Private Groups and Public Life: Social Participation, Voluntary Associations and Political Involvement in Representative Democracies. Edited by Jan W. van Deth. London and New York: Routledge, 1997. 244p. $85.00.

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This collection is based on a workshop, "Social Involvement, Voluntary Associations and Democratic Politics," held during the 1996 Joint Sessions of Workshops of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) in Oslo. The central theme of the volume is the relationship between private groups and public life at a time when the organizational basis of public life is undergoing a profound transformation in Western democracies. As is often the case with conference volumes, this one is quite heterogeneous in content and uneven in quality. The contributions have one thing in common: They all present empirical data from various European countries on different aspects of the common theme. They differ in terms of theoretical approach, terminology, and the types of data used.

The variety of theoretical approaches is not unusual; it closely reproduces the state of the art in research on political participation. The differences among the various approaches mostly involve the way they view the organizational link between the private and the public sphere, or between civil society and the state. In order to designate the relevant organizational structures, some authors speak of "voluntary associations," others of "interest groups" (or "public interest groups"), yet others of "social movement organizations." To illustrate the conceptual disarray of the field, consider the example of trade unions. The contributors refer to them variously as "occupationally based voluntary associations" (Moyser and Parry), "social organizations" (Billiet), "interest organizations" (Oldersma), "intermediary organizations" (Lelieveldt), "goal-oriented associations" (Joye and Laurent), or "traditional political organizations" (Wessel). With respect to the types of data used, the various contributions also take widely different approaches: individual survey data, organizational data, or macrostructural data. In one instance, the excellent last chapter by Dekker, Koopmans, and van den Broek, data from different levels are combined to resolve an interesting macro-micro puzzle.

Taken together, the twelve chapters allow one to discern some important trends with respect to political participation in Western Europe. First, several contributions confirm the existence of a close link between social participation and political participation. Some allow one to differentiate the received wisdom. On the basis of Danish survey data for example, Gundelach and Torpe, confirm the mobilizing function of social participation but not its socializing function. That is, contrary to Tocquevillian expectations, social participation does not seem to contribute to political tolerance and to more encompassing commitments to the public good in general.

Second, several contributors hint at a profound transformation in the organizational linkage between the social and the political spheres. Gundelach and Torpe notice that Danish voluntary associations are becoming more detached from their social base; they are becoming "catch-all" associations. Similarly, Billiet notices a decline in the traditional link between membership in unions and health insurance societies, on the one hand, and voting behavior, on the other hand, in the case of Belgium. This decline turns out to be most pronounced in the younger generation, while the political preferences of older people still are heavily structured by social participation. Selle, who analyzes Norwegian women's associations, to mention yet another example, finds a decline in the historically powerful mass movements in which women played an important role. With their emancipation from their traditional roles, Norwegian women are losing the organizational society which was their own, that is, the trend has been toward a less gender-segregated organizational society in Norway.

Third, a new link between organizations and their members is taking shape. This is most clearly described in the very interesting chapter by Maloney and Jordan on what they call "protest businesses," that is, organizations such as Amnesty International, Friends of the Earth, and Greenpeace. The authors argue that in these cases the relationship between the individual and the organization is essentially financial. Membership is large, participation is minimal, and individuals are essentially "contracting out the participation task to organizations." It is argued that large-scale "new politics" groups have done very little to enhance participatory democracy.

Most of the chapters do not try to explain the trends they find but, rather, attempt to interpret them in terms of the literature on social capital. The ghost of Putnam hovers over several contributions, although his sensitivity to causal reciprocity or "virtuous circles" between social and political participation is not always shared by the various authors. Whiteley and Seyd, for example, present a straightforward linear model to explain the political capital (i.e., trust in political institutions) of British Conservative Party members by the level of their social and political activities. The authors do not take into account that (as suggested by Dekker et al.) associational life may only flourish in a political culture that stimulates and perpetuates such trust, and that, by extension, the individual's associational participation may be enhanced by his or her trust in the political institutions.

The last two chapters, by Wessels and by Dekker and others, are more ambitious with respect to explanation. Wessel presents a modernization theoretical account of the differences in the organizational capacities of Western European societies. His conclusion is quite straightforward: The organizational capacity of Western democracies is higher the more modern these societies are (measured by such macrostructural indicators as GNP per capita or percentage of employment in the service sector). His account is not at all sensitive to cultural and/or institutional differences among these societies. Actually, it is striking to see that his countries cluster along the linear trend in quite significant ways: There are the least modern southern European societies and the most modern Scandinavian countries, with the Anglo-Saxon and the consociational democracies forming two groups in between.

Dekker and colleagues find similar clusters in their chapter, and in fact they juxtapose two patterns of political participation (p. 209). The first, with the Netherlands as the example, is characterized by high levels of conventional organizational participation, low levels of protest participation, relatively moderate protest forms, and a predominance of new social movements. The second, exemplified by Spain, combines low organizational participation with high protest levels, radical protest forms, and a predominance of mobilization around traditional cleavages. The authors interpret the differences between these patterns by the variable openness of the institutional structures of the respective political systems. The only other contribution that makes use of such institutional differences to account for the patterns of participation is the one by Joye and Laurent, who interpret local participation patterns in Swiss cities in terms of the variable local political opportunity structures.

As these examples illustrate, the field of political participation could benefit enormously from a more systematic

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integration of institutional and cultural factors into theoretical accounts. If, in addition, practitioners could agree on a common conceptualization of the organizational structures involved, then the field could, indeed, make some important progress.

The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968–1970. By Kieran Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 270p. $59.95 cloth, $19.95 paper.

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Taking advantage of the release of thousands of new documents on Soviet and Czechoslovak actions during the ill-fated Prague Spring in 1968, Kieran Williams has written an important book that reexamines the underlying motives and actions of leaders on both sides. While the book can be read as a history of the entire period 1968–70, its greatest contribution is in the definitive account it provides of Soviet-Czechoslovak elite interactions leading up to the 1968 invasion. As such, it will be of interest not only to historians of the Cold War but also to political scientists who specialize in crisis behavior and bureaucratic politics.

First, a note about sources. Williams has conducted an absolutely exhaustive study of the available archives in Prague, Bratislava, and Moscow, although anyone familiar with the stellar work done by the nongovernmental National Security Archives and the Cold War International History Project, both based in Washington, D.C., will know that the most important Moscow archives were never really open, with documents trickled out on a highly selective basis by the chief archivists. What we "know" about Soviet behavior, therefore, is still what they want us to know. Nevertheless, the analysis presented in Williams is rich and multifaceted, particularly when supplemented by a close reading of the documents, including an excellent annotated set translated into English and recently published (*The Prague Spring '68*, Preface by Vaclav Havel, edited by Jaromir Navratil, 1998).

Viewing the Prague Spring from the perspective of the postcommunist world, Williams not only benefits from a wealth of archival sources but also can see the events for what they really were—an effort to reform a system that ultimately was unreformable. Williams does not say so, but surely the brunt of his analysis pushes us to the conclusion that the Prague Spring could not have succeeded in creating "socialism with a human face" because the socialist system at that time was unreformable, based as it was on terror, dictatorship, and economic nonsense.

Knowledge of this fact is widely appreciated in contemporary Prague, where the thirtieth anniversary of the Prague Spring went uncelebrated, in stark contrast to the streams of books, films, and rallies that commemorated the fortieth anniversary of the 1956 uprising in neighboring Hungary. The Czechs have chosen not to make the Prague Spring part of what Harvey Kaye (*The Powers of the Past: Reflections on the Crisis and the Promise of History*, 1991) has called their "grand governing narrative." The question is why.

Williams provides us with some clues. Archival documents in the hands of a neutral historian can be a powerful leveler, and while the image of Soviet decision makers as essentially ruthless, cynical, and determined can be resupported by the new documents, the previous image of Czechoslovak reformers as essentially courageous, visionary, and brilliant does not perhaps bear up so well. Consider some of the details brought out by Williams. Czechoslovak reformers "suffered from a delusion of sovereignty" (p. 5) based on the fact that they had no Soviet troops stationed on their borders. As Dubcek subsequently recalled, "I thought that we were much freer than we were." But Dubcek himself had grown up in the USSR, had been imprisoned in Bratislava during the Stalinist purges, and had participated in meetings in which the Czechoslovaks had been pressured to accept Soviet troops. So this statement seems fanciful, if not pathetic, in hindsight.

Another example is the Soviet perception of the strength and objectives of the Czechoslovak opposition, led by Vaclav Havel and other nonparty activists during 1968. The Party's Action Program, published in April 1968, called for the reform of socialism and the lifting of censorship, but it did not call for anything approaching a multiparty system. When activists like Havel and the philosopher Ivan Svitak argued for the creation of a true opposition, and when the Club of Non-party Engagees (KAN) and K-231 (a pressure group to rehabilitate victims of Stalinism) were established, the Dubcek leadership then and subsequently did little to clamp down on this activity. The Soviet embassy is much derided by Williams and by previous authors, including myself (*The Kremlin and the Prague Spring*, 1984) and Jiri Valenta (*Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968: Anatomy of a Decision*, 1991), as having a paranoid and distorted view of the events taking place in Prague. Yet, again in hindsight, perhaps it is not unreasonable to conclude that in fact the embassy had a clearer picture of Soviet interests and how to promote them than the Czechoslovak leaders had of their own.

When Brezhnev, in a May 1968 Politburo meeting, denounced the Action Program as "a bad programme, opening up possibilities for the restoration of capitalism in Czechoslovakia" (p. 73), was he not right? Is it not reasonable to assume that, had the Dubcek team stayed in power, communism might have collapsed sooner than it did? As Havel stated, given that Dubcek did not resist the Soviet invasion (and psychologically could not resist it), it was a blessing for the opposition that the Czechoslovak Politburo was removed to Moscow for forced and phoney negotiations, since this "lifted a restraining hand on the public" (p. 132). Indeed, Czechoslovak communist leaders themselves echoed Moscow's concern about collapse. While in Moscow, an extraordinary congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party was called, and Zdenek Mlynar, then among the detainees in Moscow, argued that unless they were allowed to return immediately, a new politburo would be chosen who would not be willing to do Moscow's bidding, and "Czechoslovakia will quickly become bourgeois" (p. 134).

While we might disagree (even profoundly) with Moscow's definition of its interests, and the actions taken to promote them, can we really conclude, based on the information so ably presented by Williams, that the invasion was irrational, that leaders were ill-informed, or that the decision was in any way the result of bureaucratic infighting (frankly a ridiculous and insupportable claim further refuted by Williams)? Even the fact that dispute continues about whether there were some disagreements in the Soviet Politburo over when or whether to invade seems more the stuff of historical footnotes than real substance. It is clearly the case that no one on the Politburo would have allowed Czechoslovakia to leave the socialist camp, whether by stealth, mistake, or open counterrevolution. The only real question was whether Dubcek himself was able and/or willing to keep the country within the bloc.

Of all the documents discussed by Williams, it is those that reveal Dubcek's own gullibility and weakness that, for this reviewer, are most revealing. After all, Dubcek has been the almost sacrosanct hero of so many standard accounts (starting with William Shawcross, *Dubcek*, 1970, and Gordon

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