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ABSTRACTS

NOW OUT OF NEVER:

THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE IN THE EAST EUROPEAN REVOLUTION OF 1989

By **TIMUR KURAN**

Like many major revolutions in history, the East European Revolution of 1989 caught its leaders, participants, victims, and observers by surprise. This paper offers an explanation whose crucial feature is a distinction between private and public preferences. By suppressing their antipathies to the political status quo, the East Europeans misled everyone, including themselves, as to the possibility of a successful uprising. In effect, they conferred on their privately despised governments an aura of invincibility. Under the circumstances, public opposition was poised to grow explosively if ever enough people lost their fear of exposing their private preferences. The currently popular theories of revolution do not make clear why uprisings easily explained in retrospect may not have been anticipated. The theory developed here fills this void. Among its predictions is that political revolutions will inevitably continue to catch the world by surprise.

LEGITIMATION FROM THE TOP TO CIVIL SOCIETY:

POLITICO-CULTURAL CHANGE IN EASTERN EUROPE

By **GIUSEPPE DI PALMA**

Communism has collapsed in Eastern Europe because the regimes, no longer justified by their Soviet hegemon, lost confidence in their "mandate from heaven." Domestically and internationally discredited, East European regimes had traditionally shielded themselves behind a principle of legitimation from the top that saw communism as the global fulfillment of a universal theory of history. Once the theory became utterly indefensible, a crippling legitimacy vacuum ensued. Reacting against that theory, East European dissent, and a civil society of sorts, survived under communism not just as an underground political adversary but as a visible cultural and existential counterimage of communism. This fact must be given proper weight when assessing the capacity of civil society to rebound in postcommunist Eastern Europe.

SOCIAL SCIENCE, COMMUNISM, AND THE DYNAMICS OF POLITICAL CHANGE

By **ANDREW C. JANOS**

In the past thirty years the comparative study of communism as conducted in the United States has rested on two conceptual pillars: Weber's theory of routinization and Spencer's notion of progress through industrialism. This article points out some of the limitations of these theories and then develops a more comprehensive framework for comparisons. One of the keys to the understanding of communist politics is the model of a "military society," also formulated by Spencer but generally ignored by contemporary social science. In terms of this model, communism is presented as a militant geopolitical response to international inequalities, the initial logic of which has been undermined by technological developments in the period following World War II.

POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF THE POST-COMMUNIST TRANSITION:

A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

By **RUSSELL BOVA**

This article makes a case for viewing the politics of regime transition in communist states as a subcategory of the more generic phenomenon of transition from authoritarian rule. Drawing on case studies from Latin America and Southern Europe and from the more theoretical literature on postauthoritarian transitions that those cases have generated, the article reexamines the politics of reform in the Gorbachev-era USSR. This comparative ap-

proach shows that the dynamics of the liberalization process in the USSR adhere to a model of political change previously manifested in other parts of the world. Specifically, it provides a clearer understanding of the initial vitality and subsequent disintegration of Gorbachev's centrist reform program, as well as a new perspective from which to reevaluate Gorbachev's often-criticized program of regime democratization.

THE NATIONAL UPRISINGS IN THE SOVIET UNION

By DAVID D. LAITIN

Recently published histories of national groups living under Soviet rule provide a rich secondary literature on the various paths taken by these groups to be incorporated into the Russian empire and the Soviet state. Social scientists who want a differentiated understanding of political mobilization among the various nationalities should not ignore these important contributions. This review essay attempts to synthesize these histories in order to provide a coherent model of nationality politics. Proposing an "elite incorporation model" of political mobilization, the essay accounts for different sources of national protest. The model weighs not only the pressures for national autonomy and republican sovereignty but also the pressures that provide support for the Union.