State in Hungary, 1948-1958” (PhD. Thesis, University of Liverpool, 1998), pp.325-53.

<sup>40</sup> - BgLA A/VIII-14/I-2; Bezirkshauptmannschaft Oberpullendorf. Zahl: Pr.-244/19. Oberpullendorf, am 30. Sept.1947. Lagebericht für September 1947.

the refusal of populations to accept the legitimacy of the single-list elections was widespread. During Hungary's 1949 elections agitators were faced with opposition from people who demanded to know why they "should vote when there is no choice, and no opposition to vote for".<sup>41</sup>

Behind this apparent democratization of popular expectations of politics lay demands for the reconstruction of the state as a "protector", focused on the immediate and largely local needs of populations in the immediate post-war context. This can be illustrated particularly with references to the political responses to crime waves in post-war Central Europe. "Liberated" eastern Austria was characterized by widespread violent crime between 1945 and 1947, and considerable fear among the largely rural population of the Soviet troops and displaced persons who were widely believed to be responsible. Village local authorities, in the absence of functioning police forces, organized their own irregular police forces from among the village residents to protect property and people against those they saw as unwelcome outsiders.<sup>42</sup> Denied the right to carry arms by the local occupation authorities and unable to face down armed and dangerous opponents, the attempts of village authorities to organize their own irregular police were quickly replaced by overwhelming demands on the part of the population that the provincial government increase the resources and powers of the gendarmerie and that the occupation authorities allow them to carry arms.<sup>43</sup> In western Hungary, in the context of a similar crime wave, the "overly political" role of the newly reconstructed police was sharply criticized, as it had to confront popular demands that it pay more attention to conventional petty and violent crime instead.<sup>44</sup>

The shifts in legitimacy that underpinned popular insistence on a limited and accountable politics combined with demands for a protective state that met local needs had deeply ambiguous meanings when set against conventional understandings of left and right,

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<sup>41</sup> - GyMSMGy.L.X. fond402/PTO/20ö.e.; Győr, 1949 április 26. Jelentés

<sup>42</sup> - BgLA A/VIII-11/VI; Gemeindeamt Deutsch-Jahrndorf. Deutsch-Jahrndorf, am 12. Juli 1960. Zl:207/1960. Betr.: Ereignisse 1945-1956, Bericht

<sup>43</sup> - BgLA A/VIII-14/V-1; Landesgendarmeriekommando für das Burgenland. Situationsbericht für die Zeit vom 1. bis 30. Juni 1946. Eisenstadt, am 1. Juli 1946

<sup>44</sup> - For such complaints in the western Hungarian town of Sopron see "Komoly munka folyik a városházán", *Soproni Újság* (14 October, 1945), p.4



restoration and renewal or notions of distrust of or support for state intervention. As Austrian Communists were quick to recognize, demands for more state provided law-and-order played into the hands of gendarmerie officers who had backed both the National Socialist regime and the authoritarian *Ständestaat* that preceded it.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, however, the change in the tone of politics that the shifts in popular expectations of the state generated produced a political culture across most of Europe, that was more democratic than that which had existed prior to the war, even if it was more conservative than some of the more radical political actors wished it to be. Perhaps the most striking cultural expression of this shift, outside Germany at least, was the hegemony of a democratic, patriotic political discourse. In many cases this was closely allied to a “myth” of the wartime of resistance as the bearers of a homogeneous, national, anti-fascist sentiment. This was particularly marked in societies like Yugoslavia, where a radically, democratic “resistance”-based patriotism was deployed to legitimate social revolution.<sup>46</sup> In politically divided Italy, democratic patriotism based on the notion that the end of fascism heralded national renewal equivalent to “a new Risorgimento” was advanced, at least in the immediate postwar years, in a way which masked the real ideological differences between significant anti-fascist political actors.<sup>47</sup> In many contexts, especially where Communist traditions were strong, this democratic patriotism was tied to a tradition of the “popular front” which cast the left as the representative of a progressive, national tradition.<sup>48</sup> Often, however, the attempts of left-wing or resistance-based groupings to deploy a radical version of patriotism ran into trouble as even the democratized versions of national identity placed hidden limits on the radicalism of their vision of change. In Hungary, Communist attempts to legitimate their hegemony through the use of patriotic discourse were limited, among other things, by the actions of

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<sup>45</sup> - In some places, like the eastern Austrian village of Frauenkirchen this led to violence between local Communists and the gendarmerie, see BgLA Bezirkshauptmannschaft Neusiedl am See (Office of District Commissioner Neusiedl am See) Verschiedenes XI-1945; Gendarmerieabteilungskommando Eisenstadt Nr.1, E. Nr.224. Frauenkirchen, Posten, Überfall auf desselben. An das Landesgendarmeriekommando f.d. Brgld. Neusiedl a. See, 21.Okt. 1945.

<sup>46</sup> - Drago Roksandic “Shifting References: Celebrations of Uprisings in Croatia, 1945-1991”, *East European Politics and Societies*, 9 (2): 1999, pp.256-71

<sup>47</sup> - See Donald Sassoon “Italy after Fascism: the Predicament of Dominant Narratives” in Bessel & Schumann (eds.) *Life After Death*, pp.259-90

<sup>48</sup> - For Hungary see Martin Mevius, *Agents of Moscow: The Hungarian Communist Party and the Origins of Socialist Patriotism 1941-1953*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2005)

neighboring states, particularly Czechoslovakia, who used anti-fascist discourse to justify attempts to expel Slovakia's Magyars; a step which sparked painful memories of the post-World War One Treaty of Trianon within Hungary itself, thus reviving more conservative discourses of patriotism.<sup>49</sup> In Austria, patriotic discourse placed more subtle limits on radical change in that they celebrated local and provincial traditions that stressed the preservation of the apparently timeless in a period of upheaval and uncertainty.<sup>50</sup> In post-war Belgium it emphasized the cultural continuity of the state, thus closing off the possibility of radical political change, and bolstering the restoration of pre-war political institutions.<sup>51</sup>

The same patterns of tradition and change were visible in the patterns of the political affiliations of post-war Europeans, such as they were revealed by elections between 1945 and 1951. Perhaps the most striking feature of the free elections in Europe were the limits they revealed to the support for large-scale social change; the political map of central and north-western Europe was characterized above all by support for anti-socialist, Christian democratic parties, even though they offered a thoroughly different kind of right-wing politics to that which had been on offer in the inter-war years. The new centre-right parties came from different starting points, Austria's Peoples' Party (ÖVP) established itself on the basis of the social networks left by the inter-war Christian Socials, the dominant party of the years between the wars and the one responsible for the end of political pluralism in 1934. Hungary's Smallholders' were based on the pro-land reform, yet nevertheless right-wing opposition to the dominant conservative oligarchy of the inter-war years, while other organizations like West Germany's Christian Democratic parties (CDU/CSU), Italy's *Democrazia Cristiana*, or France's *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (MRP) emerged from inter-war traditions of political Catholicism, though they were all substantially new parties. All these parties drew substantially on catholic political activism and benefited considerably from the importance of religion in shaping the cultural identities of many of their middle-class and rural supporters. In some cases,

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<sup>49</sup> - See Ferenc Radó "Két magyar fiu kálváriás utja a szlovák deportálás elől-Sopronig", *Soproni Újság* (25 February, 1947), p.2

<sup>50</sup> - For a good example of this see *Burgenländische Freiheit* (27 October 1946), p.1

<sup>51</sup> - Conway "The Cultures of Belgian Patriotism"

particularly that of DC, they were able to expand their base of support through the political polarization that resulted from the existence of a powerful Communist opponent; the DC increased its vote from 35.21 percent in elections to Italy's constituent assembly in 1946 to 48.51 in the elections of 1948, in such a climate.<sup>52</sup> Others, like the MRP, however, failed to benefit in similar circumstances and were instead squeezed by the rise of other right-wing formations.<sup>53</sup> What was perhaps more important was that these christian democratic parties were able to reflect the anti-socialist majorities in most of the central and north-western European states on the one hand, while they were able on the other to combine conservative appeal with the demands among their support base for a more muted, democratic form of politics than that which had been advanced by right-wing formations in the inter-war years. They were also able to offer a vision of the state, which was both distinctively anti-socialist, yet captured the desire for greater intervention in the economic and social spheres, particularly that which would protect the interests of white-collar employees, and the agrarian population, though it also ensured that these parties were sufficiently open to those sections of the industrial working-class to whom religious values were important.<sup>54</sup>

While post-war elections revealed the relative ascendancy of a new kind of centre-right politics that addressed the anti-socialism of most of the continent's rural and middle-class majority, the labour movement remained relatively isolated. Industrial working-class communities retained distinctive traditions, mentalities and cultures, but their political representatives, outside post-war Scandinavia, and to a lesser extent Austria, were unable to build the kind of cross-class political alliances that would enable them to play a part in democratic politics, at least as anything more than a powerful minority. This is not to say

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<sup>52</sup> - See the figures in György Fábian & Imre László Kovács *Parlamenti Választások az Európai Unió Országában (1945-2002)* (Osiris, Budapest, 2004), p.372

<sup>53</sup> - Ferenc Gazdag "A Mouvement Républicain Populaire (1944-1958): Ideológia és gyakorlat a francia MRP politikájában" in Jenő Gergely (ed.) *A Keresztény-Demokrácia Nyugat-Európában 1944-1958* (Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1980), pp.153-211

<sup>54</sup> - See Wolfgang C. Müller, Fritz Plasser & Peter A. Ulram "Wähler und Mitglieder der ÖVP, 1945-1994" in Robert Kriechbaumer & Franz Schausberger (eds.) *Volkspartei – Anspruch und Realität*, pp.163-4; Jenő Horváth "A Democrazia Cristiana" in Gergely (ed.) *A Keresztény-Demokrácia Nyugat-Európában*, pp.104-5; Wilfried Becker "Die CDU im demokratischen Neubeginn 1945/46: Motive der Gründung und parteipolitischer Standort" in Günther Rüter (ed.) *Geschichte der christlich-demokratischen und christlich-sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland*, Vol.1, (Schriftenreihe der Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 216, Bonn, 1984), pp.333-360

that the war had undermined powerful traditions of working-class protest.<sup>55</sup> The persistence of the strike and a range of more informal forms of on-the-job protest as weapons in the workplace, suggested powerful continuities in work culture with the pre-war years, despite the material disruption such communities experienced as a consequence of war.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore there was deep anger in many working class communities at miserable living conditions in the immediate post-war years. Organized hunger marches in working-class eastern Austrian towns to protest at restrictions in rations or price rises marked them out from their less proletarian counterparts<sup>57</sup>, and similar phenomena were experienced in industrial Hungary.<sup>58</sup> Yet the position of the working class as a minority across much of Europe would determine the political fortunes of the labour movement during the immediate post-war years.

In terms of the political representation of the labour movement, the most important trend to be revealed was the nature of support for communism and its limits. With the exception of the Czech regions of Czechoslovakia, where the Communists were able to build on the experience of resistance to German occupation, popular post-war anti-fascism and the prestige of the Soviet Union to win 38 percent in Czechoslovakia's 1946 elections, Communist parties were in a minority everywhere. The prestige of their role in the resistance and the relative weakness of social democratic/socialist parties in the post-war climate allowed them to make significant breakthroughs in France where their vote reached a post-war peak of 28.59 percent in November 1946, and in Italy with 18.93

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<sup>55</sup> - This is to disagree with those who argue that the pressures of war smashed the traditions of protest of the industrial working-class. For this position see Martin Conway "The Social Normalization of Belgium 1945-7" (mss.), pp.4-8; Weber ""Die Angst der Parteiführung vorm Klassenkampf", pp.11; Klaus-Dieter Mulley "Der Österreichische Gewerkschaftsbund 1945-1959" in Wolfgang Maderthaler (ed.) *Auf dem Weg zur Macht. Integration in den Staat, Sozialpartnerschaft und Regierungspartei* (Löcker Verlag, Wien, 1992), p.79

<sup>56</sup> - This is powerfully suggested by much of the work on the social history of work in Central and Eastern Europe, see Mark Pittaway "The Reproduction of Hierarchy: Skill, Working-Class Culture and the State in Early Socialist Hungary", *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 74, No. 4, pp.737-69, December 2002; Peter Heumos "Aspekte des Sozialen Milieus der Industriearbeiterschaft in der Tschechoslowakei vom Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs bis zur Reformbewegung der Sechziger Jahre", *Bohemia*, 42 (2), 2001, pp.323-62; Helke Stadtland *Herrschaft nach Plan und Macht der Gewohnheit: Sozialgeschichte der Gewerkschaften in der SBZ/DDR 1945-1953* (Klartext Verlag, Essen, 2001)

<sup>57</sup> - BgLA Bezirkshauptmannschaft Mattersburg (District Commissioner, Mattersburg, hereafter BH Mattersburg) XI-1948-1950-Situationsberichten; Gendarmerieposten Neudörfel

<sup>58</sup> - Politikátörténeti és Szakszervezeti Levéltár (Archive of Political History and of Trade Unions, hereafter PtSzL) SZKL Szaktanács/16d./1946; Felsőgalla-Ujtelep .....

percent in the same year. In Hungary, where they polled 16.95 percent in November 1945, they were aided by the relative unpopularity of local social democrats among the working class and the popular memory of the short-lived Soviet republic in 1919. In much of Central and Eastern Europe, and to a lesser extent in Italy, they attempted to turn to the poorer sections of the rural population as supporters of radical land reform to win support, but, outside south-eastern Europe, only with distinctly mixed results. Within the political system of the immediate post-war years they represented a strong polarizing force in both halves of Europe. While fear of them among the majority of the population played a key role in shaping political systems organized around the political right in France, Italy and in the western zones of Germany, and it helped cement consensus politics in Austria, in Soviet-occupied eastern Europe, Communist parties attempted to mobilize the working class and rural poor around a rhetoric of class struggle. The dialectic of the mobilization of a subordinate minority against the majority and the polarization that followed in the wake of mobilization, generated a pattern of social conflict within Central and Eastern societies, which later became internationalized in the climate of the cold war.<sup>59</sup>

In many European states, however, social democracy, or socialism, remained dominant on the left. This was at its most marked in Scandinavia, where patterns of social democratic dominance in co-operation with agrarian parties had developed in the 1930s and persisted into the 1950s.<sup>60</sup> In Austria, the SPÖ were able to depend on patterns of political affiliation among the urban working class that had grown in opposition to right-wing federal governments and the brief dictatorship prior to 1938 so as to marginalize the Communists who were in turn compromised by the behaviour of Soviet occupation authorities in the east of the country.<sup>61</sup> The revival of pre-war political cleavages helped the SPD to quickly surpass the Communists as the main party on the German left, not only in the western zones, but prior to its enforced union in eastern Germany with the

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<sup>59</sup> - For Romania see Rieber "The Crack in the Plaster"; for Hungary see Pittaway "The Politics of Legitimacy"

<sup>60</sup> - Stein Rokkan "The Growth and Structuring of Mass Politics", in Allart et al. (eds.) *Nordic Democracy*, pp.53-79

<sup>61</sup> - Weber ""Die Angst der Parteiführung vorm Klassenkampf"; Mulley "Der Österreichische Gewerkschaftsbund"

KPD in 1946, in the Soviet zone as well.<sup>62</sup> Europe's social democrats, outside Scandinavia, however, were weakened in their attempts to become equal competitors for power by two different processes. The first of these was their failure in the immediate post-war years to broaden their appeal to middle-class and rural social groups. In much of north-western continental Europe this left social democrats with slightly less than a third of the vote through the late 1940s. The second was that they suffered from the polarization of European politics between Communists and anti-Communists that characterized and to some extent drove Europe's slide into the cold war, generating a markedly anti-socialist climate in the continent by the end of the decade, which hindered social democrats in seeking new sources of support. The one exception to this rule was Austria, where the SPÖ joined the ÖVP in grand coalition, gaining support from their centre-right coalition partners for social reforms in exchange for maintaining a solid anti-Communist front and securing working-class consent for the painful economic measures necessary to integrate Austria into the western economic sphere.<sup>63</sup>

The last most important trend that emerged from early post-war elections was the failure of the resistance to generate a really lasting presence in post-war politics as an independent voice for itself. In the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and Norway it all but disappeared in the immediate post-war period as established patterns of political affiliation quickly re-asserted themselves. The resistance "myth", however, remained an enduring legacy of wartime activism, embedding itself in political culture.<sup>64</sup> In Italy, while all the major parties of the immediate post-war period, particularly the Communists, sought to draw on the legacy of the resistance for their legitimacy, the spirit of resistance was briefly represented in politics by the *Partito d' Azione*, led by the first post-war Prime Minister, Ferruccio Parri. Yet by the 1946 elections, crippled by internal division, it had been consigned – with only 1.5 percent of the votes cast – to the margins

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<sup>62</sup> - Echternkamp *Nach dem Krieg*, pp. 115-20

<sup>63</sup> - On the social and political underpinning of the grand coalition see Ernst Hanisch *Der Lange Schatten des Staates. Österreichische Gesellschaftsgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert* (Ueberreuter, Wien, 1994), pp.402-20

<sup>64</sup> - Romijn "Niederlande – "Synthese", Säuberung und Integration"; Martin Conway "Political Normalization and Elections: August 1945 to February 1946" (mss.); Olesen, Paper on Denmark (see note 10)

of the political system.<sup>65</sup> The partial and somewhat ambiguous exception to the rule of the disappearance of the resistance from post-war politics was that of Gaullism in France. De Gaulle's ability to capture legitimacy as a result of the collapse of Vichy and of German occupation and through liberation, left him with considerable resources to act politically into the post-war period.<sup>66</sup> De Gaulle's political movement, launched following his resignation from the presidency in January 1946, grew tremendously in the climate of political polarization that followed the exclusion of the Communists from the government in May 1947, taking 22.29 percent in the 1951 elections, achieved by votes gained from other right-wing parties.<sup>67</sup>

Though the resistance failed to enter the political arena as a significant actor in its own right during the post-war period, states right across the continent aimed to place distance between themselves and the fascist past, through the pursuit of politics of retribution. This was in part to contain the wave of "wild retribution" pursued against sections of the populations at the moment of "liberation", who were perceived to have transgressed the accepted norms of community during the period of occupation. In much of Europe "wild retribution" was a sporadic affair; in the rural eastern Austrian district of Neusiedl am See, popular demands for retribution were primarily directed against the small number of individuals who were felt to have infringed community norms during the Nazi takeover in March 1938, or who were regarded as having been especially zealous in their attempts to implement orders to evacuate villages in the face of Soviet advance during the first months of 1945.<sup>68</sup> Where the extent of conflict had been greater, "wild retribution" was especially widespread. In Italy as many as 12,000 people were estimated to have been killed by partisans as part of this wave of retribution at the end of the war.<sup>69</sup> In those parts of Central Europe, like the former Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and western Poland, where the occupation authorities had sought to re-draw the ethnic map, "wild retribution" took the form of widespread ethnic retribution against local Germans.

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<sup>65</sup> - Ginsborg *A History of Contemporary Italy*, p.99

<sup>66</sup> - Peschanski "Legitimacy/Legitimation/Delegitimation"

<sup>67</sup> - Paul-Marie de la Gorce *L'Après Guerre: Naissance de la France Moderne* (Bernard Garret, Paris, 1978), pp.381-407

<sup>68</sup> - BgLA BH Neusiedl am See, XI-N-A-Zeugnisse von Registrieten des Bezirkes, 1938-1948

<sup>69</sup> - Hans Woller *Die Abrechnung mit den Faschismus in Italien 1945 bis 1948* (Oldenbourg, München, 1996), p.280

The forced expulsion of 20,000 by the local authorities in the town of Brno was an extreme manifestation of what was termed “wild expulsion”.<sup>70</sup>

The retributive climate that accompanied liberation produced a wave of state sponsored “cleansing” right across Europe that was sponsored by both new states and occupation authorities alike. In both occupied Germany and Austria the widespread internment of National Socialist functionaries – around ninety-thousand in the British zone of Germany alone – was as much about securing political authority and eliminating opposition as it was about judicial retribution per se.<sup>71</sup> Public administrations were purged of those implicated in supported wartime regimes.<sup>72</sup> Measures against those believed to have committed “crimes” during the period of war and occupation were often radical, as states introduced a range of illiberal measures to deal with those found guilty of such infractions; the death penalty was re-introduced in a number of countries where it had been long since abolished, notably in Denmark and Norway, for the most serious offences, while courts were not reluctant to inflict prison sentences on those found guilty, which would have been seen as overly draconian by the standards of the pre-war years.<sup>73</sup> In Czechoslovakia, retributive legislation provided courts with draconian powers that resulted in widespread recourse to the death penalty.<sup>74</sup>

When one moves beyond the desire that united European states in pursuing policies of judicial retribution – namely the attempt to divide their rule from the regimes that had preceded them and to secure legitimacy by defining themselves against the standard of “criminal” wartime regimes – a picture emerges that reflected patterns of political

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<sup>70</sup> - Eagle Glassheim “National Mythologies and Ethnic Cleansing: The Expulsion of Czechoslovak Germans in 1945”, *Central European History*, Vol.33, No.4, pp.475-7, 2000

<sup>71</sup> - Lutz Niethammer “Allierte Internierungslager in Deutschland nach 1945. Vergleich und offene Fragen” in Christian Jansen (ed.) *Von der Aufgabe der Freiheit. Politische Verantwortung und bürgerliche Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (??, Berlin, 1995), pp. 469-92; Sebastian Meissl (ed.) *Verdrängte Schuld, verfehlte Schuld. Entnazifizierung in Österreich* (??, Wien, 1986), pp.??-??

<sup>72</sup> - Peschanski “Legitimacy/Legitimation/Delegitimation”, p.21

<sup>73</sup> - Hans Fredrik Dahl “Dealing with the Past in Scandinavia: Legal purges and popular memories of Nazism and World War II in Denmark and Norway after 1945” in Jon Elster (ed.) *Retriubtion and Restitution in the Transition to Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, forthcoming, 2005), pp. 9ff.

<sup>74</sup> - Benjamin Frommer “Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Post-War Czechoslovakia” (PhD. Thesis, Harvard University, 1999), p.2



diversity in wartime Europe. Communist parties, in particular, were among the most radical and determined to use processes of judicial retribution both to eliminate the traces of a “fascist” past, and lay the foundations of a “new” society. Consequently in the states where the Communist parties had most influence, in Central and Eastern Europe, the patterns of judicial retribution tended to go the furthest, including mass ethnic retribution against the German population. Furthermore, they merged with purges against political opponents of Communists in the police and civil services of the states of the region who stood in the way of attempts by the Communists to consolidate their rule. What is more, they were used deliberately and consciously as part of an attempt to legitimize the dominant political position of Communist parties, by stressing their anti-fascist identity, and occasionally casting their programme of radical social transformation as a continuance of the process of post-war “cleansing”.<sup>75</sup> Radical policies of retribution, both judicial and extra-judicial, employed in the interests of creating a new society were also implemented by the authoritarian right-wing regimes of southern Europe, which mirrored and often exceeded, the radicalism of Communist regimes. In post-Civil War Spain violence was systematically deployed motivated by an ideology that stressed the need to “cleanse” the country of elements that had supported the Republic.<sup>76</sup> Similar notions motivated post-civil war violence in Greece.<sup>77</sup> Elsewhere the intentions of new political elites were more moderate, and reflected the desire of leaders to both satisfy popular demands for retribution but to do so in way which would guarantee the stability of the state and ensure a swift return to normality. This was the intention behind judicial retribution in France, though this aim was achieved with only limited success.<sup>78</sup> In the Netherlands the implementation of judicial retribution was motivated by the need of the restored state to control the widespread process of “wild retribution” that spread throughout the country during the first half of 1945.<sup>79</sup> In Belgium state measures were

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<sup>75</sup> - For Central and Eastern Europe see the brief overview in Pittaway *Eastern Europe*, pp.39-43; Frommer “Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Post-War Czechoslovakia”; István Deák “Political Justice in Austria and Hungary after World War II”, Paper presented at the Mellon Seminar on Transitional Justice, Columbia University, May 1999

<sup>76</sup> - Richards, *A Time of Silence*, pp.26-46

<sup>77</sup> - See the essays in Mazower (ed.) *After the War Was Over*

<sup>78</sup> - Peschanski “Legitimacy/Legitimation/Delegitimation”, p.21

<sup>79</sup> - Romijn “Niederlande – “Synthese”, Säuberung und Integration”, pp.220-1

motivated by the need to draw a line under the popular demands for retribution, in order to enable some form of return to political and economic normality.<sup>80</sup>

While, in most of Europe retribution was in part driven by “a wave of public rage”<sup>81</sup> that spread through European societies during the first half of 1945, this “wave” very quickly lost momentum, as the radicalism of many aspects of judicial retribution came to clash with the localism, materialism, and scepticism towards ideological politics that characterised the moral economies of European citizens. The limits to which a judicial anti-fascism could be a real legitimating force in post-war Europe, given popular attitudes and expectations, were at their most clear in Central and Eastern Europe, when rulers attempted to extend the scope of retribution beyond the prosecution of those who were seen to have breached commonly shared norms. This lay behind the failure of the attempts of Czechoslovakia’s Communists to extend retribution in order to win legitimacy for their anti-capitalist vision of the country’s future.<sup>82</sup> When Hungary’s Communist-dominated police sought to extend the scope of internment and retribution as part of a drive to criminalize the entire inter-war regime, such steps provoked protest. In the town of Sopron members of the Smallholders’ party openly compared the local internment camp, set up for alleged “fascists”, to those run in 1919 by the Soviet Republic and then in 1944 by the Gestapo.<sup>83</sup> Outside the highly charged political atmosphere of Central and Eastern Europe, where measures of judicial retribution were especially widespread they also ran up against resistance from local populations. In eastern Austria, local populations and even local authorities made up of the democratic parties opposed the internment of former National Socialists on the grounds that many were skilled craftsmen and local smallholders who were essential to the reconstruction effort in their communities.<sup>84</sup> The unpopularity of internment fuelled complaints in the

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<sup>80</sup> - Martin Conway “February-August 1945: Revolution and Realism”, p.3

<sup>81</sup> - Dahl “Dealing with the Past in Scandinavia”, p.1 f.; Jon Elster, *Closing the Books: Transitional Justice in Historical Perspective*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 2004), Chapter 8

<sup>82</sup> - Benjamin Frommer “Retribution as Legitimation: The Uses of Political Justice in Postwar Czechoslovakia”, *Contemporary European History*, Vol.13, No.4, pp. 477-92, November 2004

<sup>83</sup> - “A soproni internáló-tábor szörnyűségei a közigazgatási bizottság előtt”, *Soproni Újság* (17 November, 1945), pp.1-2

<sup>84</sup> - BgLA BH Neusiedl am See XI-125/45; Stadtgemeinde Neusiedl am See. Zl.667. Neusiedl am See, am 9. Mai 1946

region that only the “little Nazis” were being punished, while those responsible for “real” crimes went free.<sup>85</sup>

The limits of post-war anti-fascism were most disturbingly visible in the popular attitudes to survivors and victims of National Socialist policies of racist extermination. For Jewish survivors of Nazi extermination camps, finding public space to voice their experiences in the climate of Europe in the immediate post-war period was difficult. The dominant reaction to the knowledge of extermination seems to have been a deep-seated, enforced silence about its reality among the vast majority of Europeans. There was little appetite for any widespread “reckoning with the past”, among a population obsessed with their own physical and material security.<sup>86</sup> Among large sections of the population across the continent, anti-semitic attitudes persisted, which manifested themselves in isolated acts of violence against returnees, which were most marked in tense atmosphere of Central Europe in post-war period.<sup>87</sup> In Kunmadaras in Hungary, as in a variety of other locations in the county, as well as in Slovakia and Poland, anti-semitism manifested itself in a limited number of open pogroms.<sup>88</sup> It was not only anti-semitism that stubbornly persisted into the early post-war period, but racist attitudes towards members of other groups who had been targeted by Nazi racial policy. Survivors from among Burgenland’s Roma faced repressive police policies well into the 1960s, motivated and driven by popular and official hostility towards them, while both provincial and the Austrian federal authorities failed to recognise fully that they had been targets of policies of racial extermination well into the post-war period.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> - BgLA BH Neusiedl am See XI-125/45; Bezirkshauptmannschaft Neusiedl a.See. Zahl:XI-125/1. Neusiedl am See, 14.2.1946

<sup>86</sup> - Pieter Lagrou, “Victims of Genocide and National Memory: Belgium, France and the Netherlands, 1945-1965”, *Past & Present*, No. 154, pp. 181-22, February 1997; Michael Brenner, *After the Holocaust: Rebuilding Jewish Lives in Postwar Germany*, translated by Barbara Harshav, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1997); K.H. Adler, *Jews and Gender in Liberation France*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge & New York, 2003)

<sup>87</sup> - Heinz P. Wassermann, *Naziland Österreich!? Studien zu Antisemitismus, Nation und Nationalsozialismus in öffentlichen Meinungsbild*, (Studien Verlag, Innsbruck, 2002), pp. 11-79

<sup>88</sup> - For events in Kunmadaras, see Péter Apor, “A népi demokrácia építése. Kunmadaras 1946”, *Századok*, Vol. 132, No.3, pp. 601-32, 1998

<sup>89</sup> - Gerhard Baumgartner, & Florian Freund, *Die Burgenland Roma, 1945-2000*, (Burgenländischen Landesarchiv, Eisenstadt, 2004), pp.56-85

While popular demands for a return to a sense of “normality” placed clear limits on the politics of anti-fascism, they also drew clear boundaries around the legitimacy of occupying armies and the powers that lay behind them. This is not to say that all the victorious powers were held in equal esteem in post-war Europe, as some, particularly the United States, could help to legitimise certain post-war regimes, while others, most notably the Soviet Union, could de-legitimise them. Nor were the various victorious powers viewed in the same ways in every European state. Their contribution to struggles around legitimacy was determined by a number of factors including the behaviour of occupying armies at the moment of “liberation”, but also by the perceptions of the states they represented within European societies, as well as their interaction with domestic political forces. Generally, however, their presence affected the balance-of-forces in politically segmented European societies.

The impact of the Red Army and the Soviet Union on the post-war struggle for legitimacy was, with the partial example of Czechoslovakia, a largely negative one. Across much of south-eastern and Central Europe, the behaviour of invading Red Army troops towards civilian populations left a deep imprint on popular memory, even where such memories could not be openly expressed. Across large swathes of eastern Germany, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and Austria, large scale mass violence against civilian populations accompanied Soviet advance, which included, most traumatically, the mass rape of a substantial section of the female population.<sup>90</sup> Working-class Hungarians spoke of “the period of fear” that followed the arrival of the Red Army in Budapest as troops raped, plundered, and arbitrarily detained large numbers of people.<sup>91</sup> In Austria, Germany and Hungary, the behaviour of the insurgent Red Army soldiers confirmed many of the stereotypes of the Russians as a “barbaric” eastern other that had been carried in Nazi and fascist propaganda during the later period of the war. The conservative mayor of the eastern Austrian village of Frauenkirchen, writing some years after “liberation”, compared the first three months following the arrival of the Russians to

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<sup>90</sup> - For this see Norman Naimark *The Russians in Germany, 1945-1949* (The Belnap Press, Harvard MA, 1997), pp.69-140; Andrea Pető “Memory and the Narrative of Rape in Budapest and Vienna in 1945” in Bessel & Schumann (eds.) *Life After Death*, pp.129-48

<sup>91</sup> - 1956-os Intézet Oral History Archivium, (1956 Institute Oral History archive, hereafter OHA), 181 – Péterffy Miklós, p. 57.

“the Turkish period” of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>92</sup> While in the former Soviet zone of Austria these became parts of a public memory of “the years of occupation” between 1945 and 1955, behind the “iron curtain” these remained part of a private memory that was hardly, if ever, recounted in the public sphere.<sup>93</sup>

The de-legitimizing influence of the Red Army was exacerbated by the retributive policies pursued by the Soviet occupation authorities towards the populations of those states that had fought on the side of Germany. The rounding up and deportation as prisoners-of-war of nearly one in five of Transylvania’s ethnic German population, and the similar internment of large numbers of urban Hungarian males of working age in the months that followed the “liberation” contributed to popular opposition not only to the Red Army itself, but to their domestic communist allies.<sup>94</sup> The ways in which Soviet occupation authorities exacted reparations through dismantling industrial plant and carrying it off east provoked fury among local working-class populations across the eastern half of Germany, Austria and Hungary, as they saw the basis of their livelihoods taken away from them.<sup>95</sup> The pursuit of such politics seriously impeded the advance of Communist parties across the region as they were frequently associated with the unpopular actions of the Red Army and the Soviet occupation authorities. They undoubtedly eroded support, even among the working class, for the KPD and, after 1946, the SED in the Soviet zone of Germany.<sup>96</sup> In Austria, Karl Renner, who served as the country’s provisional Federal Chancellor prior to the first post-war elections in November 1945, correctly noted in a discussion with their leader that the perception of the Communists as “the party of the Russians” would prove fatal for their election

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<sup>92</sup> - BgLA A/VIII-11/V; Gross- und Marktgemeinde Frauenkirchen. Zl. 190/1/1960. Frauenkirchen, am 4. Jänner 1961. Bericht über die Ereignisse von 1945 bis 1956

<sup>93</sup> - This point is made forcefully in Pető “Memory and the Narrative of Rape in Budapest and Vienna in 1945”

<sup>94</sup> - For Transylvania see Perry Biddiscombe “Prodding the Russian Bear: Pro-German Resistance in Romania, 1944-5”, *European History Quarterly*, Vol.23, No.2, pp.210-1, 1993; for Hungary see Pittaway “The Politics of Legitimacy and Hungary’s Postwar Transition”, p.11

<sup>95</sup> - For eastern Germany see Naimark *The Russians in Germany*, pp. ??-??; for Austria see Otto Klambauer *Der Kalte Krieg in Österreich. Vom Dritten Mann zum Fall des Eisernen Vorhangs* (Ueberreuter, Wien, 2000), pp.24-30; for Hungary see Mark Pittaway “Workers in Hungary” in Eleanore Breuning, Gareth Pritchard & Jill Lewis (eds.) *Power and the People. A Social History of Central European Politics, 1945-1956* (Manchester University Press, Manchester & New York, forthcoming, 2005), pp.??-??

<sup>96</sup> - Naimark *The Russians in Germany*, pp. 251-317

prospects.<sup>97</sup> During the first half of 1945 the hostility towards them that the behaviour of the Red Army generated, prompted Hungary's Communist leadership to write panic-stricken letters to Moscow.<sup>98</sup> This popular hostility forced Hungary's Communists to place distance between themselves and the Red Army and seek legitimacy through the espousal of a left-wing version of Magyar nationalism.<sup>99</sup>

The continued presence of troops was seen everywhere as incompatible with desire for a return to some semblance of political and social normality by European citizens. Not all of the victorious post-war armies were as unpopular on the territories they sought to administer as the Red Army was. In Austria on the border between the British and Soviet zones, the population found British occupation far more benign than they did Soviet.<sup>100</sup> Yet everywhere foreign troops were seen as outsiders and the friction this could lead to, generated unpopularity and frequent complaints. American troops were seen as particularly different, in part due to popular racism that was directed against African-American troops.<sup>101</sup> This friction was also generated by their obvious wealth relative to the troops of other countries and to local populations. In Austria the anti-communist trade union leader, Franz Olah remembered that "the French looked really poor, similar to the Russians, or at least not much better. The same could be said of the English – the only rich ones were the Americans".<sup>102</sup> Though their troops may have been unpopular, the United States enjoyed tremendous prestige in many European societies, in part as a consequence of the country's wealth when Europe itself was gripped by severe hardship. This also reflected the marked popularity during the late 1940s of American popular culture among young Europeans.<sup>103</sup> This gave the United States considerable cultural leeway during the late 1940s when it bolstered dominant political forces in many

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<sup>97</sup> - Ernst Fischer *Das Ende einer Illusion: Erinnerungen 1945-1955* (Molder, Wien, 1973), p.82

<sup>98</sup> - Lajos Izsák and Miklós Kun (eds.) *Moszkvának Jelentjük .....: Titkos dokumentumok 1944-1948*, Századvég Kiadó, Budapest, 1994

<sup>99</sup> - Pittaway "The Politics of Legitimacy and Hungary's Postwar Transition", pp.13-5

<sup>100</sup> - BgLA A/VIII-14/II-1; Bezirkshauptmannschaft Oberpullendorf. Oberpullendorf, am 30. Oktober 1947. Zahl: Pr.-244/22. Lagebericht für den Monat Oktober 1947

<sup>101</sup> - Conway "The Social Normalization of Belgium 1945-7", p.25

<sup>102</sup> - Quoted in Klambauer *Der Kalte Krieg in Österreich*, p.22

<sup>103</sup> - Uta G. Poiger *Jazz, Rock and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (University of California Press, Berkeley, London and Los Angeles, 2000); Reinhold Wagnleitner *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill NC & London, 1994)

countries throughout western Europe against their Communist opponents. The combination of the anti-socialism of majorities of European citizens, the political polarization between Communists and their more conservative opponents and the promise of US aid for societies was a potent one; a fact that was demonstrated by the 1948 election campaign in Italy, when the promise of aid was deployed by the United States in order to successfully boost the election chances of *Democrazia Cristiana* against the left wing alliance of Socialists and Communists.<sup>104</sup>

Promises of aid could be used to bolster legitimacy in part because of the parlous economic state in which Europe emerged from the war. The pressures of military conflict, which had included aerial bombardment, combined with the strains generated by several years of the widespread mobilization of economic resources in the interests of the war effort, left the continent's new rulers with a legacy of devastation. While in some parts of north-western Europe the impact of war damage and disruption to sources of supplies was relatively less than in Germany and much of Central Europe<sup>105</sup>, right across the continent damage and material hardship were intense. Governments of various political compositions were forced to demand sacrifices in the interests of reconstruction in view of the parlous economic situation. This was as true in Hungary where the Communist party called on workers not to strike and instead to accept severe economic hardship in the interests of reconstruction<sup>106</sup> as it was in Austria, where the country's second post-war Federal Chancellor Leopold Figl, told his country's citizens in December 1945 that "we have nothing. I can only ask you to believe in this Austria".<sup>107</sup>

The rhetoric of reconstruction emphasized the importance of construction and production to placing national economies back on their feet. Hungary's Communists emphasized "the battle for coal" as a central plank of the struggle to repair production, while it called on workers to "turn their faces to the railways" in order to re-build shattered transport

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<sup>104</sup> - Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, pp.115-8

<sup>105</sup> - For Belgium see Conway "February-August 1945: Revolution and Realism", p.4; for Germany see Echternkamp *Nach dem Krieg*, pp.15-73; For Hungary see Pittaway "The Politics of Legitimacy and Hungary's Postwar Transition", pp.13-4

<sup>106</sup> - István Kovács, "A Nagyüzemi kommunista pártszervezet munkájáról és feladatairól", *Pártmunka* (15, August, 1945), p. 108

<sup>107</sup> - Quoted in Hanisch *Der Lange Schatten des Staats*, p.408

infrastructure.<sup>108</sup> Many were successfully mobilized behind such demands because of their expectations of a better material future that reconstruction would bring.<sup>109</sup> Behind such expectations lay a demand for as rapid a return to some form of economic normality as possible and in this the arena of consumption was more important to post-war citizens than production per se. This was a product of backlash against the pervasiveness of black markets and barter that had become ubiquitous across much of continental Europe from 1942 onwards, as well as the goods shortages and hidden inflation that underpinned them.<sup>110</sup> Across much of Central Europe, “liberation” was accompanied by a worsening in the material situation of households, as inflation and black market activity spiralled, production collapsed, and rations were cut back.<sup>111</sup> As a consequence the economic concerns of populations tended to be centred on issues of consumption and demands that the supply of food in particular be improved. Behind the strike waves which hit Hungarian industry during the second half of 1945 lay a perception among industrial workers taking part that the state was not doing enough to defend them against the effects of food shortages and hyper-inflation that was then spiralling out of control.<sup>112</sup> In Austria hunger marches reflected a re-centring of working-class protest around consumption, as the residents of industrial towns articulated discontent that was far more widely felt throughout local society.<sup>113</sup>

The deep seated discontent that surrounded issues of consumption prompted some political actors, particularly Communists, to campaign against “black marketers” and

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<sup>108</sup> - Mark Pittaway ““The Unlucky Worker Who Waits for the Building of the Country goes Hungry”:  
Workers, Politics and Reconstruction in Hungary, 1945-6” (mss., 1995)

<sup>109</sup> - Erzsébet Severini, *Munkaverseny és a Magyar Munkás Lelkisége: MÁVAG és a Csepeli WM Művek*, (Atheaneum, Budapest, 1946)

<sup>110</sup> - This is discussed in Conway “The Social Normalization of Belgium 1945-7”; Echternap *Nach dem Krieg*; for Austria see the documents in NÖLA Ia-10; for Hungary see Pittaway “The Politics of Legitimacy”

<sup>111</sup> - For the desperate situation in eastern Austria in 1945 and 1946 see Roman Sandgruber “Der Lebensstandard in der ersten Nachkriegszeit” in Stefan Karner (ed.) *Das Burgenland im Jahr 1945*, Amt der Burgenländischen Landesregierung, Eisenstadt, 1985, pp.199-217

<sup>112</sup> - Pittaway “The Politics of Legitimacy and Hungary’s Postwar Transition”, pp.27-8

<sup>113</sup> - BgLA BH Mattersburg XI-1945-1946-1947-Situationsberichten; Bezirkshauptmannschaft Mattersburg. Situationsbericht für Juni 1947



“speculators”.<sup>114</sup> It also prompted considerable concern with both price stability and the value of money. In Hungary, the introduction of a new currency, the Forint, and the role it played in ending the period of hyper-inflation which followed the end of the war, generated a degree of real economic stability, which allowed living standards to rise, albeit at the cost of rising unemployment.<sup>115</sup> In Austria it underpinned considerable popular support, even in working class areas, for the 1947 “law for the defence of the Schilling” which had provoked the Communists to walk out of the government. Though the controlled price rises that followed it, which were renewed through a series of Wages and Prices Agreements, provoked some discontent as the living standards of those living from fixed incomes fell, this was mitigated by a popular feeling that unrealistic wage demands would lead to higher prices and a return of the black market.<sup>116</sup> Similar concern with returning to a semblance of normality in the field of consumption and fear of inflation accompanied and underpinned the introduction of the Deutschmark in the western zones of Germany in June 1948.<sup>117</sup>

Working-class demands for greater social justice had not disappeared, as the ability of Communists in Hungary to mobilize workers against speculators and unpopular managers, or their counterparts in Austria to mobilize some workers against price rises in October 1950, showed.<sup>118</sup> Yet by the end of the 1940s, at least in Central Europe, a broad economic consensus had emerged, to which states were forced to adapt their policies. Populations demanded an end to the privations of the war years, and preferred policies that concentrated on household welfare and economic stability, especially price stability. The development of this somewhat privatized, materialist consensus set the stage for a number of changes over the following decade. It underpinned the predominance of

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<sup>114</sup> - For Hungary see Pittaway “The Politics of Legitimacy and Hungary’s Postwar Transition”, p.28; for Czechoslovakia see Public Records Office (PRO) FO 371/71264; “Czechoslovakia: Weekly Information Summary, 20<sup>th</sup> February-3<sup>rd</sup> March 1948”

<sup>115</sup> - Pittaway “The Politics of Legitimacy and Hungary’s Postwar Transition”

<sup>116</sup> - For a fairly representative account of the kinds of attitudes to economic circumstances see BgLA A/VIII-14/II-2; Bezirkshauptmannschaft Oberpullendorf. Zahl: Präs.106/7-1949. Oberpullendorf, am 29.11.1949. Situationsbericht für den Monat November 1949

<sup>117</sup> - Echternkamp *Nach dem Krieg*, p.102

<sup>118</sup> - On Hungary Pittaway “The Politics of Legitimacy”; for Austria see Jill Lewis “Austria 1950: Strikes, “Putsch” and their Political Context”, *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 4, pp. 533-52, October 2000

material, over ideological demands that characterized the politics of the 1950s west of the “iron curtain”; the phenomenon identified by Burgenland’s governor in 1953. Secondly, it provided an environment west of the “iron curtain” that would be receptive to the mass consumerism that spread to even working-class households during the late 1950s.<sup>119</sup> Thirdly, east of the “iron curtain” it created an environment in which socialist regimes were rejected by populations during the 1950s, on the basis that their rule was experienced, in part as a continuation of the material privations of the war years. It would later create an environment which would allow regimes to recover some legitimacy by promising and securing for their populations a surrogate “socialist consumerism”.<sup>120</sup>

The implications of these shifts in popular expectations of states only became clear a decade after the end of the 1940s, even though these shifts had their roots in the everyday European experience of war and of reconstruction. This was because many of these shifts were overtaken by conflicts over economic futures that were determined by the political cleavages within and between European societies. While Europeans remained basically united about what they wanted – a higher standard of living and greater material comfort – a central theme in conflicts over legitimacy during the late 1940s was dispute over how to achieve it. Movements advancing revolutionary strategies of legitimation sought to base economic reconstruction on workerist, socialist visions of industrial productivity and wholesale social transformation.<sup>121</sup> With the advent of Marshall Aid after 1947 those supporting a liberal democratic strategy of legitimation that rested either on the hegemony of social democracy or centre-right politics, were able to offer an alternative vision of a future of plenty. They also were thus able to offer a better future that underpinned a rhetoric of sacrifice deployed by political leaders; in other words a future

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<sup>119</sup> - Michael Wildt *Auf kleinen Wohlstand: Eine Konsumgeschichte der fünfziger Jahre* (Fischer, Frankfurt am Main, 1996)

<sup>120</sup> - I explore these themes in Pittaway *Eastern Europe*, Chapter 5; see also Susan E. Reid & David Crowley (eds.) *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-war Eastern Europe* (Berg, Oxford & New York, 2000)

<sup>121</sup> - I discuss some of these visions and how they failed in Mark Pittaway “Retreat from Collective Protest: Household, Gender, Work and Popular Opposition in Stalinist Hungary, 1948-1953” in Jan Kok (ed.) *Rebellious Families. Household Strategies and Collective Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Berghahn Books, New York & Oxford, 2002, pp.199-229

of plenty would be bought by sacrifice today.<sup>122</sup> While the choices of which of these political visions would be adopted were determined by the complex interplay between international actors, political elites and the patterns of political affiliation that were woven into the fabric of national civil societies, the shift in the expectations of European citizens of politics and the state cut across lines of class, political affiliation and even across state borders. These expectations demanded a politics that centred on the immediate needs of local communities and provided them a state that primarily built its legitimate authority through offering those communities protective measures that guaranteed their physical and material security. Yet overwhelmed by the political polarization that accompanied the onset of the cold war, the significance of the shifts in legitimacy was not immediately apparent as the political institutions of the post-war order were consolidated on both sides of the continent.

Though the precise nature and implications of the shifts in legitimacy may not have been immediately apparent to contemporaries or even to political leaders, they are nevertheless crucial to grasping the character and dynamic of post-war transitions. Transitions in legitimacy involved the reproduction of continuities in political cleavages within European society under circumstances of new post-war social expectations. These popular expectations rested on demands that political power be shared between rulers and ruled, that the state should focus its action on securing key demands of households and communities for security, both in the conventional sense of law-and-order and in the economic sense of material security. Furthermore, in the economic realm, popular expectations of the state demanded that politics pay close attention to the sphere of consumption, avoiding the occurrence of shortages of goods, black markets or of inflation. Such shifts suggested that if new political elites were to attain a degree of legitimacy for themselves then they were forced to develop a muted, more democratic and more privatized kind of politics than that which had existed in the inter-war years. Furthermore it required a pragmatism about the means by which goals were to be attained. This pragmatism was most manifest in western Europe about the ways in which

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<sup>122</sup> - For a stimulating analysis of how this worked in the Austrian case see Klaus Dieter-Mulley "Wo ist das Proletariat?" in Gerhard Jagschitz & Klaus Dieter-Mulley (eds.) *Die "Wilden" Fünfziger Jahre: Gesellschaft, Formen und Gefühle eines Jahrzehnts in Österreich* (??, St. Pölten, 1986, pp.??

political elites managed the role of the nation-state. While post-war political orders rested on the cultural hegemony of a democratic patriotism, the policies national governments needed to pursue to build their legitimacy rested on the recognition of the limits of national sovereignty. Thus, in western Europe, co-operation with the foreign and security policies of the United States guaranteed access to economic aid, while the development of transnational economic spaces guaranteed firstly by bodies like the European Coal and Steel Community and then, after 1957, the European Economic Community, were manifestations of the ways in which the politics of post-war legitimacy affected the international dimensions of the post-war settlement.

The reproduction of continuities in political affiliation ensured that politics in the second half of the 1940s was characterized by a dynamic of restoration and renewal. A thoroughly modernized right emerged in much of western and central Europe, yet, majorities in most of Europe's states remained decisively anti-socialist. Visible class divisions persisted and the survival of working-class cultures ensured that the labor movement would play a crucial role in post-war European politics. Yet, its minority position in most states, outside Scandinavia, meant that it was either marginalized, or only able to take power through building dictatorship. The patterns of polarization between left and right which tore apart political orders in inter-war Europe, took new forms in the more muted, democratic climate of post-war Europe, becoming internationalized with the onset of the cold war.

The patterns of transitions in legitimacy that characterized the immediate post-war years shaped the development of post-war orders on both sides of the "iron curtain" in the four decades down to 1989. In much of western Europe they enabled the consolidation of individualist, materialist democracies that provided a fertile environment for the burgeoning middle-class consumerism of the miracle years of the later 1950s, when the post-war boom transformed European economies. The clear, success of this post-war political settlement laid the foundations for its export as an institutional model to southern Europe during the 1970s, and eventually Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s – even after the constellation of institutional, international and cultural

factors that underpinned its successful consolidation in the 1950s had disappeared. In the eastern half of the continent, after the crises of the mid-1950s, socialist states consolidated their authority by accommodating to the materialist sentiments of the populations they ruled. Beneath the surface of politics in Central and Eastern Europe's dictatorships, the political cleavages that had been prominent during the years of transition that followed the Second World War remained, to re-emerge and structure politics across the continent after 1989.