

Viewpoint Geography and Social Justice: Some Reflections on Social Change in Eastern Europe

David M. Smith

Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London*

Explicit consideration of social justice has become muted in geography in recent years. Yet social change in various parts of the world, especially Eastern Europe, is generating renewed interest in the question of who should get what, where. This paper provides a brief reminder of the main issues associated with the concept of social justice in general, and of its territorial application. It goes on to consider some of the implications of the introduction of market economies in Eastern Europe, and suggests that the privatization of state assets should be guided by explicit principles of social justice. If market exchange relations are to predominate in the distribution of benefits and burdens in these changing societies, it is important to get certain starting conditions which drive markets right, in a moral sense, at the outset.

"From the point of view of promoting socialist relations, the central point is strengthening the principle of social justice" Zaslavskaya, 1990).

"We should become involved in refining the definition of territorial equity, developing criteria for its assessment and the means for its planning, and in identifying trends in its development" (Kolosov, 1989).

The discourse of social justice has been muted, if not virtually silent, in the geography of recent years. Interest in this subject was initially associated with the so-called radical geography of the 1960s, culminating in publication of David Harvey's classic work (Harvey, 1973). By the time of the present author's attempt to restructure human geography around the theme of welfare, with distributive issues of central concern (Smith, 1977), the focus of disciplinary attention had begun to move in other directions. The structural approach heavily influenced by Marxism which then came to the fore in Anglo-American geography appeared to consider the unjust outcomes of

* Department of Geography, University of London, Mile End Road, London, E1 4NS, U.K.

the prevailing capitalist system too obvious to require refined analysis. And despite attempts at least to maintain geographical interest in inequality (e.g. Smith, 1979; 1987), the recent turn to a more eclectic practice, now embracing postmodernism, shows no signs of reviving serious interest in what used to be referred to as territorial social justice, despite the recent focus on the issue of citizenship along with continuing concern on the part of geographers for the plight of disadvantaged populations and places.

Yet the issue of social justice seems never more timely than it is today. For much of the two decades since the birth of "radical geography," those who considered the injustices of capitalism to be beyond reform of the system from within naturally looked to some, often undefined, form of socialism as a panacea which would automatically deliver distributive justice as well as release from labor exploitation and the more recently identified ills of racism and discrimination on grounds of gender. Now, evidence of the perverse outcomes of socialism in practice is too compelling to ignore, not least because of a failure to take social justice seriously enough, and the system itself is being dismantled in much of Eastern Europe. But, what is to be built in its place? Unless those countries which hitherto espoused socialism are merely to be (re)absorbed into the capitalist world, with its inequalities simply accepted as part of the price of material progress, then explicit attention has to be given to the question of who should get what, and where, out of the distribution of society's product in its broadest sense. The challenge facing Eastern Europe (taken here to include the Soviet Union), and other transforming societies such as South Africa, is the design of institutions capable of delivering a considered distribution of benefits and burdens, explicitly grounded in some conception of morality.

The issue of social justice is given special urgency by the common assumption that the restructuring of socialist society inevitably involves the adoption of a "market economy," accompanied by at least a partial reversion to private property relations. But it is axiomatic that the distribution of income and product generated by market forces depends on the preexisting distribution. Very simply, those with most money (and other forms of property) exercise greatest influence on market outcomes. Thus an unjust distribution (by whatever criteria) has an element of self-perpetuation, and with it other problems of the past. A process of social transformation in which those able to accumulate wealth under the old order can acquire large shares of newly privatized economic assets may not promise much improvement in efficiency, never mind social justice. For example, if industrial enterprises in the Soviet Union were to be sold to the highest domestic bidder, then their distribution could be expected to reflect that of wealth accumulated during the so-called "era of stagnation" associated with Brezhnev, which preceded Gorbachev's perestroika, irrespective of whether the beneficiaries

have the capacity to run efficient businesses or deserve their past and present privilege in any sense.

This paper provides a brief, introductory discussion of social justice in general and its territorial application. It then goes on to consider what may be required for a just spatial order of society, with some lessons for, and from, Eastern Europe. It is broad in scope, but written partly as a response to an emerging interest in issues of territorial social justice in Soviet geography, reflected in the discussion summarized by Kolosov (1989).

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN GENERAL

The distinction between (in)equality and (in)equity provides a convenient starting point. Inequality refers to differences among individuals or groups of people, with respect to some significant attribute. What makes something significant is the recognition that it is better (or worse) to have more (or less) of it. Thus by universal consent it is better to have high rather than low incomes, wealth rather than poverty, and health rather than illness, for example. Differences with respect to these conditions are inequalities. Some other differences, such as people's height, hair color, skin complexion or gender, are not usually described as inequalities, though some societies may bestow differential status in the form of more positive appraisal of people blessed with tall stature or fair hair, for example, and unequal treatment of various kinds may be meted out to those with dark skin or females.

Equity refers to fairness or justice. Although it may be argued that equity is (or should be) manifest in equality, with respect to any or all significant attributes, this obviously need not be the case. There may be fair or justifiable grounds on which to treat individuals or groups unequally. The crucial and extremely difficult questions are how inequality can be justified and the degree of inequality which may thus justly arise, both of which may vary with the attribute under consideration. In general, equality means the same, in an arithmetic sense, whereas equity can mean differential treatment according to some relevant consideration. The difference may involve simply possession or otherwise of whatever is being distributed, or distribution in proportion to some measure of entitlement or desert.

Before exploring equity further, it is as well to recognize that equality without any suggestion of differential entitlement does apply, in most if not quite all societies, to certain attributes. Thus all people are equally entitled to the protection of the law, to the vote (if qualified by age), to use certain public facilities and to other general rights of citizenship. Equality may not always prevail in practice, of course: the law itself, or those responsible for its implementation, may not prove to be color-blind or indifferent to the status or power of those who transgress. But this concerns imperfections in the

way the system operates, or perhaps unofficial recognition of differential entitlement or an outcome of unequal power relations, not formal departures from the principal of equal rights.

If acceptance of the principle of equality under the law depends on the shared quality of nationality or citizenship, the shared humanity of all people is sometimes used to assert more general claims for equality in some if not all realms of life. It is significant that justifications for unequal treatment have sometimes been linked to assertions of the sub-human status of those victimized, the Jews in Nazi Germany and Blacks/Africans under apartheid in South Africa being cases in point.

Returning, then, to the question of how differential treatment can plausibly be justified, certain possibilities have obvious common-sense appeal. For example, people who work harder and produce more than others should be paid more. But even this condition is by no means straightforward. Those who are more productive may have some innate ability, which makes it easier for them to work more effectively. Their entitlement to higher earnings in these circumstances is by no means self-evident. If, however, it is recognized that society as a whole benefits from the greater efforts of some, who can be encouraged in their endeavor by higher pay or other incentives, then their differential and favorable treatment may be in the general interest. This is perhaps the easiest justification of inequality: contribution to the common good, in the sense that we all gain from it.

More generally, people who occupy crucial roles in the reproduction of a society are often viewed as deserving favorable treatment. However, the grounds on which special claims to society's product are made are by no means uncontroversial. What may have been an obvious basis for privilege in one era, or at least broadly accepted, may be contested in other times. For example, the right of some people in Britain to inherit a title with which goes a seat in the House of Lords is, now, obviously undemocratic but still preserved. Once privilege is acquired, those with advantage will seek to protect and entrench it beyond the point where it can plausibly be justified as contributing to the common good.

If the favored treatment of some people can quite easily be justified, on a variety of grounds, the degree of advantage to which they are entitled is much more difficult to resolve. One possible test is that of trial and error, or the discovery by experience of what level of incentives are required to induce people to work harder or to occupy crucial roles in a society. In general, the assertion is that people should receive more (or less) in proportion to some measure of their desert, but how this measure is to be established poses severe difficulties. This helps to explain the attraction of any mechanism which appears to relieve society of the responsibility for such a moral calculus by automatically delivering justly differentiated rewards, a property some-

times associated with the free market (a matter to which the discussion will return).

While the general distribution of society's benefits and burdens poses what may appear to be intractable problems in the conscious attainment of social justice, specific differentiated entitlements are easier to arrive at in particular spheres of life. Distribution according to need may be related to more clearly identifiable and even measurable criteria. For example, the allocation of resources in health care or education can be concentrated on people whose need in terms of illness or ignorance is manifestly greater than that of others. Differential distribution according to need has powerful moral appeal. The practical problem is that both the meaning and the measurement of need can be contested.

It is not unusual for equality and equity to come together in practical policy making. An explicit aim may be to ensure equality of outcomes in a particular sphere, for example the same level of health whoever (and wherever) people are, and this can justify unequal inputs in the form of levels of service designed to compensate for existing low levels of health, particular (possibly local) hazards or other criteria of need. The attainment of equality thus justifies unequal treatment. An alternative formulation is to prescribe equality of inputs, or opportunities, such as the same level of education services whoever (or wherever) people may be, and to accept unequal outcomes as a justifiable consequence of variable human ability or good fortune.

This latter formulation leads to what is perhaps the most common practical prescription for social justice: equality of treatment, at least in some spheres of life, along with acceptance of some degree of inequality as inevitable and possibly desirable. Thus in welfare states under capitalism, and also in socialist societies, public services or means of collective consumption are provided on what is supposed to be an equal basis, or according to some measure of need (possibly local), while allowing individuals to attain unequal rewards in the economic sphere.

There is, of course, much more to social justice in general than these brief observations are able to incorporate. But this should have been sufficient reminder of the problem of specifying relevant criteria, the circumstances in which inequality may be justified, and what might comprise a just distribution. Whatever may be suggested by abstract deliberations, most real societies operate under some, often unspecified, commitment to constrained inequality, setting both a floor and a ceiling (albeit permeable) on the extent to which economic mechanisms and human greed generate inequalities which can arouse threats to social reproduction as well as moral indignation. Thus social justice is in practice much more obviously manifest in curbing than in encouraging some disequalizing tendency.

TERRITORIAL SOCIAL JUSTICE

Understanding social justice in geographical space follows logically from the general considerations outlined above. Territorial equality implies no differences from place to place (in the form of spatially defined population groups) in relevant attributes. The general distinction between inequality and differentiation is crucial in geography, as highlighted in the following somewhat ambiguous comments of Freidrich Engels writing to Karl Marx in 1875 (quoted in Buzlyakov, 1973, p. 108, *italics original*):

Between one country and another, one province and another and even one locality and another there will always exist a *certain* inequality in the conditions of life, which it will be possible to reduce to a minimum but never entirely remove. Alpine dwellers will always have different conditions of life from those of people living on plains.

There is the suggestion here that physical environment will induce differences in how people live, manifest for example in what they produce and are able to eat, and which could be interpreted as inequalities if they mean that the quality of people's lives varies as between uplands and lowlands. Unequal access to services, especially those usually associated with urban living, could be part of this condition. Differences could, however, merely be expressed in ways of life, or local customs such as consumption preferences in which people freely engage with no particular sense of advantage or deprivation. As at the more general level, territorial inequalities are a matter of moral concern, whether or not they can ever be entirely removed; differences are not. In short, territorial equality with respect to relevant conditions does not require uniformity with respect to others.

A distinction is sometimes attempted between inequalities in which place or space is causally implicated and those where the geography is incidental. Accessibility to sources of human need satisfaction arising from the friction of distance is perhaps the most easily understood manifestation of inequality, generated by the spatial arrangement of facilities in relation to the user population. But the spatial arrangement itself is socially produced, as are the constraint on access insofar as personal mobility is related to people's resources. So the distance effect cannot really be isolated as some independent source of inequality. As is now widely recognized, space and society are mutually interdependent in the generation of inequality.

As at the individual level, there may be certain attributes the equal availability of which is supposed to be part of equality under the law or rights of citizenship irrespective of where people live. And this principal may be similarly assailed in the case of population groups with a geographical identity, perhaps denied full rights, eg peripheral populations with a distinc-

tive ethnic identity. Even the voting strength of some territories can be diluted by electoral arrangements such as different size of constituencies.

How can the spatial expression of inequality be justified? Again, the general argument provides a guide. More productive territories may be considered to have justifiable claims on higher living standards. Even if this arises from the good fortune of a rich physical environment, contribution to the common good may prevail as a justification for local or regional privileges. This is connected with the familiar efficiency versus equity payoff, whereby equity (implicitly, reduced inequality) is sacrificed for the sake of efficiency or expanded output stimulated by favoring some places in resource allocation. Such a strategy is usually justified by proposals for the eventual redistribution of enhanced output, to the advantage of areas initially deprived.

The fact that initial local/regional advantage in resource endowment or allocation can actually be compounded and perpetuated is a further example of the departure between theory and practice. This is analogous to the inherited privilege of individuals being preserved after their initial rationale had ceased to be relevant. That economic power begets political power is commonplace, geographically as well as personally. Real societies may recognize forms of place privilege which are more a reflection of the power or status of those occupying them than of some clearly articulated concept of justice such as contribution to the common good.

The easiest aspects of spatial discrimination to justify are probably those which can be related to some fairly objective assessment of local need. Areas with high mortality rates or illiteracy may justify favored treatment in service resource allocation, geared to specific goal attainment to the extent that such outcomes can be accurately calculated and planned for in practice. More generally, such area-based policies as the revival of depressed regions or of inner-city poverty areas or backward rural regions, usually rely on appeals to the justice of distribution according to need, although contribution to the common good can also be evoked on the grounds that such places have undeveloped potential from which others could gain.

As at the individual level, the principle of constrained inequality seems to be the most common conception of social justice, implicit if not explicit, guiding the conduct of real societies. Central government ensures basic national standards of provision for local public services or means of collective consumption along with income support for the poor, as the floor constraint, while limits on earnings assisted by progressive taxation may create a local ceiling. However, the analogy with the individual is imperfect. Some territories may attract disproportionate shares of those people who have become rich elsewhere, along with other benefits which accompany them; other places may be left with large shares of the poor. Thus, specific inter-locality transfers of resources often supplement nation-wide systems of income redis-

tribution via taxation and service provision, to combat spatial inequities arising from the combined power of people and place privilege or deprivation.

TOWARDS A JUST SOCIO-SPATIAL ORDER: SOME LESSON FOR EASTERN EUROPE

That social and spatial considerations tend to be conflated in the generation of inequality will have been clear from the previous section. To specify what is required for a just socio-spatial order is well beyond the scope of this paper (as well as defying the ingenuity of its author). What follows are some fairly obvious comments, stimulated by changes in Eastern Europe away from a centrally administered economy (and society) towards a market regulated system.

That the Eastern European version of socialism has failed is beyond doubt. It failed, literally, to deliver the goods, efficiently, reliably and in quantities consistent with the expectation of people aware of rapidly rising living standards in the capitalist world. Its governments failed to establish legitimacy, and ultimately lost the support and eventually the grudging acquiescence of the mass of the people. Even within the sphere of collective consumption, in housing provision for example, some impressive technical production achievements have been undermined by administrative mechanisms which distorted the ideal of distribution according to need (see for example Szelenyi, 1983, on Hungary, summarized in Smith, 1989, pp. 37-41). One system of injustices was replaced by another. Whether or not these defects were intrinsic to the versions of socialism adopted, or capable of eradication within a reformed structure dedicated to "true socialism," the alternative of a "market economy" was virtually inevitable (that is to say, an extension of market relations, bearing in mind the market systems of distribution already existing for some goods and services).

This move inevitability has had the unfortunate consequence of encouraging the uncritical adoption of a mechanism the very nature of which may be grossly misunderstood. The adjective of "free" sometimes attached to the term market evokes democracy and individual liberty, to add to the enticing range of consumer goods produced by market economies under capitalism with such apparent efficiency. Most appealing of all is the ease with which a market system is supposed automatically to solve the interrelated problems of what and how much to produce, how to produce it, for whom, with what rewards, and of course where. And this without central planners to set output targets and prices and generally coordinate the activities of the participants. While the expectations placed on the market economy by those deprived of material benefits for so long understandably focuses on the effi-

ciency attributed to such a system, its claims to solve the equity problem by distributing outputs and earnings in a manner which maximizes human welfare is more germane to the present discussion.

For markets to generate both efficiency in production and equity in distribution, they must operate in a particular way. This is set out in tortuous detail in neoclassical economics texts and cannot even be adequately summarized here. Suffice it to say that, for markets to work perfectly, they require perfectly informed and rational profit/satisfaction-seeking behavior on the part of producers/consumers, including instantaneous adjustment of prices, supply and demand to change, and a scale of units of production insufficient for individual participants to set prices rather than accept those generated in the marketplace or otherwise to take advantage of size which at the extreme achieves monopoly power. The departure of these conditions from real life is obvious. Geographical space is also a great inconvenience sometimes ignored in economic theory, but actually introducing market imperfections through constraints on the mobility of resources and creating the possibility of local monopoly. The truth is that the perfect free market economy delivering justice as well as efficiency is an ideal-type construct devised by economists, not to be confused with how any real economic system works.

But it is not even necessary to engage reality to reveal the fundamental difficulty posed by the market economy, with respect to social justice. This is the dependence of the distribution being generated on the preexisting distribution of income, wealth and other resources. It is obvious that those with most money will have the greatest influence on what is produced: effective demand is, literally, purchasing power. Similarly, those who happen to own (or otherwise control) land and its natural resources or have capital to invest can exert an influence denied those with only their labor to sell. Very simply, the welfare-maximizing properties of the free market model and its claim to generate social justice depend crucially on the justice of the distribution that already drives the system. That this crucial condition has been recognized for some time is illustrated in the following passage from an early critique of neoclassical welfare economics (Graaff, 1957, p. 155):

Much of orthodox welfare theory lacks realism precisely because it assumes that the desired distribution of wealth has already been attained (and is somehow maintained) and then proceeds to regard the price system as a highly specialized resource-allocation mechanism which exercises no influence whatever on the distribution of wealth. Such a view is not easy to defend.

That this point could not be ignored by mainstream economics is demonstrated on an old edition of one of the most popular and influential textbooks (Samuelson, 1973, p. 458; italics original):

If the dollar votes of different consumers represent an "equitable" allocation, so that each person's dollar represented as ethically deserved "pull" on the market as any other's, there would be no need to make the following qualification: Efficient production and pricing does not mean that the FOR WHOM problem of society is being properly solved; it only means that the WHAT and HOW problems are being solved consistent with the *existing distribution* of dollar-voting power and of sharing in natural wealth and GNP.

This vital qualification highlights the difficulty, if not impossibility, of describing as equitable or just the structure and distribution of outputs of an actual market economy, as well as the distribution of earnings. And if theoretical logic is insufficient, the observable disparities in material conditions under capitalism, with extreme affluence for some people in some places and a failure to provide for even the basic needs of so many others elsewhere, clearly calls into question claims of equitable outcomes. Something is badly wrong, if not with the theory of market mechanisms, then with their operation in practice.

If the efficiency benefits to be derived from market mechanisms are to be associated with distributive outcomes with some defensible claim to equity, then the issue of social justice must come first. Dependence on the preexisting distribution of income, wealth and resources risks perpetuating past inequities if privatization means that the ownership or control of state assets is simply to be transferred to those who can afford them. There could be a case for an equal distribution of assets, like housing and possibly shares in industrial enterprises when privatization is initiated, with subsequent tendencies towards inequality carefully monitored. Social justice aside, this could be as effective a means of transferring state assets to safe and efficient private hands as allowing larger shares to go to those whose accumulated wealth may have depended on neither enterprise nor honesty.

PROBLEMS FACING EASTERN EUROPE: EXAMPLES FROM THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

Some specific problems facing Eastern Europe may be considered briefly, to illustrate the issues of social justice which are arising. The privatization of state assets is an obvious starting point. Privatization has become emblematic of economic reform and even democratization, and its pursuit may be moti-

vated more by ideological faith than by informed economic conviction, and far less if at all by considerations of social justice. This can lead to ill-considered strategies. The problem is compounded by precedents elsewhere; for example, the privatization of nationalized industries and formerly public utilities in Britain by Prime Minister Thatcher, so much admired in parts of Eastern Europe, proceeded without any serious debate on the distributive justice of the outcomes, which were constrained only by limits on the number of shares any individual could purchase (those who could not afford any got none, of course, whereas they had shared in the previously public ownership). However, there are indications that equity is not being ignored in Eastern Europe, despite the understandable preoccupation with efficiency and economic growth.

Any privatization strategy will reflect some considerations of social justice, explicit or otherwise. Thus, the Thatcher strategy, while explicitly encouraging wider share ownership among those who can afford it, implicitly endorses an increased concentration of wealth. Alternatively, every citizen could be allocated an equal share, or a minimum share free of charge with the rest going to the highest bidder, which would recognize some entitlement for everyone to part of what used to be public assets. Special claims or desert could be recognized, for example shares set aside for purchase by those employed in the activities concerned, as was the case in the major British privatization schemes, or even free issues for the workers. How far are such alternatives under consideration in Eastern Europe?

Each country will, in fact, have its own context in which the debate on privatization and its practical application unfolds, which underlines the danger of universal or imported solutions. There can also be local considerations within individual countries. For example, in Poland the original owners of assets such as domestic and industrial premises expropriated by the state with the advent of socialism, are now able to regain their property, though the ability to substantiate a claim depends on such variable conditions as the survival of records and of the buildings themselves (e.g. less likely in Warsaw than in places which suffered less war damage). Space available here permits only brief discussion of aspects of the privatization debate in the former Soviet Union.

At the time of writing (mid-1991) the Soviet parliament had been considering measures to privatize up to 60 per cent of state assets over the next four years. A government proposal would have reserved a free quota of shares for an enterprise's workforce; some 16 per cent of the state's total assets would have been distributed in this way. The Russian Republic's parliament has a different approach, proposing to give all its citizens vouchers worth 7,000 roubles to buy whatever shares they wish. The Soviet Union government also proposed quotas for Soviet and foreign investors, excluding certain

plants in the defence industry, power production, communication facilities, railways, airports, seaports and space research centers.

How far to take privatization is a crucial issue. There is support for the preservation of strong state services, so as to ensure a level of social security broader than that typical of a capitalist economy. This reflects the the survival of some socialist ideals; it is wrong to assume that all Soviet people sought unrestrained capitalism. And there is still opposition to the entire privatization programme. For example, the retired "hardline" Politburo member Yegor Ligachev had called for state assets to be kept in collective, cooperative or municipal ownership, saying that, "Otherwise a new bourgeoisie, and foreign investors, will be able to buy up all the country's enterprises" (*The Guardian*, 26 June 1991). Such a warning is by no means out of place, raising as it does some implications of any major redistribution of property and the economic power that goes with it.

Kazakhstan is regarded as the republic which has taken privatization furthest. July 1991 was set as the date for beginning to sell the state housing stock, to be followed by much of the service sector (restaurants, cafes, shops, hairdressers), small businesses and light industry, and then heavy industry and the mining sector. The transfer of assets from state to private ownership by direct sale is greatly constrained by the fact that savings deposits in Kazakhstan total 8 billion roubles while the most conservative estimate of the value of state property is 165 billion roubles (*The Guardian*, 24 June 1991). Thus in housing, the possibility of sales to the highest bidder was rejected on the grounds that the lack of private savings would enable a few rich people and foreigners to purchase many flats on the cheap. Alternatively, a system was proposed whereby every adult would receive a voucher in roubles calculated according to their years in work and their average salary over the past few years, or in the case of pensioners the last period of their working life, with an additional allowance for children. The local authority would fix the price of all flats, and people would then be able to buy their own with their vouchers, possibly supplemented by savings. Market mechanisms would then encourage the transfer of flats according to need, e.g., those in large ones but with no children might sell to families seeking more space. The important point is that the starting conditions, in the sense of the initial distribution of purchasing capacity, was related to specific criteria of desert linked to need.

Similar proposals with respect to the privatization of housing have been put forward in Moscow. For example, in the latter part of 1990 the Chairman of the city's Commission on Social Policy suggested that every Muscovite would be allocated something like the average living space of 12 square meters free of charge. Those with more space would have to pay for it; those with less would receive paper securities in proportion to their deficit, which would act as an entitlement to new accommodation (*Moscow News*,

22-29 July 1990). Again, this represents an attempt to establish equitable starting conditions for a housing market. How the market actually functions when it gets going is another matter, of course; the prevailing shortage could push prices up to the point where the poor (especially the elderly on low pensions) are forced into inferior accommodation. The point at which the state reasserts some degree of control depends on how the disparities generated by the market are judged against some conception of equity, which may be related to any social instability provoked by changes in people's circumstances.

A further aspect of the privatization debate concerns rights over mineral deposits and other natural resources hitherto owned by the state and (supposedly) exploited in the interests of the population at large. Are these to be distributed to individuals as part of the privatization of land? Are the rights to the income such resources can generate to be vested in a local authority? Is the appropriate jurisdiction to be the Republic in question, or should the state retain control? The answer has a crucial bearing on how widely or narrowly the benefits from highly variable local resource endowments are to be distributed: a fundamental issue of territorial social justice. The same of course could be said for fixed capital in the form of industrial plants and infrastructure, the location of which may have been influenced by central state planning objectives such as more even regional development: how widely or narrowly should the benefits (or disbenefits, such as pollution) be distributed following changes in proprietorial arrangements?

Property rights by no means exhaust the scope for the application of the discourse of social justice to spatial aspects of social restructuring within the former Soviet Union. Rights of citizenship, including democratic participation, depend crucially on the territorial jurisdictions adopted for electoral purposes. For example, ensuring that local concentrations of people of particular nationality are neither dominant nor dominated in political life is a problem which many western countries characterized as democracies have yet to solve. The complexity as well as the importance of political (re)districting so as to ensure that the interests of all population groups are fairly represented is crucial to the success of political reform in the Soviet Union (Kolosov, 1989). This is true both locally and regionally. The engagement of Soviet geographers, and their Polish counterparts, in research relevant to the solution of such problems epitomizes the resurgence of territorial social justice on the discipline's agenda.

CONCLUSION

Given that the concern for (territorial) social justice which emerged in geography two decades ago was focussed on the capitalist system, to the almost complete exclusion of the socialist world, it is fascinating to find its

revival stimulated, at least in part, by the transformation of the "post-communist" societies of Eastern Europe. The understandably arrogant stance of "the West" is that "they" must now learn from "us." What must surely be recognized is that the capitalist experience offers some important lesson on how not to proceed, or on what needs to be done in the interests of social justice if gross inequalities are to be avoided. If Eastern Europe learns from this, "they" may eventually have something to teach "us," by way of institutional arrangements which give equity in distribution the prominence that pursuit of efficiency has acquired under capitalism.

The central argument of this paper is that societies embarking on the introduction of a market economy would be well advised to get the starting conditions right, in a moral as well as practical sense. And from the start they should introduce limitations on such increasing concentration of wealth and power that market mechanisms generate from intrinsic inequalities in individual human attributes and local or regional resource endowments. The constraining, as well as enabling, role of the state therefore needs to be addressed, as an integral part of the issue of social justice. Open government action based on explicitly recognized principles of social justice which have popular sanction is likely to be preferable to a "hidden hand," whether this is that of the anonymous—but by no means disinterested—central planner, or of the compromised neutrality of market forces.

And, at a practical level, it should not be overlooked that years of experience throughout the capitalist world demonstrate that prevailing versions of the market economy generate inequalities, by individual, class and territory, which societies judge to be too great, but that their best endeavors, in the form of urban and regional planning as well as welfare state measures, seem inadequate completely to correct. If the newly emerging societies of Eastern Europe are not merely to repeat this experience, at least two important conditions have to be satisfied. One is sufficient independence of the wider capitalist economy to enable firm domestic control to be exercised over distributive processes. The other is governments with the power as well as the capacity to put their people first in the competitive struggle for the benefits to be derived from their labor. To embark on economic reforms and leave the issue of (territorial) social justice for later will inevitably be too late.

NOTE

This paper is based on one written for publication in Russian in a Soviet journal. The author is grateful to Leonid Smirnyagin of Moscow State University for the initial stimulus to write the paper, as well as for his translation of the original version.

REFERENCES

- Buzlyakov, N. (1973) *Welfare the Basic Task*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Harvey, D. (1973) *Social Justice and the City*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Graaff, J. De V. (1957) *Theoretical Welfare Economics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kolosov, V. A. (1989) Socialist federalism and spatial equity: Review of a discussion. *Soviet Geography*, 30(4):662-9.
- Samuleson, P. A. (1973) *Economics*. New York: McGraw-Hill (9th edition)
- Smith, D. M. (1977) *Human Geography: A Welfare Approach*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Smith, D. M. (1979) *Where the Grass is Greener: Living in an Unequal World*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Smith, D. M. (1987) *Geography, Inequality and Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, D. M. (1989) *Urban Inequality under Socialism: Case Studies from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Up-Date series)
- Szelenyi, I. (1983) *Urban Inequalities under State Socialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zaslavskaya, T. (1990) Perestroika and socialism. In *Soviet Sociology in Conditions of Perestroika*. Moscow: Nauka, pp. 7-33.