



zaczęło się w Polsce

1989

Solidarność i upadek komunizmu  
Solidarity and the Fall of Communism

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# Solidarity and the Fall of Communism

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Europejskie Centrum Solidarności

# Introduction

Twenty years have passed since the 4th of June 1989, when the first non-fraudulent elections took place in the People's Republic of Poland. Those ground-breaking elections were the starting point of the dismantling of the Communist system in Central and Eastern Europe and led to profound social

and economic changes. The distinguished personalities of public life, scholars and most importantly, the heroes of those times, now congregate in Warszawa and Gdańsk to evaluate the last 20 years from historical, social and political perspectives. This auspicious assembly is also an opportunity to identify future challenges and find possible answers, using past experiences, of how to approach them.

The events of 1989 were

of great importance. Not only was it an unarmed fight but also the civic opposition had turned it into a peaceful revolution. Seldom in world history did the revolutions renounce violence bringing radical changes by peaceful means of accord and dialog. Peace and revolution, those usually contrasting words, in 1989 and through the following years described in the most suitable way, the unique changes of those times.

The revolution commenced in August 1980. In Central Europe, separated from the rest of the world by the Iron Curtain, workers of the Gdansk Shipyard, paradoxically named after Lenin, supported by students, intellectuals, priests and journalists, utterly opposed the regime. They were followed by ten million Polish people who created a social movement with the symbolic name *Solidarnosc*. This solidarity

led Poland to freedom. The same path was shortly followed by other nations.

The story of *Solidarnosc* has not finished. Not only did lead to the collapse of totalitarian regimes in our continent but also it remains a source of inspiration and a challenge for others. The peaceful revolution still goes on and should never end. We all need this revolution today as we did during those historic times. Moreover, it is possible. The nations who

regained their liberty 20 years ago, as well as those who have enjoyed their freedom for much longer than the last two decades, are facing a massive task. They must jointly use the gift of freedom to ensure unity throughout Europe.

Maciej Zięba OP  
Director of the European  
Solidarity Centre

1989 -  
Changing the  
Course of  
history

Prof. Andrzej Paczkowski  
Poland

# The world around the Round Table

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It is generally accepted that the process paving the way for the negotiations which created the

foundation for the demolition of the communist regime in Poland, usually called the Round Table negotiations, as well as the course and results of these talks were to a large extent set by the internal dynamics of events. The endogenous factors underlying this phenomenon have already been indicated a number of times, tracing their origins to national tradition often dating as far back as the Bar Federation or the

Kosciusko Uprising.

However, the more cautious commentators have limited the roots of the 1989 events to the Poznan revolt of June 1956, the changes that took place in October of the same year or the strikes on the Coast in December 1970. Minimalists refer to the emergence of a democratic opposition in 1976 or the election of a Pole to the highest office in the Holy See two years later. It is worth pointing out that although it was not the

Polish votes that decided on the conclave's results, this memorable event is treated as the Polish people's "own" piece of history. Nonetheless, wherever the origins of the changes may be sought, everyone agrees that the key event opening the cycle which lasted until 1989 and which adopted, to speak perhaps over emphatically and not precisely, the form of a "cold civil war", became the strikes of August 1980.

Of key importance was

the way the strikes were conducted without the use of force and concluded through the so-called social agreements. Equally important, or perhaps even the most important, was the fact that one of the parties in that conflict deemed precisely this way as fundamental for the fight which it assumed. Despite all that transpired, *Solidarity*, the party in question, remained faithful to its chosen way, naturally not without lesser or bigger

transgressions. Many believed at the time, and continue to do so now, that *Solidarity* was too loyal to this idea, which was to condemn it to carrying away only a qualified success. The other party, let's call it the "power-wielding" or "Communist" party, did not exercise similar restraint. Although it would be an exaggeration to state that the other party considered force and dictatorship as the only remedies, it could be

confidently said that at the slightest failure of other means, or when confronted with effects it wasn't sure of, the party resorted to "forceful solutions". It did that not with hesitation but with full conviction based on the remains of ideological prejudice, group interest and its own peculiar understanding of defensive patriotism.

The tension between these two ways of viewing social conflict was one of the main propellants of the

dynamic of the events. They led from one “lesser evil”, namely consent for the creation of a social organisation independent of the authority (Edward Gierek’s formulation from 29th August 1980), through the second, namely the imposition of martial law, to the final “lesser evil”, namely the signature of the “contract of the century”, as some have cynically called the agreement concluded at the Round Table twenty years ago. All these

(although I hope with the exception of the federation era and national uprisings) will be discussed by our eminent panel speakers. It is not my intention to "direct" or pre-empt them, to ask to a higher or lesser extent inappropriate questions. However, what I would like to do is present, inevitably in a summary format, only the specific aspect of the road to the Round Table which can be called an exogenous factor.

What I mean are two sets

of issues. The first one is more obvious and it is the influence of international factors, which are usually (and justly) restricted to the stance of the two then superpowers: the Soviet Union and the United States. Although Washington had several important allies (Germany, Great Britain and foremost France) I shall omit them here so as not to complicate the argument. In a similar fashion, I shall omit the party and nationalist

activeness of Poland's Warsaw Pact comrades. For undoubted, it was the two superpowers and the rivalry between them which acted as an exogenous factor in the strict sense, namely they bore a direct influence on Poland. The second set of issues is rarely raised in reflections on the Round Table and it concerns the state of affairs in other communist states in this part of Europe. It is commonly accepted that it did not exert direct

influence on the events in Poland. However, it seems to me that verification whether Poland was truly an isolated island, as it is commonly thought, might not be of great relevance but could certainly prove interesting. Let's start with the first set of issues.

The introduction of martial law significantly impacted on Soviet as well as American policy vis-à-vis Poland and more strictly speaking General Jaruzelski's government

which gained decisive, although not complete success by forcefully breaking up strikes, the legal structures of *Solidarity* and also by isolating a large part of the most active union and opposition activists. This success meant that the pressure on the PZPR [Polish United Workers' Party] leadership exerted by the Kremlin with lesser or greater brutality and more or less publicly became superfluous to liquidate the counter-

revolution. Although grumbles could still be heard about “Poland’s deviations” - such as the Church’s independence and power or individual farming practices - or that the crackdown on the opponent is not radical enough, the Soviets were “stuck” with Jaruzelski who was their only alternative. In comparison to the period prior to 13th of December, the Soviet policy towards Poland became, for want of a better word, passive.

Moscow had no reasons and also not enough resources to actively interfere in Polish matters.

Such approach was almost the exact opposite in the case of the Americans. Until the introduction of martial law, Washington sympathised with *Solidarity*, was “glad” about the problems the turmoil in Poland caused the Soviets and counted on gradual “softening” of the system (at least over the Vistula River). Yet in reality, it did

not possess a defined line of action nor the tools to interfere in Polish matters, which it was continually suspected of by the communist propaganda from Berlin to Vladivostok, including (or more likely led by) Warsaw. By imposing martial law in a particularly brutal manner as manifested by deaths amongst civilians, General Jaruzelski's government in a way forced the Americans to develop a "Polish policy" and find the necessary tools

for its implementation. In consequence, for many years until 1989, President Reagan had applied the same rule towards Jaruzelski as the General recommended for dealing with the Church - that of "carrot and stick". I believe it is worthwhile mentioning the three demands presented by Reagan (which were mostly supported by his NATO allies): lifting of the martial law, release of those arrested and detained, and resumption of

dialogue with *Solidarity* and the Church (although in truth, talks with the latter were never finished). Sanctions and diplomatic isolation of Poland acted as a stick, whilst in turn, financial promises were the carrot. I am extremely doubtful that it was only to pander to the White House demands but nonetheless, Warsaw did meet them one by one. It started in July 1983 by lifting the martial law, then in September 1986 by releasing almost all

political prisoners, and finally on the last day of August 1988 by officially declaring the opening of talks (despite the fact that the word *Solidarity* could not cross the regime's lips, the interlocutor was *Solidarity's* leader). Regardless of other factors, the pressure exerted by the US, or to speak more broadly, the West, had an effect best exemplified by the amnesty of 1986, the ultimate form of which is attributable to Washington's

direct influence.

Polish decision-makers were well aware of the situation. I would like to take the liberty of presenting some quotes from General Jaruzelski's speech at a secret meeting of the Central Committee's Secretariat in October 1988 in relation to the announced visits of Vice-President Bush and (separately) Prime Minister Thatcher. For the West, *the key aspect of this 'round table',* said the General, *is Solidarity. They*

*don't give a damn about anything else. They realise that all the democracies that we've been promising, second chambers, etc. will fall by themselves from heaven once Solidarity is installed because Solidarity will take care of everything, including communism and socialism. (What a prophecy!) And next: How dare they! They are exploiting our weakness in a cynical way... I've been going on about it for ages now, anyone would turn*

*blue in the face... but everything is going back to the starting point. There must be trade union pluralism, Solidarity, Walesa and full stop... I'd be prepared to walk to Gdansk barefoot [to the meeting with PM Thatcher] if I knew we could get a deal, but there won't be any deals... some decision will probably be taken later on economic matters, on some minor issue. In reference to information obtained by the intelligence, he stated that*

*we won't get a penny... nothing until the end of the year, and then they'll see depending on how much they'll have us eating out of their hand.* I believe these quotes are telling enough for the definition of the meaning of the West's policy toward Poland after 13th of December 1981.

In all of this "Polish turmoil" which seemed like it would last forever, not many things stayed constant. They included: the conviction announced

by the delegalised main stream *Solidarity* centred around Lech Walesa that agreement with the authorities is the only effective means of introducing effective changes in the country; the doggedly repeated demands of the West for the fulfilment of every single one of its demands made in December 1981 and also the fact that John Paul II, in front of whom even General Jaruzelski's knees buckled, also thought along similar

lines and at times even pronounced them publicly.

It is generally beyond doubt that the key event for the unfolding of the events, not only in Poland but on a truly worldwide scale, was the assumption of power in the Soviet Union by Mikhail Gorbachev in March 1985 and in reality the start of his attempts at internal reform as well as change in the relations with the Soviet Union's principal rival on the global arena. These actions became known

under the slogans of “uskoreniye”, “Perestroika” and “Glasnost” as well as “new thinking” and were launched gradually from 1986. Due to Poland’s profound dependence on the Soviet Union, they had a significant influence on what was happening – and could happen – in Poland. In brief, the reforms undertaken by the new Soviet leadership meant for the Soviet bloc countries and hence also Poland: 1) an incentive for the start (or

intensification) of own reform attempts in the economic realm, 2) submission to reforms of mutual economic relations as part of the COMCON [Council for Mutual Economic Assistance] and even changes in the functioning of the Warsaw Pact, 3) gradual but consistent detraction from the hitherto Soviet politics of dictate and the so-called Brezhnev doctrine on "limited [by Moscow's interests] sovereignty" of

the Soviet bloc countries.

The debate on the change of relations with its Central European vassals was launched by the Soviet leadership in the autumn of 1985. It was moved to the forum of the whole bloc half a year later: *the previous methods no longer fit [ne godiatsia], we are now entering a new stage* - reads a note from the minutes of the meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the

Soviet Union (CPSU CC) of 3rd July 1986 following a meeting of the Warsaw Pact countries. Doubtlessly, alongside the Hungarian counterparts, the Polish leadership enthusiastically and actively lent support to the new currents in Moscow. Following a meeting of communist leaders in November 1986 during which matters of economic and COMCON reforms had been discussed, Gorbachev related to his comrades in the Politburo that Jaruzelski

was the most sensible [sodierzhatiелny] and participated the most actively. In a face-to-face conversation, the Polish leader concluded outright: look at the comrades - nothing will come out of them. Ceausescu won't carry out any of the measures we discussed. The rest are simply not capable: they are old and backward [otstaly]. Come on [dawajtie], we can pull this carriage just the two of us'. It seems that Gorbachev did

not have such a negative opinion about his first secretary comrades as the Polish general did but he accepted that Jaruzelski developed a strong will to imitate him and to take on the difficult task of implementing difficult reforms. The Soviet leader not only did not object to this but it was deemed in Moscow that the "Polish deviations" hitherto viewed with hostility deserved a closer look. The chairman of the Soviet Committee for

Religion consulted with Polish comrades on state-Church relations, Primate Glemp participated in the celebrations of the millennium anniversary of the baptism of Russia and the Soviet press published an interview with the Primate. A delegation of the CPSU CC came to Poland to learn how to reconcile the coexistence of individual peasantry with a socialist state. However, with a clear reserve, it was decided to support the Polish comrades

who found themselves under the hurricane fire of the opposition on the sensitive issue of “historical politics”. Consent was given for the discussion of such topics as the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact or even the Katyn events. Nothing of relevance developed from the discussions, however it did make a statement about the Soviets’ understanding of the Polish communists’ problems with the past.

Gorbachev was well aware of Poland’s role: *if we*

*can't keep Poland then we won't be able to keep the GDR either,* he said in July 1986 at a meeting of the Politburo. At the same time, he thought that the best solution to "keep" Poland as a vassal and ally would be to give as much freedom as possible to the Jaruzelski government instead of attacking it over such matters in attempts to solve the problems of indebtedness to the West with political concessions. In any case, the Polish

leader ensured Gorbachev that the concessions would not be far reaching. In July 1988, during Gorbachev's visit to Poland, Jaruzelski said to him: *we've got two lines that we cannot cross, just as the Red Army could not retreat from Moscow or from the line of the Volga River.* Those lines were trade union pluralism and political parties. *The West is putting pressure on us,* he said, *to recognise Walesa and they are citing the fact that Gorbachev called*

*Sacharov. But Sacharov is not Walesa... and doesn't have any organisations behind him.* Clearly, behind Walesa stood *Solidarity*, which although far from its former size, still constituted a force to be reckoned with, particularly in terms of relatively small but radical combat groups.

In my opinion, Jaruzelski was not trying to fool Gorbachev when talking about the two impassable lines, except that, as opposed to the

Krasnoarmeisks - he was soon forced to *withdraw to pre-defined positions*, as standard announcements read of an army which finds itself in a desperate retreat. Whether he ran out of cannons or the will to fight is a different matter. In any case, the Soviet side gave him a bigger room for manoeuvre than any other Polish communist leader including Houlka, ever had. Soviet tanks were on their way back from Afghanistan but rather than signifying

victory they were more representative of defeat (if not failure). Therefore, it seems almost unthinkable that the troops stationed on Polish territory could march out and step in as they did on 18th October 1956. Although it was certainly not without considerable pain, Gorbachev's Moscow in the end came to terms with the idea that its place and role in East Central Europe needed to be re-defined. In any case, at the time when the Round Table

talks commenced, opinions prepared by amongst others, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central Committee apparatus lay on the desks of members of the Soviet Politburo. Those opinions unequivocally suggested that the whole region was evolving towards a free-market economy and political liberalisation and that despite the necessity of maintaining influence in this part of the world, the Soviet Union should forget

about the use of any kind of “forceful solution”.

Therefore, although international conditions favoured changes, probably no-one, neither in the West, nor the East and certainly not in Poland, realised how far reaching they would be and if anyone else would follow in Poland's footsteps. It was clear however that it was important for Moscow and Washington alike that whatever was to happen would take place without the use of force and

bloodshed and that the delicate balance of power in Europe would not be upset. No wonder then that the Round Table talks were held in a situation of peculiar “diplomatic silence” and the world superpowers treated them with kid gloves.

I would like finally, to talk briefly about what was happening in other Soviet bloc countries when the future of Poland was being discussed in and around Warsaw. Naturally, in

comparison to the events taking place in Poland, even if only after 13th December 1981, apathy and deathly calm reigned supreme from the Rhodope Mountains in Bulgaria to Rugen Island in Germany. This was the work of the “gang of four” - Honecker, Husak, Ceausescu and Zhivkov - all of whom resisted changes and some of whom even dared to distance themselves from Moscow (such as Honecker). The gang was not of much use

to Gorbachev but it was rather the opponents of "Perestroika" - in great supply at the Kremlin - who were pleased with their politics. Nonetheless, Moscow winds travelled everywhere, or perhaps they were just local manifestations of the imminent socio-politicoeconomic crisis. For it was not only in Poland that "real socialism" was drawing on, or had already drawn on, its last creative capacities, as Mieczyslaw

Rakowski said in the autumn of 1987. Hence, in reality there was no complete peace anywhere.

Even in Romania where the regime was the most ruthless in the face of the slightest signs of dissatisfaction, serious strikes accompanied by sympathy demonstrations took place in November 1987 (in Brasov), whereas incredibly, a Lenin statue was set on fire in Bucharest. Tensions with the Hungarian minority continued to rise

and even started to spill over into the public, which led to a diplomatic crisis with Budapest. A second wave of another ethnic conflict swept Bulgaria in the mid 1980s against the Turkish or Muslim minority. Despite some delay, ideas to organise an opposition also reached Bulgaria and January 1988 saw the formation of the Independent Association for the Protection of Human Rights. In March it was the ecologists' turn to organise,

in November the "Pierestroika and Glasnost" Intellectual Club was created, in December it was the Democratic League for the Protection of Human Rights which arose in defence of the Muslim minority and a few days after the official opening of talks in the Warsaw Namiestnikowski Palace, the "Podkrepa" (Support) trade union was founded in Sofia. This is also when the great exodus of Turks began, which in a certain way was

a signal of what would happen half a year later in the GDR. In Czechoslovakia, alongside already existent initiatives such as “Charter 77” or the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Persecuted (VONS), several new movements sprung up, including the Committee for the Defence of the Rights of the Hungarian Minority. Subsequent associations appeared over the course of 1988, including the Helsinki Committee. On the 20th anniversary of the invasion

of the Warsaw Pact troops, approximately 10,000 people demonstrated on Wenceslas Square and in January 1989, every day for a week several-thousand strong crowds gathered in commemoration of Jan Palach. All were pacified ruthlessly... but they did take place. In the GDR, opposition was concentrated around more or less casual pacifist and environmental circles, yet in the second half of 1988 the unrest stirred by the circles

grew to finally voice itself through mass street demonstrations in May 1989 when protests with thousands of participants were held in Leipzig against falsified local government elections.

The situation was different only in Hungary where Kadar's rule, already relatively "soft" for a long time - was drawing to an end under the pressure of the reformist wing of the communist party. As of autumn 1987, the

opposition which concentrated around illegal magazines and publications entered the organisational phase. The Hungarian Democratic Forum was formed, followed by the Alliance of Young Democrats (FIDESZ), the Alliance of Free Democrats in the autumn of 1988 and next the reactivation of two so-called historical parties disbanded already in 1948. In March 1988, on the 140th anniversary of the Hungarian Spring of

Nations, around 10,000 demonstrators marched out onto the streets; their number reached 80,000 just a year later. Feeling the pressure of the growing opposition and faced with an increasingly deteriorating economic situation, communist reformers set out in earnest to plan changes which included recognition of political pluralism. On 22nd March 1989, namely when the Round Table negotiations were coming

to an end, most opposition groups in Budapest commenced internal talks on their attitudes to the communists' reform projects and two representations were chosen which acceded to negotiations with the authorities two and a half months later (the so-called Triangular Table). The purpose of the negotiations was to transform Hungary into a democratic parliamentary republic. That is just a fragment of what

was happening in the Communist Bloc which no later than in 1988 started to enter a period of deep political and outright structural crisis.

In February 1988 at a meeting of the Soviet Politburo, while presenting the situation on the Vistula River, the Soviet ambassador to Poland, Vladimir Brovikov used an old Leninist expression saying: Poland *is the weakest link in the socialist community*. I do not know

which “links” the ambassador considered as strong enough but it seems that links which had not in fact succumbed to corrosion simply no longer existed. In this situation, it sufficed for one of the links to break or bend for the whole chain to fall apart. The course of later events revealed that we should consider the Soviet Union itself to have been the strongest element which with great effort managed to survive until the second half of 1991.

Nonetheless, a flipside of the coin also existed. Poland as the “weakest link”, whose rupture instigated the break-up of the chain binding a large part of Europe was at the same time the “first link” in the emergence of a set of countries regaining their subjectivity. These countries became sovereign and also through different means democratic, thanks to which they could join a different camp, the one which used to be called the Free World.

Today, this term is no longer used but its meaning has remained.

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# The role of the Solidarity in the demise of socialism in Bulgaria (1980- 1989)

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century history. She specialises in East-European History and Cold War issues, along with the subject of transition from Communism to a free market and democracy in South-Eastern and Central Europe. A passionate scholar, Iskra has written numerous books and papers on those subjects. She is the author of the monograph *Eastern Europe after Stalin 1953-56*. Currently she is an Associate Professor of Contemporary History at the Faculty of History, Sofia University.

Bulgaria and Poland have

a very different historical destiny. Yet, after the end of World War II the two states became part of one and the same social-economic system, which today is referred to as Eastern or Soviet Bloc. The reasons for such a development are geopolitical, the victory of the USSR in World War II and the readiness of its Western Allies, the USA and Great Britain, to consign Eastern Europe to the Soviet "sphere of influence". The two states and their peoples

reacted to their new situation in a different way. Bulgaria adapted to the USSR, as it had previously adapted to the Third Reich, while Poland resisted. The opposite reaction manifested by Bulgaria and Poland at the very moment the Soviet system was imposed in the second half of the 1940s would remain their permanent characteristic feature in the Eastern Bloc.

Rather rapidly, as early as the 1950s, Poland got the

image of the “horrible child” of the Eastern Bloc. It was due not only to the society which took any opportunity to react, but also to the Polish authorities, as was reflected in Wladyslaw Gomulka’s return to power in October 1956. In the aftermath of the Polish events of 1956 (the Poznan rebellion in June and the confrontation in October) the Bulgarian authorities started to regard Poland with suspicion and did their utmost to prevent

Polish freedom of thought to reach Bulgarian citizens<sup>[1]</sup>.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Bulgarian communists fears of a possible Polish influence increased<sup>[2]</sup>, but Bulgaria's gradual opening to the world and the development of transnational means of communication made the isolation of Bulgarian citizens impossible. In the 1980s the effect of what was happening in Poland on Bulgarian public life increased. Two events

connected with Poland were to become crucial not only for the system in Poland itself, but also for Bulgaria and the whole of Eastern Europe. The first was the emergence of the Independent Trade Union *Solidarity* in the course of the wave of protests in the summer of 1980 and the second was the return of *Solidarity* in Polish politics in the beginning of 1989 and its triumph in the first semi-free elections conducted in the Eastern

Bloc on June 1989. I shall focus my attention on the Bulgarian reaction on these two events.

What was the reaction in Bulgaria to the victory of the Gdansk workers at the end of August 1980, the date which marks the signing of an agreement with the Polish government?

During the first quarter of a century after World War II, the people in the Eastern Bloc had already got used to

the fact that crises in Poland were a common phenomena and for that reason the 1980 wave of protests did not trigger a particular reaction at first. However, before the end of the year it was to become clear that the Polish workers' summer revolt would leave its mark on the future of Poland and the whole of Eastern Europe. It gave rise to political changes and changes in the general atmosphere in Poland, in a way that would

prove to be crucial for the political system of Eastern Europe. The Polish workers not only wanted lower prices of foodstuffs and higher salaries, but they raised demands also for freedom of speech. This confronted the system with a difficult dilemma: how to react to similar protests (unconceivable in terms of ideology, as Poland had been proclaimed a “workers’ state”). In the end, after a confrontation that was to last for 16 months the new

Polish government of General Wojciech Jaruzelski adopted drastic measures, proclaiming a state of martial law on December 13, 1981.

What did the events look like from the Bulgarian perspective? While the Polish party leadership was taking a holiday on the Black Sea, the majority of them in the Crimea and Stanislaw Kania in Bulgaria, the rebellious Gdansk became the center of protests. From the very

beginning the protests were not purely economic, they also had political overtones. After August 14, when the strike in the "V. Lenin" Shipyard was joined by the electrician Lech Walesa, the events became avalanche-like. The Gdansk Shipyard became a national meeting point for the representatives of the other factories which participated in the strikes and an Inter-Factory Strike Committee was set up. It was that committee, helped by expert intellectuals, that

was to make a list of 21 workers' demands, which would gain popularity owing to the workers' slogan calling the government to respond to the "21 times Yes" demands..

The birth of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union *Solidarity* was a real novelty for the Eastern Bloc and that was the reason why it caused anxiety. The meeting of the Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov with the Polish Vice

Prime Minister Kazimierz Barcikowski who had participated in the Gdansk negotiations, speaks a lot about the nature of that anxiety. The meeting was held in Sofia on September 15, 1980. Barcikowski tried to belittle the importance of what had happened and to calm down his Bulgarian interlocutors, explaining it mainly with the economic difficulties<sup>[3]</sup>. Yet, in the words of Barcikowski one could notice also some shades of weakness: *our*

opponents penetrated into several factories and enterprises, managed to attach themselves to the economic demands of the workers, to take advantage of their discontent and to attack first of all the trade unions, about 700 thousand workers took part in the strikes, people stopped paying attention to our appeals for consciousness, it became necessary for us to promise a general increase of salaries, there was a demand for new trade

*unions, independent from the state and the party, which were to establish themselves as a third power in the state, the agreements are hard and they imply risks, but we have decided to put them into practice, for we have lost far too much to ignore them... to ignore them at a moment when the people feel their power - that is not possible anymore<sup>[4]</sup>.*

As early as September 1, the experienced Bulgarian

leader Todor Zhivkov made clear his negative attitude towards the Gdansk agreement. At his meeting with Barcikowski however, Zhivkov stated his understanding of the hard situation in which the Polish United Worker's Party (PORP) found itself: *These are your problems, mainly of your party, and your party leadership and we believe that you shall manage to resolve them, no matter how hard the situation in your country is.*

*At the same time he acknowledged that the events necessitate all the socialist states to make some conclusions about themselves too... You are aware of the fact that it is for the first time that a similar retreat is made in a socialist state, and what is more, on the whole front<sup>[5]</sup>. However, immediately after that he started to speak from the position of superiority and to give advice that a retreat was actually possible, but only*

in order to prepare better for the offensive<sup>[6]</sup>. Todor Zhivkov spoke with the self-confidence of a leader who had not allowed political perturbations in his country.

At the international meetings held in the period 1980-1981 the Bulgarian leadership expressed its anxiety provoked by the extraordinary event - the establishment of the trade union *Solidarity*. *Solidarity* was the subject of the Todor Zhivkov's talks with the Romanian leader Nicolae

Ceausescu which took place in Bucharest on 18th - 19th October 1980, It was also discussed at his meeting with the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrey Gromiko on 23rd December 1980 in Sofia, then again with Ceausescu in Ruse (Bulgaria) on 21st January 1981, and during the negotiations with the Soviet Prime Minister Nikolay Tihonov on 5th July 1981 in Sofia.

However, the real effect which *Solidarity* exerted on

Bulgarian society was evident from the public reaction. The nature of archival documentation at the disposal of historians allows assessing public reactions mainly through the eyes of the government and the documents of the security forces. I shall summarize them below.

Bulgarian political leadership discussed the events in Poland a number of times already in 1980. Less than two months after the signing of the Gdansk

Agreement, the brochure entitled "Information on the Events in Poland"<sup>[7]</sup> was prepared in Sofia. The assessment is clear: *the Polish events are not only connected with some problems of the economic and social policy, but actually affect the very existence of socialism and all the virtues attained by the Polish people during the 35-year period of people's power.* The formulation of the reasons for what had happened in Poland speaks

indirectly about the Bulgarian fears, too. They are as follows:  
*manifestation of the strategy of imperialism for undermining and liquidation of socialism through indiscernible evolution, i. e. through its eroding from the inside, the activity of the Polish dissident circles, the Polish Catholic Church, a whole platform of political demands with anti-socialist direction, mistakes of the PORP with underestimating*

*the class approach towards the social phenomena, unprincipled compromises, misunderstood liberalism weaknesses and shortcomings in the management of the Polish economy, encouragement of nationalist-patriotic sentiments.* It could be noticed easily that the brochure's main aim was to prevent Bulgaria from similar events, the recommendations were directed towards tightening the regime in Bulgaria<sup>[8]</sup>.

It is more difficult to grasp the public reaction in Bulgaria to the birth of *Solidarity* and its 16-month measuring of swords with the Polish authorities. It was reflected in translation of the Gdansk Agreement provisions and spread among Bulgarian intellectuals; the acquaintance of a number of students from the Sofia University with that document and the discussions on it during seminar classes<sup>[9]</sup>; as well

as in the talks about the successive defeat of the ruling ideology. Information about the undesired by the authorities interpretation of the Polish events came from the State Security, which recorded an increased interest towards what was happening in Poland. Bulgarians drew information on that mainly from the western radio stations and newspapers<sup>[10]</sup>. The information about the increased interest of the Bulgarians prompted Todor

Zhivkov to address a warning on 5th November 1980: *To put it briefly, we should be at the same time vigilant and sober, calm and resolute, so that to be precise in our estimates and to choose the most appropriate means for the achievement of our aims*<sup>[11]</sup>.

The establishment of the Polish *Solidarity* put all the states from the Eastern Bloc in a very difficult position – if they tried to prohibit the establishment of an trade union independent from the

authorities, that would reveal the dictatorial nature of the system and if they accepted *Solidarity*, they would demonstrate the lack of viability of the system, unable to provide real social protection. Only a decade later the entire system would collapse, but the deadly blow was dealt by the striking Polish workers in the summer of 1980.

Poland would again focus the attention of the Bulgarian public at the end

of 1988, when the return of *Solidarity* to the Polish political scene seemed imminent. The leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BKP) learned about PORP's intention to admit its historical defeat and to start negotiations with *Solidarity* by the end of September 1988. During his visit to Bulgaria, General W. Jaruzelski first acknowledged that *in 1948 a very big mistake was made, and then he admitted the failure of his*

own policy: By proclaiming the state of martial law we became convinced that the opposition could be kept down, could be forced to go underground. Yet, we cannot make the whole society accept with enthusiasm all the things we are doing... For this reason we came up with the idea of a round table , regarding it as a form of broad cooperation<sup>[12]</sup>. No less revolutionary for the Bulgarian leadership seemed Jaruzelski's

intentions to develop the Polish “Round Table” into a Council for National Understanding which was to *work out a concept about the future development* with the participation of the opposition<sup>[13]</sup>. The legalising of *Solidarity*” and the start of the “Round Table” talks at the beginning of February 1989 was not a surprise for the Bulgarian party leadership. Yet, it was quite unexpected for the Bulgarian society and influenced it strongly.

Parallel with the start of the Polish “Round Table” negotiations, at the party forums held in Bulgaria talks about political pluralism started. However, as many times before, the way of speaking was a parody – the leader of the officially recognised by the state agrarian party Bulgarian Agrarian National Union Patar Tanchev stated that political pluralism was reduced to his party only<sup>[14]</sup>. The information which came from Warsaw

concerned quite a different kind of pluralism - the establishment of a real opposition in Poland with its own programme for the transformation of the political system and suggestions for pluralistic elections<sup>[15]</sup>. The conclusion that was made in Bulgaria was explicit: *At present, an acute political struggle for power is waged in Poland. It is the struggle with the forces which are striving for a change of the social order through the erosion of*

*socialism or by a direct clash aimed at the change of power*<sup>[16]</sup>.

At the beginning of May 1989, information disturbing for the Bulgarian leadership came also from Brussels. During the negotiations of the Minister of Foreign Trade Andrey Lukanov with the European Commission it became evident that united Europe supported East European states such as Poland and Hungary which had embarked on thorough

changes<sup>[17]</sup>.

On the eve of the June 1989 elections, PORP reassured the Bulgarian leadership that according to public opinion polls the government would win the elections and that the “Round Table” agreements were regarded not as a capitulation but as a *perspective for the stabilisation and putting an end to the sequence of crises, and that they did not harm by no means the obligations of Poland to its*

*allies*<sup>[18]</sup>. However, the reality was quite different, in the first round of the elections that were held on 4th June 1989, PORP suffered a heavy defeat.

Bulgarian Prime Minister Georgi Atanasov visited Poland shortly after this, on 7th - 8th June 1989. He had a meeting with General Jaruzelski, the Prime Minister Mieczyslaw Rakowski and the President of the Polish Sejm Roman Malinowski. The conclusions of the three of them made

Bulgarian leadership realise the actual significance of the first elections in Eastern Europe during which the citizens were allowed to cast their votes freely, even though only for the Senate and for a third of the seats in the Sejm. The most concise estimate was defeat and the actual one was that the elections had been a plebiscite - for whom and against whom, both by Rakowski<sup>[19]</sup>. That was a turning point for the entire system in Eastern

Europe. In the same way as the “blind faith” in communism had collapsed after Hruschev’s revelations about the Stalin crimes in 1956, the mass voting of the Poles for *Solidarity* in 1989 put an end to the belief in the stability of the system which had at its disposal all mechanisms of power.

What was the reaction of the Bulgarian society to the election victory of *Solidarity* which in August brought about the first non-

communist government in Eastern Europe? There could be no single answer to this question, for processes of differentiation had already started in the Bulgarian society, dissident organisations had been established, and the citizens had begun to express their opinions openly.

It should be pointed out is that unlike the previous Polish crises, the events of 1989 were reflected in the Bulgarian media through

radio dispatches, TV reports, and newspaper correspondences. They were all censored, hence expressed rather the ideas of the PORP<sup>[20]</sup>. However, the Bulgarians had learned a long time ago to read between the lines and to understand the “Aesop’s” language. That was why they reacted with an increasing understanding to what was happening in Poland.

The regular survey of the attitudes in Bulgaria (for the

Central Committee of BKP) of 4th September 1989 contains information about certain comments that the establishment of the government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki was *one of the first steps in Poland's detachment from the socialist community* and that Poland and Hungary would leave the Warsaw Pact<sup>[21]</sup>. In the following days and months the comments would increase and the Bulgarians explained to themselves the

downfall of the system in Poland with the fact that *these events resulted from a great number of problems that had accumulated*<sup>[22]</sup>. More explicit statements were made also about the *impact of these events on the other socialist states* and the fate of the entire Eastern Bloc<sup>[23]</sup>. The open declaration of similar positions in the Bulgarian society reflects the role of the Polish events of 1989 in the preparation of the Bulgarians for the

forthcoming changes in Bulgaria as well.

The reaction of the BKP leadership was quite different. On the one hand, it started to feel more strongly, the outside pressure for changes, such were the impressions of the foreign minister Petar Mladenov from his visit to the Federal Republic of Germany at the end of July 1989<sup>[24]</sup>. On the other hand, Todor Zhivkov hardened his position, although his statements at

closed party forums revealed that he was well aware of the consequences of the lost PORP elections. According to Zhivkov, what was happening in Poland was *a scenario for a silent betrayal of the positions of socialism*<sup>[25]</sup>, and the Perestroika that was taking place in the whole of Eastern Europe jeopardised socialism itself<sup>[26]</sup>. In a document of 22nd August 1989 Todor Zhivkov summarised: *The Polish phenomena, if it could be*

*named so, has both national and international dimensions. Its reverberations are extremely strong at all ends of the planet. Particularly strong is its resonance in the socialist world*<sup>[27]</sup>. This position proved to be prophetic both for Bulgaria and his personal destiny, for only three months later on 10th November 1989 his forced resignation marked the beginning of the erosion of the system in Bulgaria.

Thus, two times, first in

1980 with the establishment of *Solidarity*, and then in 1989 with the victory of *Solidarity* in the first pluralistic elections, Poland demonstrated that the system was not invincible and that when the majority of the people want democratic changes, they can achieve it. The Bulgarian public learned this lesson comparatively quickly and used exactly the Polish experience in the Bulgarian "Round Table" from the beginning of the

1990.

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[1] Баева, И. *Източна Европа след Сталин 1953-1956. Полша, Унгария, Чехословакия и България.* С., 1995, 287-300.

[2] Баева, И. *Източна Европа и България.* С., 2001, 162-206.

[3] Central State Archives of Bulgaria ЦДА, ф. 1 Б, оп. 60, а. е. 272, л. 3.

[4] Ibidem, л. 3-14.

[5] Ibidem л. 17.

[6] Ibidem , л. 18.

[7] The brochure was discussed at the Politburo's meeting of October 21 and 25, 1980. ЦДА, ф. 1 Б, оп. 66, а. е. 2617, л. 118.

[8] The main theses of the brochure are to be found in a document of October 14, 1980, signed by Todor Zhivkov: *"On some current issues related to the preparation of the 12th Congress of the BKP"*. ЦДА, ф. 1 Б, оп. 65, а. е. 36, л. 110.

[9] This is my personal experience from the first half of the 1980s when I was an assistant professor at the Faculty of History, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

[10] Архив на МВР, ф. 1, оп. 2, а. е. 543, л. 54-56, 92-94, 159.

[11] Central State Archives of Bulgaria ЦДА, ф. 1 Б, оп. 65, а. е. 31, л. 186.

[12] Central State Archives of Bulgaria ЦДА, ф. 1 Б, оп. 60, а. е. 411, л. 12-13.

[13] Ibidem, л. 13.

[14] Central State Archives of Bulgaria ЦДА, ф. 1 Б, оп. 68, а. е. 3591, л. 283.

[15] Central State Archives of Bulgaria ЦДА, ф. 1 Б, оп. 101, а. е. 2195, л. 1-7.

[16] Ibidem, л. 8.

[17] Central State Archives of Bulgaria ЦДА, ф. 1 Б, оп. 101, а. е. 2106, л. 4.

[18] Central State Archives of Bulgaria ЦДА, ф. 1 Б, оп. 101, а. е. 2198, л. 6.

[19] Central State Archives of Bulgaria ЦДА, ф. 1 Б, оп.

101, а. е. 2199, л. 12, 13.

[20] For the media coverage of “the year of miracles” in Central Europe see.: Иванова, Д. 1989. Голямата промяна. Благоевград, 2007, 205-217.

[21] Central State Archives of Bulgaria ЦДА, ф. 1 Б, оп. 101, а. е. 2368, л. 91.

[22] The information is from October 9-15, 1989. Ibid., p. 190.

[23] Central State Archives of Bulgaria ЦДА, ф. 1 Б, оп.

101, а. е. 2404, л. 11-12.

[[24](#)] Central State Archives of Bulgaria ЦДА, ф. 1 Б, оп. 101, а. е. 2120, л. 4-5.

[[25](#)] Central State Archives of Bulgaria ЦДА, ф. 1 Б, оп. 68, а. е. 3735 А, л. 138.

[[26](#)] Ibidem, л. 140.

[[27](#)] Ibidem, л. 158.

Markus Meckel

Germany

# Germany and Poland 1989

*Markus Meckel (born 1952) German politician and theologian. Since the early 70s, an active member of the opposition in Eastern Germany. He was the founder and leader of the Socialist Party (SPD) in Eastern Germany. From April until August 1990 held the position of the GDR Minister of*

*Foreign Affairs, then after the reunification of Germany, he was elected to the Bundestag. His focus has predominantly been the development of the German-Polish relations and heading the German-Polish Parliamentary Group in the Bundestag since 1994. Decorated in 1998 with the Cavalier's Cross of the Polish Republic Order of Merit.*

2009 is a year of some very important commemorations. We remember in particular the momentous events of 20

years ago, the end of the Cold War that divided Europe and the world, followed by the fall of communism, which for almost half a century denied us our liberty. Also this year we commemorate the 70th anniversary of the German invasion of Poland, the beginning of World War Two and the Hitler-Stalin pact which preceded it. These fundamental subjects are the central themes of the 20th century. Only in this context is it really

possible to measure the significance of the 20th anniversaries of these events.

So much annihilation, terror and murder emanated from Germany, bringing catastrophe to the whole of Europe. For us in Eastern Europe liberation from National Socialism did not bring us freedom but a seemingly all-powerful communist dictatorship which held our people captive and cut us off from the free development of the

West. How auspicious for us, after all this, that 20 years ago freedom and democracy triumphed in East, Central and Southeast Europe and Europe began to grow together again. We can rejoice that we were able to play a part in this and be thankful to have lived to see it.

For me as a German in particular, whose country was responsible for so many of the terrible things that befell Poland and the whole of Europe, these events

have a very special additional importance. With the victory of freedom in the peaceful revolution of 1989, we in Germany had an opportunity that we hardly dared to believe possible: the opportunity to achieve national unity. Today we are united not only as Germans but also with all our neighbours in the European Union. Whatever the problems that undoubtedly confront us even now, Germany and the European Union is for me, a gift which

naturally also brings with it a responsibility for the future.

Today everyone in the European Union faces great challenges. Precisely for this reason it is important that Europeans are aware of their foundations and goals. Two years ago in the Berlin Declaration marking the 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, it was clearly stated that not only the treaties themselves but also more precisely, the victory of freedom and

democracy over the communist dictatorship formed the pillars which support a united Europe: *Thanks to the yearning for freedom of the people of Central and Eastern Europe the unnatural division of Europe is now consigned to the past.*

The peaceful revolutions and upheavals in Central Europe in 1989, which have radically changed the face of Europe, did not emerge out of nowhere. They were the result of a long process

in which many factors played a role. They were the successful culmination of a history of dissidence, opposition and resistance, a history of freedom on the other side of the Iron Curtain, a history of which far too little is known in Europe. We ourselves still know too little about this history; for the most part what we know is our own particular national tradition. Who knows, for example, that over one million people in more than 700 towns and

communities took part in the popular uprising in the GDR in 1953? Who knows that two weeks prior there had also been an uprising in Czechoslovakia? Who in Western Europe associates the year 1956 not only with Hungary but also with the uprising in Poznań? Who in Poland really knows anything about the opposition in the GDR? Apart from a few specialists, the answer is probably, hardly anybody.

I firmly believe that it is

important for us not just as neighbours but as Europe as a whole, to learn more about this history of European freedom on the other side of the Iron Curtain, to make a collective effort to find out more about it and to correlate the different national traditions with each other. It is part of Europe's heritage of freedom which we need to understand better and of which we need to take better care. Why, for

example, should we not seek to establish a European research centre for such questions or a corresponding network of research centres? The Europejskie Centrum Solidarności (European Solidarity Centre) in Gdansk could be a good starting point for this.

The almost ten-year struggle of *Solidarność* (*Solidarity*) was one of the major factors paving the way for the fall of communism in Central and

Eastern Europe in 1989/90.

The founding of the independent trade union *Solidarity* in 1980 was a clarion call to us, the opposition in the GDR. For the first time in the entire eastern bloc, unlike in the GDR in 1953, in Poland and Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968, resistance in the form of strikes, uprisings, demonstrations and the resounding call for freedom led not to a bloodbath in the wake of the violent

suppression of this resistance but to success. For the first time a negotiated outcome was achieved: an independent and non-communist trade union.

We in the GDR observed these events with immense interest and were deeply moved by them. We were convinced: *mea res agitur*, this was something that concerned us too. It was about the common cause of freedom. We were aware that the founding of

*Solidarity* and the gaining of recognition of it by the communist rulers of Poland represented a body blow to the system. A fracture to part of a rigid structure however, can cause the whole system to totter and this is how the events of the summer of 1980 reverberated far beyond Poland.

The SED (Socialist Unity Party) closed the borders between the GDR and Poland and sought to stop the “germ of freedom”

spreading over the border. Old anti-Polish resentment was dredged up in the communist media in an attempt to vaccinate the people against the Polish spirit of freedom. A friend of mine who brought documents produced by *Solidarity* out of Poland, was sent to prison for a year and his was not an isolated case. Contact with Poland became more difficult and those who did not speak Polish had problems getting their hands on any

information other than what was available in the West. Fortunately there were a few people in the ranks of the GDR opposition and the churches who were able to speak Polish and who managed to maintain contact clandestinely. I would like to make special mention here of Günter Särchen, Wolfgang Templin and Ludwig Mehlhorn. They did everything they could to spread the word about Poland and the work of *Solidarity*.

For those of us who were fighting for justice and freedom in the GDR, the founding of *Solidarity* in 1980 and the illegal continuation of its work after the declaration of martial law in 1981, was a huge encouragement. It showed us that change from the bottom up was possible! With *Solidarity* a new political player had mounted the stage. There was no hiding the fact that a new political player acting from within society had

become a power factor. Many in the West failed for a long time to grasp this and were still pinning their hopes exclusively on change being imposed from the top down. With *Solidarity* it became clear that the fight for freedom and justice was no longer just a private, moral struggle on the part of individuals seeking, in the words of Václav Havel - to "live in truth". It was a case of millions taking action and their fight for freedom

could no longer be ignored.

For us, the opposition in the GDR, where people were so fearful, all this seemed like a miracle. We thought it would be impossible to achieve the same with Germans but fortunately, as we saw in the autumn of 1989, we were wrong. People in the GDR too, stopped being afraid. In a peaceful revolution they triumphed over communist power and from the inside, broke down the wall that had divided Germany from

the whole of Europe.

As in the other countries that Stalin once occupied, there had from the very beginning of the Soviet occupation, been opposition and resistance in East Germany too. However in our case, the partition of Germany was an additional defining factor. Initially the internal German border remained open and almost three million people left the GDR to go to the West. Subsequently, after the building of the Berlin Wall in

August 1961, the Federal Republic purchased the freedom of political prisoners - in the course of the years, over 30,000 of them. Over the decades the outflow of critical, democratic potential from the GDR to West Germany drained the lifeblood of the opposition. Those who then settled in the West did not consider themselves to be in exile, they were building a new life for themselves in Germany. This made it impossible to build

a tradition of opposition in the GDR.

Nevertheless, a new generation of opposition did indeed emerge, carving out their own paths. At the end of the Seventies the movement gained strength, helped not least by the Ostpolitik of the Social-Liberal coalition led by Willy Brandt in the Federal Republic and by the CSCE process. Contact with the West became easier again and more information started to reach us. At the

beginning of the Eighties we attempted to forge contacts between the various newly emerging opposition initiatives and groups to build networks in order to create the conditions to enable us to take collective action.

The Protestant Churches were of key importance for the opposition. They enjoyed more freedom in the GDR than in the other communist countries: firstly because they had greater financial independence due

to receiving generous support from the Churches in West Germany and secondly because the Soviets after 1945 acknowledged the resistance shown by the "Confessing Church" during the Nazi era and hence granted it greater autonomy. The Church was also permitted to engage in youth work and run its own training centres. Thus it became the only social space in which independent discourse was possible and

even fostered. Here was one place where people could communicate freely with each other.

Certain tensions developed among those who were critical of the communist system in East Germany, particularly in the last ten years of the GDR's existence. There were those who sought to escape the GDR either by fleeing or by applying for permission to emigrate to the West. Others worked for the cause of democratising the

country and built an opposition which slowly took on a structure. From 1988 these forces started to look increasingly outside the Church for new forms of organisation.

The opposition was often critical of those who wanted to leave and called on them to stay in the country and work towards bringing about the necessary changes.

In 1989 Hungary and Poland became a source of encouragement and

a mobilising force for both groups: for those wanting to quit the GDR, the Hungarian policy offered great hope because under the communist reform, the border between Hungary and Austria was opened up. This led to the large-scale mobilisation of society in the GDR and at the same time to a considerable destabilisation of communist power.

For the opposition, the main focus of attention was on the round-table talks in

Poland and Hungary and their outcomes. By as early as the beginning of 1989, the communist reform, under pressure from the democratic opposition, had decided to create a multiparty system and to hold elections in 1990. The effect of the first, albeit only semi-free, elections in Poland in June 1989 and the first non-communist prime minister was incomparable in terms of bringing hope to and galvanising the people. It became clear that it really

was possible to change things! What was impressive in this process was not just the will for freedom but also the sense of proportion, rationality and pragmatic negotiating skills which characterised the new political forces.

Naturally the role played in this process by Mikhail Gorbachev cannot be gainsaid. Many citizens of the GDR who could only envisage change coming from above, saw in him a figure of great hope.

Gorbachev sought through Glasnost' and Perestroika to salvage communist rule in the Soviet Union. Increasingly, however, he realised that he alone did not have the strength to propel the countries of Central Europe in a common direction and he had the sense of responsibility to want to avoid a bloodbath. Thus Gorbachev, by cautiously abandoning the Brezhnev Doctrine, gave the communist satellite states

the necessary freedom to take the first steps on a new path, a freedom of which Hungary and Poland were the first to actively take advantage.

In the GDR too, there had been more and more movement since the beginning of 1989. The democratic opposition began to emerge strengthened from under the protective umbrella of the Protestant Churches and looked for new forms of organisation. At the

beginning of 1989, Martin Gutzeit and I, both Protestant pastors, decided to found a social democratic party and in the summer of the same year we went public with it. In September, other movements followed: New Forum, Democracy Now and Democratic Awakening. A wave of emigration and exodus, which was assisted by the communist reform government in Budapest and the new forces in Warsaw, rocked the political

power of the SED. Starting in the churches, under the leadership of the newly formed democratic initiatives, parties and movements, there arose a broad wave of protest. It was the unplanned interplay of the opposition forces with the will of the great masses of people seeking to leave the country, which created the political tipping point and the breakthrough needed to bring about a peaceful revolution.

When tens of thousands demonstrated in Leipzig on 9th October 1989, the security forces who were deployed, refrained from firing on the demonstrators, we were sure that we would now be able to establish democratic conditions. A little later Honecker and shortly afterwards the entire SED politburo were forced to resign, communist power was over. In the midst of this process on 9th November 1989, the Berlin Wall, the symbol of the

division of Germany and Europe, fell. The communist government was forced to come to the round table, a "piece of furniture" we borrowed from Poland. Only this time it was certain from the very outset, that the outcome would be free elections, it was just a matter of discussing the terms and conditions. We negotiated electoral law there, pressed ahead with the dismantling of the communist state security apparatus and laid the

foundation for processing the communist past.

Finally on 18th March 1990 the first free elections were held in the GDR. The new parliament and the democratically elected government, in which I served as foreign minister, now had a mandate to negotiate German reunification - because unification was the will of the vast majority of the East German population. Thus the freedom that we struggled for also paved the

way for German unity!

The fall of the Berlin Wall on 9th November 1989 became a symbol throughout the world of the end of the Cold War and the fall of communism. It symbolised the victory of freedom and democracy and to some extent was the starting point for the process of German and also European unification. It is crucial to make it clear however, that the Wall fell as part of the peaceful revolution, not for example,

because it was opened up by the SED. This revolution in the GDR was part of a Central European revolution. A revolution which had its first major breakthrough with the round-table talks in Poland, reached its first emotional climax with the burial of Imre Nagy in Budapest, then found its worldwide metaphor with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

It is often stressed that in this chain of events one thing would not have

happened without the other. I am not sure that a causal description of this kind is correct. What is certain however, is that all these events of 1989, the victory of freedom and the fall of communism in Central Europe, have an internal correlation and are part of the great European heritage of freedom. That is why it is good that in this year in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, Prague and Bratislava, we remember this collective success story

together whilst at the same time also reminding others of it.

It is important that we commemorate the victory of freedom not just here in Warsaw today and tomorrow in Gdansk but also on 9th November in Berlin, the anniversary of the fall of the Wall. The victory of freedom opened the way to German unification and equally to the process of European unity. Certainly there were disagreements in Germany over whether it was

necessary to recognise the western border of Poland as an inevitable consequence of German crimes in World War Two, as I firmly believed, or whether it was the price to be paid for German unification, as Helmut Kohl asserted. In any event, it was possible for Germany to be reunified because it was the will of the people and not only because the Allies including the Soviet Union gave their consent but also the new democratic Poland, hereby

enabling Germany to regain its sovereignty. For that we are grateful!

Five years ago, after a remarkable process of transformation, Poland and the other countries of Central Europe which had struggled for freedom fifteen years earlier, became members of the European Union. Germany energetically supported this process. Today our task is to work together to expand this Europe further, a Europe in which people

live together with freedom and peace and are able to shape their future together. The challenge of guaranteeing freedom, prosperity and security has not diminished. Today too, we can only meet these challenges if we continue to work together. In the light of our experiences from twenty years ago, we as Europeans must at the same time stand shoulder to shoulder throughout the world with those who today are fighting for freedom,

self-determination and  
democracy - as we once  
did.

Dr Burkhard Olschowsky  
Germany

# The Mazowiecki Government from a foreign perspective

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historian and lecturer.  
Burkhard specialises in Late  
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*History and in particular 19th and 20th Century German and Polish History. From 2003 to 2005 he worked as an Instructor for Contemporary History and Politics at the Humboldt University. During 2004-2005 he was an Associate at the Federal Ministry of Transportation, Building and Housing. In May 2005 Burkhard became a Fellow of the Federal Institute for the History and Culture of Germans in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, he is also a member of German-Polish society based in Berlin.*

When in January 1989 the

10th Plenum of the PUWP decriminalised *Solidarity*, the SED leadership received with great scepticism, the statements by Polish high officials that everything was under control and that they had even taken the initiative. Hermann Axen was incredulous when Józef Czyrek assured that *the election to the Sejm*” was “*the guarantor of the continuity of the Socialist Society*” and the actual result would be “only a question of prestige<sup>[28]</sup>”.

The SED's old prejudice that the PUWP was lacking ideological principles and was politically weak seemed to be confirmed. The Polish comrades were discussing the round-table talks and the electoral outcome with fake optimism.

In the information given to the Politburo during the Second National Conference of PUWP delegates in early May, the SED stated that *the PUWP is inadequately prepared for the*

*forthcoming parliamentary elections. While the PUWP leadership was confident about its “change of colour”, the SED did not see how the PUWP would take the offensive necessary to win a convincing electoral victory in early June*<sup>[29]</sup>.

East Berlin's sceptical view was based on the extensive reports of operation “Warsaw”, and found, inter alia, its expression in a report on the developments in Poland commissioned by Axen at

the Department of International Affairs. It described the political strategy of the PUWP in recent years as a failure. The adherence to the requirements of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund had lead to a dramatic decrease in state subsidies. *Solidarity*, through its 1988 strikes had succeeded in *blackmailing and taking the Party and Government hostage, which triggered fear and helplessness in the Party*

*leader ship*. The authors criticised the positive reception of Perestroika even though its practical benefits had been in no way proved. In 1989, the SED leadership could only passively take note of the developments in Poland. The times when they sought to exert influence on the neighbouring country belonged, irrevocably, to the past<sup>[30]</sup>.

This suspicion was even greater in the Romanian Communists, especially in

the autocrat, Nicolae Ceauçescu. On 19th August 1989 the Polish Ambassador in Bucharest, Marian Woźniak, was summoned to the Romanian Foreign Ministry, where he was given the following verbal statement: *The Party's surrender of its leadership role is a serious blow to the Warsaw Pact. Allowing 'Solidarity' to take power and form a government from its representatives served the imperialist reactionary forces. The*

Communist and workers' parties of the socialist countries have to take a stand and demand that 'Solidarity' should not be given the task of forming a government. The election results should not harm the interests of the people or hurt the working class. The new government which is being formed should be based on the PUWP, the OPZZ and other progressive and democratic forces including the military, to become a government for

*national salvation and the preservation of Socialism in Poland. The interests of Socialism require that the communist parties should unite at this particular moment to prevent the workers' and peasants' power going into the hands of reactionary quarters*<sup>[31]</sup>.

Ceauçescu's dramatic statement stirred a huge response, because even during the same night, along with the Politburo of the PUWP, all party leaderships of the Warsaw

Pact received the call to work together to resolve Poland's dire predicament. The GDR Ambassador in Bucharest, Plaschke, forwarded this request immediately to Hermann Axen and Günter Mittag to discuss it immediately in the SED Politburo. On 29th August, the Romanian Foreign Minister Totu received a cautious response. *As far as the situation in Poland is concerned ... there is a question of how the PUWP*

*itself is disposed towards the idea of such a meeting; to what extent it is interested in 'receiving advice from third parties', more so because, in view of the complicated conditions of the internal political struggle in the People's Republic of Poland, there is no one better positioned than this party itself to assess the prevailing situation and its own strengths and capabilities. Furthermore, the SED comrades noted that The*

*convening of such a forum would be undoubtedly used by Solidarity and other opposition circles as a pretext to present the PUWP as a force which expresses the interests of foreign parties and countries rather than those of its own country*<sup>[32]</sup>.

What was implemented, almost unquestioned, in Prague in 1968 and in Poland in 1980 as “fraternal aid”, in late 1989 belonged to a different era, as the then Prime Minister

Rakowski recalls. Ceaușescu, who in 1968 had not marched with his troops into Czechoslovakia and who was for this reason extolled for a long time in the West, now showed his true despotic face which his fellow countrymen already knew all too well. The Soviet leadership was clearly opposed to the initiative of Bucharest. Rakowski instructed the Central Committee's Secretary for International Affairs, Włodzimierz Natorf,

to prepare an unequivocal reply which decisively rejected Ceauçescu's claim that the participation of representatives of *Solidarity* in the government "serve the imperialist reactionary forces". This reply was forwarded to the Romanian Ambassador and other Warsaw Pact countries<sup>[33]</sup>.

The GDR leadership united with Romania in the defence against Perestroika and was extremely sceptical about the consequences of election results and

a possible participation of *Solidarity* in the government. They did not, however, want to be in the same boat with internationally isolated Ceauçescu whose proposal was so manifestly failed and unrealistic. In order to avoid being forced to acquiesce to the Romanian request, the SED Politburo had to practice the optimism which was mistrusted a few months earlier in response to Czyrek's statements. Now this meant that *We are far*

*from writing off the PUWP as an influential political force in Poland's life*<sup>[34]</sup>.

From 1989 Poland gained considerable importance in the GDR's foreign policy. As democratisation in Poland progressed; Wałęsa presented a new Poland on his trips to Paris, Rome and Washington gaining appreciation in the West and especially in the USA. SED intensified their vigilance about the potential impact those events could have on their

country. In his speech to the Polish Sejm in July 1989, President George Bush made it emphatically clear how much the Americans appreciated Poland's struggle for freedom. By referring to the May Constitution of 1791, Poland's contribution as a courageous ally in the Second World War and now as a precursor to overcome the European division, Bush expressed, in front of the newly elected deputies to the Sejm and the public at

large, his well-calculated respect. The economic assistance from the US, however, fell considerably short of Poland's expectations. Bush was more eager to encourage Poles to implement economic reforms which would be the basis for a stable and prosperous development of the country. The main emphasis of Bush's trip was the symbolic and moral support for the democratic changes reflected in the declaration

that *the Western democracies are on the side of the Polish people*<sup>[35]</sup>.

In a report by the East Berlin Central Committee Secretariat for Foreign Affairs, the Bush visit to Poland was evaluated as follows: *Bush's visit to Poland was also directly targeted against the GDR. It was an attempt to open up opportunities for the penetration of imperialist ideologies and policies in the GDR through a 'bypass manoeuvre', through the*

*conquest of the 'hinterland'. Most of the recommendations advocated by Bush were also indirectly addressed at the GDR. Therefore, this visit was seen not only as an internal affair of the People's Republic of Poland as it directly affected the interests and security of the GDR and other socialist states*<sup>[36]</sup>.

Since the Romanian variant of democratisation in Poland was out of the question for the GDR,

Hermann Axen's Central Committee Secretariat adopted the unrealistic view, probably also due to the lack of alternatives, that "all the basic socio-economic and political problems in the People's Republic of Poland" would "continue to exist and will be increasingly acute" because *Bush gave a clear rejection to all the expectations of greater financial and material help.* A scenario of Polish „disenchantment with the

West” and the reflection on *their own responsibility and commitment* was also considered as a possible consequence. Polish opposition would differentiate along these lines, thus “opening up opportunities for the PUWP to initiate an aggressive policy”. The conclusion followed that, as a result of this chain of events, *The GDR can continue its constructive line of development of comprehensive relations*

*with the People's Republic of Poland based on treaties and agreements*<sup>[37]</sup>.

Indeed, the report of the Central Committee Secretariat was based on the correct observation that Bush offered no direct financial assistance and the opposition camp was heterogeneous. However, the conclusion that one could continue relations with Poland as before characterised the impotence of the SED to adequately respond with its

foreign policy to rapid developments. Even the euphemistic reference to *constructive line of development of comprehensive relations with the People's Republic of Poland* sounded like a mockery in the face of considerably limited relations which were further aggravated by the East German Government's refusal of visa-free travel.

When one looks at analytically correct and almost ideology-free

estimates prepared by the GDR's embassy, including the recommendations of the GDR ambassador Jürgen van Zwoll and the reports of the "Warsaw operational group", the conclusion is that East Berlin probably took these estimates into account but did not implement them in a target-oriented policy toward Poland. The information East Berlin received, originated, as in previous years, from the party apparatus of the

PUWP, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and since the formation of Mazowiecki's government, also from talks with *Solidarity* and the no-longer censored Polish press.

Typical of the conservatives in the PUWP, was the opinion of the former Minister for Religious Affairs, Kazimierz Kąkol. He and his sympathisers often maintained a close contact with the GDR Embassy, with political representatives of

which they felt ideologically connected. In early May, in the middle of the electoral campaign, Kąkol drew a devastating picture of the PUWP. As a crucial mistake he saw the 10th Plenum with its decision on trade union pluralism. The present Central Committee members were blackmailed by the resignation threat of Jaruzelski and Rakowski. Kąkol was convinced that with this decision the PUWP leadership *irredeemably ruined its chance received*

*with the imposition of the Martial Law in late 1981. Since then time has not worked for PUWP or for socialism, but against them. The reason is the leadership's inactivity and lack of vision. The past seven years have not been used to define the basic ideological positions of the Party and MarxismLeninism has been, as before, applied in a dogmatic and antiquated way. The consequence is that any attempts to work out*

*a constructive revolutionary social strategy adapted to polish conditions have failed. The party has lacked any ideological concept of Scientific Socialism. Neither has the Party, during all these years, been able to transform organisationally into a competitive party. Many comrades who wanted it, have either died, retired from their functions, or act in complete organisational fragmentation and as a consequence, are largely isolated. Many, including*

himself, were sidelined as unwelcome critics. In the past few years, the Party and Government leadership instead of analysing and clarifying the problems, avoided dealing with all the problems which mounted due to their lack of vision<sup>[38]</sup>.

At the end of his remarks Kąkol described the present course of action of the PUWP, embarked upon at the 10th Plenum, as a deliberate process of dismantling the Party, as

*abandoning the Socialist path and goals which is only perfunctorily masked by Socialist assertions of the conservative quarters. Throughout the 1980s, the PUWP never learned to fight, never found the will to fight, therefore, it is at the moment unable to fight and unfortunately, it never will be able to. Given the described decay processes in the PUWP, Kąkol considered it necessary to establish a new Communist Party. GDR's Ministry of*

Security's (MfS) comment on Kąkol's analysis said: *Subjective perceptions, but honest and clear (require particular attention)*<sup>[39]</sup>.

Only some part of the Party apparatus instinctively shared Kąkol's views. After years of de-ideologisation, the Marxist-Leninist creed was alien to a large part of the party apparatus. The ultimate driving force behind the acceptance of the political breakthrough by the Party leadership in 1988 during Rakowski

government was the lucrative privatisation of state enterprises. The Party apparatus, in Warsaw and on provincial level, had the knowledge necessary to run the country; they also derived significant benefits from profitable sale of enterprises and the non-transparent establishment of many joint-venture companies<sup>[40]</sup>.

Kąkol's militant criticism was rather shared by disgruntled comrades of the middle party rungs.

However, they did not like the self-confident tone and opposition to party leadership. The party conservative grass roots, who had vowed subordination to party leadership, proved themselves in the battle against “horizontal structures” and “revisionists” in the early to middle 1980s in accordance with the party line. These members were in many respects completely unprepared to the

paradigmshift made at the 10th Plenum. They were supposed to support the revival of *Solidarity* and later compete with it in electoral struggle. The party was completely unprepared for the change of government and electoral battle<sup>[41]</sup>.

Outrage at this U-turn in some part of the establishment was linked to a concern about their own survival. Even at the Ministry of the Interior, their own minister, Kiszczak, was

mistrusted. He was accused of *first ordering to fight the Opposition and then negotiating with it. Moreover, he is more concerned with big politics and his own career rather than operative work. He has also done too little for the welfare of the Ministry of Internal Affairs employees*<sup>[42]</sup>.

SED took careful note of the "8th July Movement", a pressure group established at the University of Warsaw, aimed

at social-democratisation of the PUWP. In the declaration of October 1989, the group opted for parliamentary democracy and social market economy. The Movement was clearly open to cooperation with *Solidarity* forces. It treated differently the comrades who advocated Leninism and democratic centralism. Unlike party conservatives, the movement members could take offensive positions under the banner of progress, thus winning

some recognition in the party and effectiveness in public opinion<sup>[43]</sup>.

In 1989 ideological differences between the SED and the PUWP had only a small bearing on political relations. However, they would invariably transpire during scientific cooperation, especially in the fields related to ideology, such as the agreement on prospective cooperation in “social science” for the period 1990-1995, entered into by

central committees of both parties. During the preparatory work, the Poles asked for less resolute expressions, because, *They assume a high development level of socialism, which is not the case in Poland.* Thus the Poles succeeded in devising the formula of: *Combination of superiority of Socialism with the gains of scientific and technological revolution.* According to the SED, the negotiation position of the Poles was as follows: *On*

*international issues, Polish comrades wanted to avoid, where possible, 'too militant' expressions, explaining that they must take into account their international situation. We did not accept that and some points indicating the existence of an ideological dispute have been included in the text. In Polish circumstances, anachronistic topics referring to communist past, like The rule-of-law nature of our era and*

*Revolutionary* *global* process were simply crossed out because the Polish side was not in a position to work on them<sup>[44]</sup>.

The cooperation between the MfS and the Polish Ministry of the Interior seemed to be unaffected by the political changes during 1988 and 1989. The Annual Plan of Work for 1989 named the most immediate task: *a constant, up-to-date assessment of the situation in the People's Republic of Poland, especially in times*

*of social change and upheavals. To this end, one was to further intensify cooperation with high-ranking contact persons in Poland's security structures and in Party central bodies and state authorities. Three days after his nomination as Deputy Prime Minister in Mazowiecki's Government, Czesław Kiszczak met a certain Lieutenant General from the MfS to brief him about the changes undergoing in Poland, his new role in the cabinet and*

his ideas about further cooperation with the MfS. Kiszczak assessed Mazowiecki as an *optimal prime minister in current circumstances in Poland. He is a devout Catholic, has very good relations with the Pope, somewhat worse with Glemp. He is a no-nonsense, balanced and composed person, but in the face of coming challenges, according to General Kiszczak, certainly far too composed.* Kiszczak stated it was “somewhat odd” to

be in one government with Mazowiecki and Kuroń, whom he detained in 1981<sup>[45]</sup>.

Obviously, Kiszczak's competences included the nomination of deputy ministers<sup>[46]</sup>. Mazowiecki requested that Kiszczak not just take into account PUWP members, however, Kiszczak rejected this. To accommodate such requests, he proposed to establish an advisory committee in his field of competence whose

members would represent all political forces and experts in particular fields. Kiszczak wanted this body to consider such matters as passports, economic crime and fighting drugs, *however, he wanted to prevent it from insightful dealing with such matters. He emphasised that he would not allow other political forces of the People's Republic of Poland to control operative work of the Ministry and would not admit for an inspection of*

any documents. In terms of information, he stressed that when verifying the acquired information, in future he would attach more weight to the protection of sources and promised that in particular, information received from us, would be in strict confidence (MfS, B.O.). Either way, in future, he would pass important information only to the President and not to Prime Minister and other Ministers<sup>[47]</sup>.

Almost unparalleled in

frankness, Kiszczak's statement, if authentic, completely diminished Mazowiecki and *Solidarity* which stood behind him. In the face of a chameleon-like conduct of the former and current Minister of Internal Affairs, it is however, advisable to verify this source in the context of other materials. Confident about his important role in Mazowiecki's government, Kiszczak aimed at preserving his unrestricted control of the Ministry of

Internal Affairs in order to have exclusive powers to handle important information and use it politically. On the other hand, he was aware that the political developments were unfavourable to him and strived to maintain a correct attitude to Mazowiecki. The openness and frankness towards the MfS was probably designed to reassure the counterpart who was concerned about possible exposure. The GDR Ministry of State Security

and the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs were regularly exchanging information about the quarters of opposition members and dissidents in both countries. Kiszczak was trying to suggest that he could, through the agency of "his" deputy ministers, "pull the strings" while, at the same time, maintaining the image of democratic rule for the outside world. Although he was inclined to act along such lines, he was

prevented by his sober assessment of the situation, knowing that the public and the increasingly critical press were waiting for such evidence of disloyalty.

It is impossible to answer definitely whether or not the Ministry of State Security believed in Kiszczak's assertions. What is beyond doubt is that the MfS, like the SED Political Bureau, was informed in detail about the developments in Poland, including Kiszczak's pledge

during interrogation at the Sejm that he would dissolve the coercion machinery, reduce the personnel of his ministry by 10 percent and would work on *changing the mentality of all those* who were subordinated to him<sup>[48]</sup>.

The GDR Ministry of Foreign Affairs was aware that Poland was seeking to strengthen relations with the USSR and Hungary, while distancing themselves from the CSSR, GDR and Romania. This was evident

in the customs and tourism laws designed to *subdue [these three states] at least indirectly, because not all socialist countries were able to cope with the new requirements of building the socialist state*<sup>[49]</sup>.

Cautious assessment of developments in Poland based on fear of the GDR's leadership concern was that too self critical statements and independent action within the Warsaw Pact would push the GDR to defensive positions on

foreign policy. The Romanian government's declaration was a salutary lesson, as it met with almost universal refusal. The Soviet Government was considering at that time how to transform the Warsaw Pact. The memorandum of Alexander Yakovlev, the Department for International Affairs of the CPSU Central Committee from February 1989, was in favour of a process of change implemented in accordance

with the principle of cooperation of Socialist countries. This cooperation should be based on an authentic concordance of interest between specific countries. The memorandum saw the actual reason behind the change in the Eastern Alliance, a systemic lack of economic competitiveness in comparison to Western democracies. Moreover, it was considered that the socialist countries of Eastern Europe were

attracted by the unparalleled appeal of welfare and lifestyle of Western Europe. In such circumstances ideological values lost their effectiveness. The ruling parties of the Warsaw Pact could not act in the way they had previously done and the new rules of the game had yet to be devised. As parties delay the adjustment process, they face even more difficult situation<sup>[50]</sup>.

The International

Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union gave its consent for the PUWP to embark on political pluralism. This process would determine the extent to which it would be possible to include opposition in this process. The general fatigue of the Polish society meant, according to the authors, that a disruptive system change was rather unlikely, as opposed to evolutionary

changes. As far as the GDR was concerned, the authors confirmed a comparatively good economic shape of the country; however this was deteriorating due to debt and dependence on the Federal Republic of Germany. Moreover, the paper says the GDR had an ideological, but not national, base. Any heated democratisation process might result in unforeseen complications<sup>[51]</sup>.

As for the economic future of the Socialist Community,

the authors proved to be helpless. They made the wrong assumption that only by common action was it possible to reduce the distance between Socialist states and Western market economies. Within economic cooperation in the Comecon it was desirable to consider which reasonable joint projects could be implemented with help from Western loans. Furthermore, a common strategy to link the Comecon to global economy

should be established.

In security policy and defence, the Socialist allies would gain significance in proportion to the reduction of strategic weapons by the superpowers and the rise of political factors. The Soviet Union must abandon its supremacy in the Warsaw Pact and enable leadership on partner-like basis. This would lead to irrevocable reduction of Soviet troops stationed in other socialist countries. A conflict inside one country or between two

countries-members of the Warsaw Pact should be resolved on a consensus basis with the participation of the countries involved<sup>[52]</sup>.

Another memorandum addressed to Alexander Yakovlev, analysed changes in Eastern Europe and their impact on the USSR. For Poland, the authors considered three scenarios: a possible scenario - with careful democratisation, a pessimist scenario - with the continuation of deadlock situation, and

a conflict scenario - with renewed martial law. The first scenario would do the Soviet Union least harm. Although it would meet with rejection from conservative forces within the CPSU and mount doubts about the effectiveness of Perestroika, this scenario would make relationships more stable and be founded on a de-ideologised basis, as well as ensuring durable perspective. In any event, it was important to maintain Poland's membership of the

Warsaw Pact<sup>[53]</sup>.

Referring to the GDR, this report states that the *reformist aspirations will not be fulfilled most of all because the potential exponents of the new course have yet to utilise the consequences of the irreversible change in the USSR.* Moscow was fully aware that a system change in the GDR would bring farreaching consequences. *Perestroika in the GDR will force the USSR and other socialist countries to*

reconsider many, now outdated situations and if possible, define anew their interests in the centre of Europe. In conditions of democratisation and openness the national problem will soon move to the forefront and how it is solved will shape the assessment of the leadership and the problem of reforms. In future, it is conceivable to determine such goals as establishing a neutral German state on a confederative basis. In the

*time of transition a formula: 'one state - two systems could be used. Maintaining the status quo in Poland and supporting conservative forces in the GDR would excessively strain the Soviet economy, because the price for maintaining the current relations would steadily rise. Our pressure would strengthen the conservative wing of the top leadership, discontinue reforms where they had already begun, and deepen the crisis<sup>[54]</sup>.*

The authors of the memorandum were critical about the practice of Soviet foreign policy and encouraged consultation on bilateral and multilateral problems, instead of, as was then the case, informing the allies about decisions already taken. Moreover, the personnel of Soviet embassies in Socialist countries should be verified and possibly replaced. The removal of unknowns in relations with the allies should be decisive, since

they encumbered the relations with the Poles and Hungarians. Reports on socialist countries would in future be assessed on their objectivity. Besides, all expressions on reformist ideas should be analysed with particular attention and the GDR, USSR, Bulgaria and Romania should understand with which tendencies the Soviet government sympathises<sup>[55]</sup>.

The picture sketched here shows that the analysts in

the party machinery irrevocably departed from the Brezhnev doctrine and with which allies they were in sympathy. At the same time, the memorandum demonstrates explicitly that in February 1989 the precursors in foreign policy in Moscow assumed the possibility of a confederation of two neutral German states, while maintaining the Warsaw Pact and the Comecon.

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SAPMO-BA

(Foundation Archive of Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR in the Federal Archives), DY 30, IV 2/2.035/50, Note by GDR Embassy in Warsaw on the speech by Comrade J. Czyrek ... on 22nd March 1989 before the ambassadors of the socialist countries, p. 155. For Axen, the aforementioned statement by Czyrek was unclear. He underlined it and put a question mark.

[29] SAPMO-BA, DY 30, IV 2/2.035/50, Information for the Politburo of the CC of the SED of 10th May 1989, pp. 181.

[30] Ibidem, On the Developments in the Polish PR, 4th Apr. 1989, pp. 164.

[31] Rakowski, It began in Poland, pp. 354; SAPMO-BA, IV 2/2.035/52, Telegram from GDR Ambassador in Bucharest, Plaschke, Hermann Axen and Günter Mittag, 20th Aug. 1989.

[32] SAPMO-BA, IV

2/2.035/52, Reply to the proposal of the Romanian leadership, 29th Aug. 1989, pp. 170.

[33] Rakowski, It began in Poland, p. 355.

[34] SAPMO-BA, IV 2/2.035/52, p. 171.

[35] SAPMO-BA, IV 2/2.035/115, p. 58, Bush's offers looked like this: In Paris, he wanted the seven leading industrialized Western countries to prepare a coordinated assistance. He promised to ask the US Congress to

provide 100 million dollars for the promotion of the Polish private agriculture.

The US would also encourage the World Bank to grant loans amounting to 325 million dollars for „reasonable investment” in the Polish industry. Bush also said that, in the Paris Club, the US would opt for a rescheduling of Poland's debts falling due in 1989 (5 billion dollars). Poland should also be granted 15 million dollars for environmental protection

measures in Krakow. BStU, MfS, ZAIG 14222, MfAA, Information on Bush's visit to Poland and Hungary, 18th July 1989, p. 17.

[36] Ibidem, p. 73.

[37] Ibidem

[38] BStU (Federal Commissioner for the Records of the Ministry for State Security of the former GDR), ZAIG (Central Evaluation and Information Group) 13830, pp. 26.

[39] Ibidem

[40] Władysław Baka

describes the atmosphere in the party machinery as “Enrich yourself!”. This process was encouraged rather than tolerated by party leadership. Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład dyktatury komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990*, pp. 192.

[41] Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja*, pp. 274.

[42] The party leadership was accused that on the eve of parliamentary elections it

failed to ensure the backing of party grass roots, adopted wrong resolutions, ignored critical remarks from basic party organizations on the development trends in provinces, and failed to take account of opinions and demands of party grass roots when developing basic strategic decisions. As a result, the gap between the Party's top officials and its grass roots was increasing. This detachment from the masses of party

members let in the end to a wrong diagnosis and abandoning of the PUWP's leading role in the Polish society. BStU, ZAIG 13209, p. 2; BStU, ZAIG 13851, Information of the Operative Group "Warsaw" on the situation in Poland, 8th June 1989, p. 41.

[43] BStU, ZAIG 13209, Information on "8th July Movement", pp. 5. Declaration of the "8th July Movement", in: Trybuna Ludu, 13th Oct. 1989.

[44] SAPMO-BA, DY 30/

former SED / 42339, Agreement between SED and PUWP Central Committees on cooperation in social sciences in 1990-1995, signed on 22nd May 1989 in Berlin by Jaruzelski and Honecker.

[45] BStU, MfS HA II/ 10, no. 783, Conversation with the deputy prime minister and minister of the interior, Division General Kiszczak, on 15th Sept. 1989 in Warsaw, pp. 59.

[46] This right was given to Kiszczak in order that he

agreed for the formation of government by “*Solidarity*”.

[47] Ibidem, pp. 66.

[48] Kiszczak confirmed this on 9th Sept. 1989 at the Sejm. BStU, ZAIG 13830, p. 9.

[49] BStU, ZAIG 13630, About the current trends in internal and international developments in the PPR / Political Department, Embassy in Warsaw, 2nd Feb. 1989, p. 15.

[50] The Memorandum can be found in the archives of

the Gorbachev Foundation and in the National Security Archive, quoted from conference proceedings "Poland 1986-1989. The End of the System", Warsaw 20th-24th Oct. 1999.

[51] Ibidem

[52] A rotation rule should be introduced to the command staff of the Warsaw Pact, and a standing political working group for the coordination of tasks should be established. Ibidem And in the analysis prepared by the

Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs in February 1989.

*“Procesy polityczne zachodzące w europejskich krajach socjalistycznych.*

*Propozycje praktycznych posunięć”*, in: the Polish part of the conference proceedings *“Polska 1986-1989: Koniec Systemu”*.

[53] Memorandum of the Bogomolov Committee for A. Yakovlev, February 1989, *“Przemiany w Europie Wschodniej i ich wpływ na ZSRR”*, in: the Polish part of the conference proceedings

*“Polska 1986-1989: Koniec Systemu”.*

[[54](#)] Ibidem, pp. 24.

[[55](#)] Ibidem, pp. 27.

Petruska Sustrova  
Czech Republic

# The meaning of Solidarity

*Petruska Sustrova (born 1947) Petruska studied Czech language and history at the Faculty of Philosophy, Charles University, Prague. Arrested in December 1969, she spent two years in prison charged with "subversion". Petruska was one of the signatories of "Charter 77" and later became one of*

three speakers of this dissident movement. After her release from prison, she worked at the Czechoslovakian Post Office as a cleaner. However, from August 1982 she remained unemployed until the fall of communism in November 1989. From May 1990 to January 1992 she was the advisor and the Deputy Minister for the Interior of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. Later she elevated to the role of Deputy Minister herself. Since 1992, Sustrova has worked as a journalist, screenwriter and a translator of English, Russian and Polish.

*In 2004 she was decorated with the Officers Cross of the Order of Merit of the Polish Republic.*

Please let me start with a personal reflection. There are times in our lives, whether flickering moments or certain dates or events spanning a longer period, which you will never forget and which may change your entire life. I experienced something like that during my brief stay in Poland at the beginning of November, 1989. I should like to tell

you about two events. The first one happened in Warsaw. On my way from the airport, looking out the window of a bus rolling along a street entering the city centre, I noticed something that looked like blazing puddles on the pavement. I got off the bus to see what it was. It turned out to be hundreds of tomb lamps and literally, armfuls of fresh flowers laid in front of every commemorative plaque honouring the victims killed during the

Warsaw Rising which are to be found in great abundance in the city centre. I thought of similar plaques erected in Prague which, at the 1945 Prague Rising anniversary dates, hardly ever received more attention from Praguers than what it took to decorate them with two artificial carnations on behalf of some public office or organisation. It was on those November days in Warsaw that I saw people remembering their

deceased loved ones and keeping them close to their hearts. What crossed my mind then was that in a country where the floral tributes of regret and esteem for the deceased were so numerous, the people certainly cared greatly about the living as well. I could experience a spiritual solidarity of which I had had no idea of, living in the communist Czechoslovakia. The 1969-1989 period of "normalisation" had almost

totally suppressed the spontaneity within us. We had got used to thinking that anniversaries were official ceremonial occasions having, as a matter of fact, very little to do with our own lives and were reduced to senseless rituals sporadically interrupted by official statements on the successes of the communist party, with the underlying objective to “confirm” that communism would last forever.

On the following day I went by train from Warsaw to Wrocław to a Central Europe related seminar and to a music festival. That was where I could see human solidarity in practice. Several thousand Czechs and Slovaks (young people in a majority of cases) arrived at the festival. They stayed with local families who had been registered by the organisers as host families. I happened to stay at an elderly female practicing physician's in the

suburban area. I arrived at her home after midnight, she waited up for me with the table laid for supper with a hot bowl of soup. It should be added at this point that supermarket shelves were empty in those days in Poland and all that was in steady supply were flowers and extremely expensive branded clothing of foreign origin. I communicated with my host in broken Polish. When I asked her for a spare key to the house in case I came

back late at night, she refused. Instead, I received her phone number with the following explanation: *You have come to Poland to make new friends and not to keep waiting for trams and buses. Give me a call when you are ready to come back and I will drive you home.*

Another reflection connected with the festival or more precisely with one festival event, which is still remembered by all those who witnessed it on that

early November day of 1989. Namely, it turned out that more people had arrived from Czechoslovakia than had originally been planned for by the organisers. Consequently, it turned out that there were not enough host families. There was an appeal for help during the concert addressed to those from the audience who were able to put a few Czechs or Slovaks up for the night. After the concert there was a crowd of those wishing to extend

hospitality to “their Czechs”, waiting in front of the theatre. It was an obvious proof of friendship and something really moving, indeed.

The November 1989 seminar and festival were held by the Polish and Czech Solidarity Foundation. This was one of a number of organisations asserting continuity of traditions of “great” *Solidarity*, the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union, whose ups and downs, the

successes and the ensuing repressions, had been followed by us attentively since 1980 and for whose victory, Czech people crossed their fingers. The results of the election in June 1989, were perceived by us as the surrender of communism to *Solidarity* in Poland. I am not sure whether or not our Czech dissidents were aware back then that the success of *Solidarity* in the Polish election augured ill for the communist system as such

in the entire Soviet bloc. Personally, I rather doubt it. The political regime in Czechoslovakia seemed to be so stunningly torpid in those days that even as late as November 1989, nobody believed that it would be practicable to introduce any essential changes to the system. Well, it is true that it was not only the all-Poland *Solidarity* movement and Polish people that should be credited for the downfall of communism. The role of the international

situation should not be underestimated either. In this context, it would be a manifestation of sheer ingratitude and blindness to the facts not to mention first of all, the role of the US President, Ronald Reagan. On the other hand, it would be a manifestation of a short-sighted policy to underestimate the impact of the *Solidarity* movement upon Reagan's decisions and his political strategy. Now let me quote Peter Schweitzer, an American

writer and author of “Reagan’s War” and then Ronald Reagan himself as the author of his presidential memoirs. Schweitzer wrote in “Reagan’s War”<sup>[56]</sup>: *After taking office [in January 1981], Reagan impressed his staff by his strong desire to be kept updated on the situation in Poland. Thus, Richard Allen and Casey restructured the content of their daily intelligence reports for the President so as to include a special*

*section containing news from Poland. Reagan wasted no opportunity to take action. Besides, the issues of Poland and communism were not new to him. Within less than two weeks of his inauguration date, Reagan met his key foreign policy advisers to find together a way to weaken the communist regime in Poland and to persuade Moscow to give up its potential plans of military intervention.*

*As it used to be with*

Reagan, his methods were cautious than his rhetoric and his objectives, so he expected no immediate results. Later on, he explained: 'There were no plans to embark upon a great crusade or to overthrow a foreign government on behalf of the nation. It was not like that, it was something the people themselves had to settle. We tried to be helpful and Solidarity was certainly the right weapon'.

What could also be

counted among Reagan's weapons were money, photocopiers, assistance to the underground press, instruments of propaganda, transmitters and plenty of other things which were then described collectively by the National Endowment for Democracy as "democratisation". Reagan explained it to his advisers and of equal importance, to the bureaucrats responsible for the US foreign policy and its intelligence service, that *Solidarity* had to receive any

assistance it might reasonably need to outlast the brutal repressions.

Here is still another fragment, this time taken from Reagan's memoirs: *I assumed this to be our last opportunity to see a shift in the Soviet imperial colonial policy towards Eastern Europe. We should take a position and warn them that we will put a total embargo on Soviet goods and suspend all the communication with Poland and the USSR until martial*

*law in Poland is revoked, the political prisoners released and the talks between Walesa and the Polish government reinstated. We should advise of it our NATO allies and others so that they could join the sanctions; otherwise we may run the risk of getting dispersed*<sup>[57]</sup>.

Now let us shift focus from the cold war and the fall of communism to the present day and to today's importance of *Solidarity*. Of course, we may say that

today's *Solidarity* is just a trade union defending the legitimate interests of its members and of the working class people. However, it is not as simple as that. An American historian, John Lukács, whose book "At the End of an Age" was published a few years ago, stated that, after the ancient times and the Middle Ages, it was now the modern era in which we had lived a bigger part of our lives that was coming (or, perhaps, had already

come) to an end. He also wrote in his book about the continuous presence of history in our lives, about its impacts and the degree to which it predetermined our existence. In my opinion, he succeeded in carrying his point in both respects. I also think he was right regarding the main thesis of his book, opposing the so-called objective attitude towards the world. Lukács points out that we must focus more on getting to know ourselves unless we want our world to

be reduced to the status of insensitive state machinery. What he means is not just philosophical or psychological research that would provide scientific evidence and conclusions, but things much simpler than that. We should talk to each other, listen to each other and try to understand each other; in a word, we should restore the human dimension to its proper role in our lives. Technology and welfare are not everything that counts and they will

not provide a solution to all our problems because, as he argues, it is human relations and first and foremost, empathy and solidarity that make our world more humane.

I do believe that this is what the bequest of *Solidarity*, born amidst decaying communism, is about. That movement attracted most of the Polish people and we can talk about its truly national dimension. As a matter of fact, *Solidarity* came into

existence in response to John Paul II's famous utterance: *May your Spirit descend upon us and renew the face of the Earth; of this land.* *Solidarity* did renew the face of the Poland of that time. Moreover, it made a significant contribution to the renewing of the face of other communist bloc countries. I shall narrow the scope of my analysis to the case of Czechoslovakia. Several weeks after the election, Polish deputies elected from the *Solidarity*

list visited Václav Havel, persecuted under the law at that time as a dissident, in his house in Hrádečk. It was a manifestation of solidarity for us which made us revise the image of a politician from the ex-Soviet bloc. They were no longer puppet politicians and talking heads speaking to you on TV. Their visit was, by nature, a political manifestation, but it also had its human dimension related to the voice within which will not let you turn

your back on your friend in need who can no longer cope with his problems by himself.

The Wrocław festival which I have mentioned before was also a manifestation of solidarity. *If Jaroslav Hutka or Karel Kryl are banned from performing in Prague then come to their concert in Wrocław where we will invite them as our guest artists.* I am deeply convinced of a great importance of that festival

to the several thousand young Czechs and Slovaks who had managed to cross the border during foggy autumn days when the Czech language could be heard everywhere in the streets of Wrocław. It is also my deep conviction that the experience strengthened their hope and their desire to get involved and that the Wrocław festival was a taste of those huge manifestations which finally made the Czech communists resign.

It is not only huge historical events that are important and decisive for a man. What also counts, or what is even more important than that, are strong impressions and personal emotions which weave the threads of your life and which govern your decisions. Feelings are something more than just the foam on the surface of rationality, they reach deep into the human soul and last longer. The passing of the modern world and the

advancing of all the postmodernisms is accompanied by ousting all manifestations of human feelings which are replaced with spots or with TV serials. However, I am convinced that manifestations of feelings are indispensable to humans unless we want to mutate into androids stimulated by consumption and amusement. That is why I should like to express my gratitude to that old *Solidarity* and to its activists

and adherents for helping my country. To come back to the Wrocław festival to which I have referred a number of times already, I should like to do it once again using, for the right effect, the words of an old song: *Nejkrásnější z dělnické třídy je Solidarita* (It is *Solidarity* that is the finest quality of the working class people”).

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[56] Free translation.

[57] As above.



Dr Janos Tischler

Hungary

# Why Poland?

# Why Solidarity?

*Dr Janos Tischler (born 1967) Hungarian historian and expert in PolishHungarian relations in the 20th century. He is a scholar at the 1956 Institute in Budapest. Furthermore, he was a deputy manager of the Hungarian Cultural Institute in Warsaw (1998-2001). Decorated with the Polish*

*Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Polish Republic. He is the author of the following books which were published in Poland: „Call to arms... Poland and Hungary, The Turing Points in the History of both Nations 1956 and 1980-1981” (2001) and “1956. Poznań - Budapest” (with Janusz Karwat) (2006).*

*Poland - 10 years,  
Hungary - 10 months, East  
Germany - 10 weeks,  
Czechoslovakia - 10 days.  
This was the concise  
message on one of the  
banners displayed during*

a demonstration in Prague in November 1989, summing up the durations of the transition process in Central Europe. Notwithstanding the similarities, the historical processes in our region not only varied in their duration but differed from each other in many other respects. The starting point of each of them however, lay in the fact that the communist regimes would not have collapsed at the end of the 1980s had Mikhail

Gorbachev not come to power in 1985 and had the Soviet Union not fallen into a serious economic and military crisis at almost the same time.

The establishment and nearly 10 years of *Solidarity's* activity contributed significantly to the ultimate weakening of the Soviet communist empire. When the protesters chanted "No freedom without *Solidarity!*" during the strikes, they were visionaries, they did not

even suspect how accurate those words were. After 1980 the Poles did exactly the opposite of their ancestors, who for more than two hundred years had fought so often 'For your freedom and ours', linking the independence struggles in various parts of Europe and in America. *Solidarity* also championed the people living in the satellite countries of the communist camp and the oppressed people of the Soviet Union. It was not by accident that

*Solidarity's* first congress in September 1981 adopted by acclamation, a proclamation addressed to the workers of Eastern Europe. It encouraged those "who chose to enter the difficult path of struggle for the freedom of the trade-union movement", expressing hope that "soon your representatives and ours will be able to meet and exchange trade-union experience."

Personally, I am proud that as a Hungarian

student-scholar in Warsaw in 1987-89, I cried out many times that there was “no freedom without *Solidarity*.”

Like any important historical event, the rise of *Solidarity* in 1980 had many underlying factors. One of these is the somewhat stereotypical statement that the Polish people are by nature inclined to rebellion, as had repeatedly been demonstrated during those 123 years after Russia, Prussia and the Habsburg Monarchy had removed

a country with a rich, long past from the map and divided its territory up amongst themselves. This also means that during those partitions, which lasted until 1918, the Poles had to learn the habits and techniques of conspiracy and secret action, which brought enormous benefits in the fight against the communist dictatorship.

Nor may we forget the role of the Catholic Church, which since the 1770s had enduring merits in that the

Poles could not only retain their religion, but also their identity, language and culture, especially in the Russian and Prussian partitions. The church played the same role after 1945. It was not possible to break Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński and his flexible but consistent policy meant that the communist government could not subdue the Church. Furthermore, during communist party meetings in October 1956, higher

party officials were asked the question: *Where is the Comrade Cardinal? Free Comrade Wyszynski!* this could also be considered a typically Polish gesture. These calls were not the main reason, but after a week, the Primate was released from strict house arrest. The Krakow archbishop Karol Wojtyla, elected Pope in 1978, gave much resilience to his countrymen. As early as the year after being elected, John Paul II visited his home

county and during his many open-air masses, he persuaded the million-strong faithful crowds that they were the owners of their own country and were responsible for it.

Another specificity of post-war Polish history were the cyclically recurring crises that shook the communist government. These demonstrated that the system was not able to muster significant support; leaving aside the events of 1968, it was always the

working class that had expressed their dissatisfaction with the political and economic situation in the country. This was the case in June 1956 in Poznań, in December 1970 on the Coast, in 1976 in Radom and Ursus, as well as in the years 1980-81. It is worth examining how these protests were put to an end. In 1956, the uprising of workers in Poznan was crushed by force but four months later the Stalinist Soviet regime fell and was

replaced by the '*Polish route to socialism*' associated with the name of Władysław Gomułka. However, Gomułka failed and this period, which came to be referred to contemptuously as '*brute socialism*', ended in 1970 with other acts of dissatisfaction. His command to shoot at unarmed demonstrating workers led to his removal. It seemed that this change would resolve the crisis, especially as Gomułka's successor, Edward Gierek

proclaimed 'consumer socialism' in the hope that satiated, satisfied people would cease to protest. Although the methods of governance were refined in relation to the Gomułka period, the policies of Gierek, a man from a simple miners' family, led at the end of the decade to total political and economic bankruptcy. The first signs of this were observed by János Kádár in summer 1979, when Gierek spent his holidays on Lake

Balaton. The Hungarian party leader said about Gierek that he was *hugely self-confident, bumptious and full of lordly posturing, which had moved him very far away from the working class.*

The wave of strikes which began in the summer of 1980 could not, as before, have been silenced with a reshuffling of the personnel at the top of the party leadership. The workers wanted their own trade unions, independent

from the government, because this was their only guarantee that the communist government would not deceive them once again, as it had done in 1956, 1970 and 1976. *Solidarity* also became a youth movement, because the corrupt and nepotistic era of Gierek did not offer them any prospects. At the same time, it could be called a real mass organisation, with a diverse variety of behaviours and ideologies. *Solidarity* was

a coalition of democratic opposition groups, intellectuals, writers, journalists, university students, ordinary farmers, anti-communist 'fundamentalists', Communist Party members and proponents of both confrontation and dialogue with the government. It was also an organisation supported by the Catholic Church and John Paul II. The 37-year-old hero of the summer strikes, Lech Wałęsa, became the leader

of the trade union. A genuine worker (an electrician by trade), he had fought the system since 1970 by various methods. With his charismatic personality, he easily attracted crowds and made himself known as a very proficient politician. Most of the public believed that this was a man who represented all features of the working class, which was the only social group that could again shake the country up and force the authorities to

make concessions.

August 1980 is linked to October 1956 primarily by the common nature of the protests by both the workers and the intelligentsia. It seemed that during the nearly quarter-century that passed between these two dates, the government had succeeded in hermetically separating these two layers of society from each other. In autumn 1957, no workers' organisation supported the students protesting against Gomułka,

who had decided it was time to close the Po prostu weekly magazine. The same happened in 1964, when 34 renowned Polish intellectuals wrote an open letter protesting against expanding censorship and the increasingly apparent limitations of cultural freedom (most of them were persecuted by the authorities for that reason). Then again in March 1968, during the brutally crushed student riots, many students and teachers were

expelled from the universities. As a result, students and even the intelligentsia at large, passively observed the lethal shots fired at the demonstrating workers on the coast in 1970, as well as the assaults on them in Radom and Ursus in 1976 in revenge for their dissatisfaction (it is true that soon after, the Workers' Defence Committee was founded, but this only occurred after these events). In contrast, in 1980

representatives of the intelligentsia, journalists, writers, university students and dissidents jointly supported the striking workers and acted in unity. It became a true Polish revolution, which can be compared with the 1956 Hungarian Uprising or the 1968 Prague Spring. With the rise of *Solidarity*, a structure was created which the Polish Communist Party was not able to control and even worse, one of the pillars of communist power,

the guiding role of the monopoly party, was undermined. Later, it became clear that this pillar had ultimately been knocked down, burying the whole system with it and what is more, undermining the very foundations of the entire Soviet bloc.

The above mentioned facts and events (and this is certainly not a complete list) all contributed to the fact that in 1980 the world's attention was focused on Poland and the Poles could

enjoy a 16-month period of freedom, which was eventually put to an end by Wojciech Jaruzelski on 13th December 1981. The general also tried to intimidate his countrymen with us, the Hungarians. On 23rd October 1981, changing the scheduled programme, Polish Television broadcast during prime time, an interview about the '1956 counter-revolution' that had appeared on Hungarian television three days earlier,

followed by a related Kadarist documentary film entitled *ńgy történt* (How it happened). Both programmes, at Jaruzelski's request, were soon repeated on the second channel. Later, the daily *Trybuna Ludu* published a review which praised both programmes. The author considered it an excellent idea that the interview and the film 'How it happened' had been broadcast together, because it allowed the Poles to find out exactly

what led to the 'Hungarian counter-revolution' and what damage it did. This programme, the author concluded, was a lesson in history which should not only be of benefit to the Hungarians.

*Solidarity* did not allow itself to be absorbed into the existing structures, while taking care not to give any pretext for a Soviet military intervention. Interestingly, the original goal was not to topple the system but to deeply

transform its political and economic spheres. However, *Solidarity* encountered more and more barriers and became increasingly radical after every conflict, more and more openly stressing that the Polish Communist Party did not have any legitimacy. In addition, responding to the provocations from the authorities, it confirmed on each occasion that its calls for a strike (as strikes and coherent social protests were the only effective tools

available to the trade unions) were echoed by the broad masses of people, which also, it was able to control.

After the summer of 1980 few Poles thought that only Gierek's team was bad, as opposed to the whole of so-called 'real' socialism. The events demonstrated that anything that was happening was a crisis of the system itself. Consequently the authorities could only resort to extreme measures, in

other words, using force against *Solidarity*. This was once again best explained by János Kádár who, obviously unwittingly, said in a confidential conversation that “the worst thing is that it’s the workers who are doing this and even their leader is a worker”. Like the leaders of all the region’s communist countries, he also referred to the ‘working class’ according to his own concept of it and none of them were able to explain

why the workers themselves were protesting against a 'workers government' in Poland (as in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968) even if by peaceful means. Certainly, they did not like the name '*Solidarity*' itself, due to the fact that they wanted to misappropriate the values included in it. Sometimes, they most certainly faced the dilemma of how to reliably explain why you would need to defend a 'workers government'

against workers themselves.

In their foreign policy, the Hungarian leadership treated the crisis on the Vistula as an internal dispute which the Polish communists should solve on their own. "The imperialists are right, they will never get Poland. As long as the Earth is round and turns around, there will be no capitalism there" Kádár declared in connection with this issue in autumn 1980. At the same time, in his foreign policy, he made efforts to

preclude any 'nationwide' solidarity for the Poles. Kádár and his comrades were shivering at the thought of 1956, when the tinder for the Hungarian uprising came from Poland. It was the Poles who first extended help and it was their help that was the most substantial during the uprising, to the Hungarians, who took up arms to defend their independence and sovereignty. That is why, from the very beginning, propaganda grew sharply in

Hungary against *Solidarity* and the strikes it organised, by indoctrinating Hungarians with the notion that these strikes were threatening the Hungarian living standard and “achievements of socialism”. This “from the top down” inspired propaganda was spread since 1981. Based on popular prejudices and national selfishness, it turned into a general anti-Poland campaign so that the Polish ‘scourge’ did not

spread to the Danube, claiming that Poles didn't like working, were losers and cadgers and 'hard-working Hungarians' would have to pay for it in the form of free economic assistance. No opportunity was wasted to denigrate Poles, by basing false and lying stereotypes on them, such as the 'jokes' on Monday radio cabaret shows (there were no TV programmes on Monday in Hungary at that time) which enjoyed a large audience:

“How do you starve a Polish mouse? Lock it in the pantry”; “What does a Polish sandwich look like? Two bread ration coupons and a meat ration coupon in between”; “How should Germans shop in department stores in East Berlin when they are full of Poles? Play the Polish anthem every hour and when the Poles stand to attention, the Germans can do their shopping.”

Kádár, who had good antennae for such things,

probably realised that the rise of *Solidarity* also meant an increasingly urgent need for political changes in Hungary.

By introducing martial law, Jaruzelski first of all tried to retain his own power. Outlawing '*Solidarity*' only postponed the problems arising out of the very nature of the system, which brought into existence an independent trade union which mustered, in only one year, almost ten million

members; it did not solve those problems. He was also unable to break down the social resistance which this trade union represented. By autumn 1987, the General and his comrades must have realised that they should not use force again and they had only one way out: start dialogue with *Solidarity*, which had been relegated to the underground, to win support for an economic and political programme that would offer real

change.

From the point of view of Polish society, the years 1985-87 passed, under an increasing lack of options, a feeling heightened by the brutal killing of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko in 1984. *Solidarity* itself was weary of prolonged activity in the underground, losing much of its momentum and support. It was apparent that most people wanted peace, they were fed up with confrontations, continuous tension, queues

and empty shops. The trade-union leadership realised that in such circumstances *Solidarity* must demonstrate that it was ready and able to reach a responsible compromise for the good of Poland. Two broadly similar forces collided: the group of those interested in maintaining the communist system and the dissidents who were primarily active in the ranks of *Solidarity*. The latter knew very well that they could not prejudice the

basic need for peace felt by the vast majority of the public without the risk of losing credibility and that they could not leave the country exposed to serious, potentially dire risks.

While in 1981, guided by the logic of the communist system of government, Jaruzelski had no choice but to introduce martial law, six or seven years later there was such an alternative, a compromise and it is to his credit that he chose this path. As a result, the future

of Poland was determined not so much by relations between the world powers or the policies of Gorbachev's Soviet Union but rather, by the Poles themselves, Jaruzelski's government, *Solidarity* and the active participation of the Great Negotiator of the Catholic Church, to find a way to avoid political and economic collapse. They found that path; they were the first to show other communist countries of this region a potential path to

political change, to peaceful transformation.

It should be stressed that the communist leaders of Poland, like those of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Germany shortly afterwards, had no intention of removing the system at all; they were in fact seeking to reform it so as to keep it alive. Therefore, as a first step, all of them, with the exception of Warsaw, stood to remove their 'orthodox gerontocrats': János Kádár, Gustáv Husák,

Erich Honecker, they then sat down for talks with the opposition but events soon outpaced their initial efforts. In Poland and in Hungary, the frameworks for the transformation were the Round Table talks and in East Germany and Czechoslovakia the first evidence of public dissatisfaction was increasingly frequent demonstrations, which forced the impaired Communist regimes to start talks (in addition, the GDR

was a special case because of the existence of the 'second' German state). There was opposition in these countries with which dialogue was possible. The situations in Bulgaria and Romania were different, because palace revolutions took place in both countries. In the former, the dismissal of Todor Zhivkov proceeded quietly but in the latter there was violence and bloodshed, therefore, it is hard not to see the execution of Nicolae

Ceaușescu as an internal settling of accounts.

In 1989 the Hungarian transformation forces saw the pioneering endeavours of Poland as a model. In March, with the participation of nine opposition parties and organisations, an Opposition Round Table was established in Budapest to put aside any differences and act in concert to negotiate with the communists. The April accords of the Polish Round

Table demonstrated that there was a possibility of concluding a deal between the government and opposition. It was even suggested that they follow Poles, not only symbolically but also literally, by moving the table, the actual piece of furniture, physically from Warsaw to Budapest, as a guarantee of success. However, this project came to nothing, not only because of transport difficulties but also because in Hungary the

transformation proceeded very differently than on the Vistula, as it soon outpaced the cautious and careful Polish arrangements. The Round Table accords in Hungary, the result of three months of talks, were not signed by all the participants in the negotiations in September 1989. Instead, two opposition parties proposed a referendum which was to elect a president of Hungary who did not originate from the disintegrating ruling

party. In addition, unlike in Poland, free elections on the Danube were held at once. In spring 1990 it was much harder for *Solidarity* to deal with General Jaruzelski, who enjoyed fairly widespread authority in his party. He concentrated the considerable power in his hands and was in general able to maintain the unity and uniformity of the Polish Communist Party, while the Hungarian opposition was dealing with new party leaders who were in conflict

with each other after Kádár's removal.

In 1980-81 there were internal clashes within the leadership of *Solidarity* too but these were postponed during the struggle with the government. Despite minor rifts during the transformation, the opposition followed Lech Wałęsa fairly obediently. Once communism collapsed on the Vistula, the trade union started to erode, as its internal lines of division became apparent.

In 1989-1993, the so-called 'Solidarity governments' built up a system of democratic institutions, succeeded in overcoming their severe economic and political legacy and the Nobel Peace Prize winner Wałęsa became the first freely elected president of the Third Republic. Almost the entire right-wing and (socially) liberal part of the new political elites originated from *Solidarity* but as usually happens to

broad-based movements, the union broke apart into many parties.

The *Solidarity* of 1980 performed its mission, toppling communism without bloodshed and nothing can diminish its historical merit. Meanwhile, a democratic Poland has become a member of NATO and a member of the European Union. Poland can boldly and proudly reach to these ideas: freedom, independence, human rights, non-violence,

solidarity; which the Union embraced and still sees as valid. The *Solidarity* of that time is an example and encouragement to oppressed people in any corner of the world, especially young people, that it is not a hopeless ambition to oppose a totalitarian dictatorship, regardless of its colour.

# Society in Times of Change

Prof. Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński  
Poland

# The world after 1989: the long- term consequences of the breakthrough

*Prof. Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński  
(born 1944) Polish sociologist,  
writer and dedicated scholar.*

*Edmund was a member of the Solidarity faction during the Round Table talks, a social politics advisor for Solidarity as well as the chairman of the Advisory Sociologist Citizen Solidarity Parliamentary Club. Furthermore, he is the founder and first head of the Polish Academy of Sciences Institute of Political Studies and Rector of Collegium Civitas in Warsaw. Edmund is also the author of the social science fiction dystopia trilogy, Apostezjon, and was the winner of Janusz A. Zajdel Award in 1988.*

The dismantling of the

Berlin Wall has become a global icon to symbolise the collapse of communism and a change in the global distribution of power. Nothing is likely to change this image, because this is a potent symbol, deeply inscribed in popular consciousness. At the same time, it spectacularly demonstrates perhaps the most important consequence of the collapse of communism, namely the end of a bipolar global order based on a balance of fear.

We live in an era of media which shapes the collective imagination and emotions. Not surprisingly then, the world's imagination was overwhelmed by pictures of a jubilant crowd breaking the Berlin Wall into pieces, rather than by Poland's arduous and unspectacular 'Round Table' negotiations. However the latter did not appear unexpectedly but was the result of both sides of the Polish conflict's determined struggle for survival. *Solidarity* was

unable to force a change in the political system and the Jaruzelski regime was unable to introduce the Husak-style 'normalisation' by coercion. There were two possible ways out of this stalemate: first, by force, or second, by negotiation.

Why was no force used although it was technically feasible to do so? In fact, in the late 1980s the internal structures of force (the military, the secret and regular police) were standing by, ready to be

used by the local communist party leadership. Also the external forces of the Warsaw Pact could have easily broken the still lingering resistance (probably with the active participation of at least some parts of the Polish military and police structures). However, the Jaruzelski team was not eager to repeat a military and police operation similar to the imposition of martial law on 13th December

1981. This was partly because they would have thus admitted the spectacular failure of the policy they had pursued throughout the 1980s in Poland and partly probably because they remembered the insightful observation of their ideological guru Karl Marx. He claimed that an event which is at first tragic, turns into a farce when repeated. Nevertheless, this was not the decisive factor.

The opposition of local Communist ruling elites did

not prevent the 1956 Hungarian Uprising or the 1968 'Prague Spring' from being suppressed through military intervention. If there had been political conditions for intervention, the Jaruzelski team's position would have ceased to have any meaning. They would have suffered the fate of Imre Nagy, or at best that of Alexander Dubček. However, the prevailing political circumstances were unfavourable to such intervention.

First of all, any outside intervention would have meant the failure of Perestroika in the USSR and most likely the end of Gorbachev's rule. Intervention therefore was not an option as long as Gorbachev exercised authority. If the hardliners had forced through an intervention in Moscow it would have had to be preceded by a palace revolution in the Kremlin to remove Gorbachev. Such attempts would have been

premature because the Kremlin power elites thought that, in the USSR at least, everything was under control. Secondly the chronic conflict in Poland had been internationalised because the myth of *Solidarity* had been established in the Western world and the unequivocal position of Pope John Paul II would not allow the international community to recognise this myth as being a thing of the past. Also, the determined stance

of the US was a strong disincentive for the USSR to forcibly intervene in Polish affairs. So all that was left were negotiations.

The emergence of *Solidarity* in 1980 disturbed the logic of any rational social and political analysis. Thus, in a sense, it was a premature revolution, since due to the configuration of forces at that time, it was likely to end with violence on the part of the ancien régime. However, had it not been for

this 'premature revolution' (the outbreak of which, as well as its far-reaching consequences, was anticipated neither by politicians nor insightful regional and global analysts), the collapse of communism would have been significantly delayed and the demise of this formation would have probably ended with large-scale bloodshed. The *Solidarity* Revolution exposed the dramatic deficit in the communist

system's legitimacy. What is more, forcible relegation of *Solidarity* to the underground not only failed to alleviate this deficit but in fact worsened it.

Two processes, which were essential for subsequent events, characterised the 1980s. Firstly the strong negative emotional reaction of *Solidarity* members to the introduction of martial law, which had been perceptible in 1982 and remained so in 1983, slowly began to

subside. Instead, social apathy set into many segments of society. The second process, however, can be called the development of a minority 'ethical civil society' which continued resistance for ethical reasons rather than for political interests (as at that time the *Solidarity* counter-elite's political activity could be considered as symbolic, at most). It was ethical principles, not political interest that allowed the *Solidarity*

counterelite to survive the oppression of the 1980s, to avoid the temptation of being co-opted by the communist elite and to achieve the breakthrough. This was of great importance for the subsequent transformation of the system. If the *Solidarity* counter-elite had agreed to be co-opted the communist system would have been able to alleviate its acute legitimacy deficit and extend its existence considerably.

The 1989 'Round Table' launched social and political processes over which the two negotiating parties were soon to lose control for they did not anticipate that the start of the 'Round Table' talks was in fact the inauguration of a commission to wind up communism in Poland. A rapid and radical change in the system was beyond the imagination of any of the participants. The parliamentary elections in June 1989 which were not

fully free were essentially a nationwide plebiscite. Its stake was not so much the introduction of representatives of the recently illegal *Solidarity* to parliament but a choice for or against the communist regime. The people could speak again. Although the turnout, given the high stakes of the elections was unimpressive (slightly over 60% of eligible voters), the defeat of the communist system was devastating. It was the point beyond which

there was no return to the old system and its crossing could be halted only by force. The final agony of the system had already started and the use of force could only have prolonged it and made it more painful for both parties to the conflict. Therefore, the communist party and the government pragmatically recognised the outcome of the elections.

The events in Poland could not have left the rest

of the communist camp unaffected. The Red Army had had good reason to intervene in Hungary in 1956, as did Warsaw Pact troops in Czechoslovakia in 1968. The conviction that the success of rebellion in one province of the Soviet empire would mean serious problems in other provinces was nothing more than common knowledge. To maintain the state of possession acquired after the Yalta agreement, the Kremlin rulers had no

choice but to expand the communist system globally, in order to deprive the satellite countries of any dreams of escaping political, economic and military dependence. Therefore, in line with the 'Brezhnev doctrine', they strangled at birth any upheavals that could undermine the coherence of the Soviet camp. Although the third wave of democratisation, to use Huntington's term, began in 1974 in Portugal, the

communist camp seemed to be completely resistant to this trend up until 1989.

The Polish example was followed by Hungary and a little later by Czechoslovakia. East German residents began to 'vote with their feet', fleeing en masse to West Germany through Hungary (which everyone knows about) and Poland (which much fewer people know about). The tiles of the Eastern European domino then started to fall, although the

USSR's military potential was still intact. Its use in the transition phase could have effectively, though bloodily, restored order, as the Soviets had always been in the habit of doing. Yet no force was used. Why? As already mentioned, this would have compromised Gorbachev's policies and probably also have brought about his end, at least in political terms. We can as yet only speculate on what Gorbachev's motives may have been, because it is

hard to understand the motives of a leader who thought that a reformed communism would not only survive, but acquire new vigour. He was probably deluded by the hope that the satellite countries would 'have their flings' politically, then later, as a result of their long-standing economic relationship with the Soviet Union, they would have reestablished their ties on a new, perhaps more partnerlike basis. However, the tide turned

against Gorbachev. First of all, a domestic political rival arose. Boris Yeltsin, who had been expelled from the Politburo, was elected in May 1990, against Gorbachev's wishes, to the position of Chairman of the RSFSR's Supreme Soviet. One year later he won the RSFSR's presidential elections. The disintegration of the old power elite in the USSR became a reality and Yanayev's abortive military coup failed to turn the tide of events. Then in

December 1991, when Russia, Belarus and Ukraine left the Soviet Union under the Belavezha Accords the disintegration of the USSR became a reality which has changed the world's geopolitical architecture.

Obviously Germany became the primary issue in Europe. The division of our continent into spheres of influence at Yalta, separated the two parts of Europe with the 'Iron Curtain' for half a century. Germany was the only country in which this

division did not run along the lines of national borders but across the country itself. Without the unification of Germany, the unification of Europe was impossible. This was evident even to people who were not versed in the intricacies of world politics. The incorporation of East Germany into the German state put the issue of NATO and the EU's eastward enlargements on the agenda. The inclusion of East Germany to Western Europe would have

preserved the old division with only a slight adjustment of its boundaries. Meanwhile, as the USSR disintegrated, new sovereign states emerged on the political map of Europe. Some of them such as Belarus and Ukraine, for the first time became sovereign subjects in international relations. Most of these countries began to express aspirations to belong to the Western geopolitical hemisphere. By this

strategic reorientation they sought the assurance of further independence from the Kremlin. The vast majority of sovereign states which emerged from the disintegration of the Soviet empire embarked on deep institutional reforms heading towards democratic political systems and market economy. These strategic goals were at the same time preconditions for accessing Western economic, political and military structures.

Probably most of these countries would have chosen the democratic and market-oriented path of change anyway but their pro-Western aspirations clearly reinforced this choice.

For this reason, the third wave of democratisation (Huntington, 1991) entered its intensive phase following the disintegration of the USSR. Doorenspleet (2000: 399) even referred to it as an “explosive phase”. She had a reason for naming it

this way, as her calculations show that in 1990-1994 as many as 34 countries moved away from authoritarian systems and became democracies, while the opposite course (from democracy toward authoritarian rule) was taken by only four countries in the world. So many transitions from authoritarianism to democracy had never taken place before.

Globally there has been

a radical change in relative strengths. The bipolar system based on a balance of fear ceased to exist, as the USSR's successor, Russia, had too many internal problems to be able to replace the USSR as one of the two poles of world order. The collapse of this order prompted some to a premature speculation about the 'end of history' caused by the global victory of liberal democracy (Fukuyama, 1992). Others foretold a worldwide

disastrous mess (Jowitt, 1993) after the collapse of the Marxist-Leninist regime camp. Notwithstanding these rather inaccurate predictions, it was clear that the consequences of 1989 and the liberation of Central and Eastern Europe as well as large expanses of Central Asia from the shackles of communism, had a global impact. Since that date the world has been different.

In addition to enormous technological developments the 20th century saw

growing inequalities of development across many regions of the world and above all, it witnessed two world wars. These wars constituted the bloodiest events in the history of humanity and the emergence of two totalitarianisms (Nazi and Communist), of which Auschwitz and Kolyma came to be looming icons. Historians and political scientists date the passage of centuries somewhat differently than ordinary

calendars do. However the 19th century survived beyond its calendar mark since its end should be dated more or less to the beginning of the First World War. In this sense, the 20th century did not last to its formal mark on the calendar, because it seems in fact to have ended in 1989.

The fears that the world would have immersed in chaos were not completely unfounded. Ultimately, even when the world was divided

into two hostile camps held together by the vision of the threatening opposite camp, local conflicts, often of a military nature, were far from being the exception to the rule. There were no open conflicts within the 'free world' camp itself but on its outskirts and the conflicts within the communist camp were quickly and ruthlessly suppressed. Nevertheless, concerns about what kind of global order would emerge as a result of the collapsing

bipolar order were justified. Western Europe was not yet ready to take on the role of a global player. Indeed it faced the difficult issue of how to redefine the borders of Europe. Moreover, the Balkans, called the 'soft underbelly' of Europe, witnessed cruel and violent armed conflicts and ethnic cleansing, notably in the former Yugoslavia.

If the United States of America had taken an isolationist course during this turbulent period large

tracts of the world were likely to have been plagued by considerable instability or even outright chaos. This is because the United States has remained the only intact global power able to cope with the role of the guardian of the global order. America undertook this challenge because it was also directly linked to its own security interests. It is not the purpose of this contribution to assess whether or not the US has tackled this task. What is

important for our further considerations is that it has become, whether one likes it or not, the constable in the global village.

The second structure which emerged unscathed out of this turbulence was NATO, which supported the US in guarding order and consolidating the areas of freedom in all corners of the globe but mainly in Southern Europe and in Western Asia. However, NATO also had to redefine its role and its existing

defence doctrines. The new democracies of Eastern Europe, which until then had been integral parts of the opposing Warsaw Pact, explicitly sought security under the umbrella of this military-cum-political structure. Therefore NATO, which until then had been preoccupied with preventing the expansion of communism in Europe, had to open up to other more global theatres of operations.

The end of the division of Europe has put the question of European identity on the agenda. In the bipolar system of forces, 'Europe' was defined in terms of Western Europe. Europe ended at the Elbe as evidenced by, among others, the content of various academic publications, although their titles promised that they related to the history of Europe. Beyond the 'Iron Curtain' there was terra incognita and the people

living there, in the minds of Western Europeans, were the subject of a variety of prejudices and amusing stereotypes. The disintegration of communism and the consequent unification of Germany resulted in a need to redefine a European identity which seemingly had already been established. Such a need had already been highlighted by Pope John Paul II in the 1980s at the time of his pilgrimage to

Poland, but the whole issue was brought into full light after 1989 (Fuchs, Klingemann, 2000). Enlargement of the European Union has become a reality but the issue of identity remains unresolved as the question of Europe's borders is not only an academic but also a political problem. Is Europe, as Huntington (1997) would like to see it, a community of civilisation, culture and religion? A positive answer to this

question would exclude from Europe such countries as Turkey, which, what is common knowledge, has had long European aspirations. Is 'Europe' a geographical term? In this case, it would also encompass Russia. Or perhaps Europe is a family of liberal-democratic states which founded their socio-political systems on European political thought? If we define European identity in such terms, this notion should include not

only the whole North America but also Australia and vast tracts of Asia and South America, because European liberal-democratic thought has spread throughout the world over centuries. So, as can be seen, this problem cannot be subsumed into a single sentence. Probably in the future, it is difficult to determine when exactly, the discussion about the identity of Europe will have to reach some limits, even if artificially imposed.

Otherwise, the identity of Europe will be exposed to the risk of blurring, gradual decay and a loss of relevance in relation to the formulation of the individual identities of the people of Europe.

In August 1980, no one anticipated that workers' strikes on the Polish coast would mark the beginning of the disintegration of the communist system and would fundamentally change the world's political

architecture. As long as the Soviet Bloc existed, Western democracies had no problems defining their mission and raison d'être. This was, above all, to protect their economic and technological development, to guard their civil liberties, to contain the expansion of communism globally and compete for influence in what was called the 'third world'. The collapse of communism created an ideological vacuum. Many Western political analysts

expressed standard concerns in connection with the possibility of such a vacuum and indicated the likelihood that aggressive nationalisms would erupt to fill the emptiness left after the collapse of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Fortunately, this nightmare scenario, as we know today, has not generally materialised. More precisely, it only arose in the wake of the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

This does not mean that

there are no ideological fetishes in the early 21st century. One such fetish in the secularised areas of the prosperous liberal democracies is consumption coupled with political correctness, representing secular equivalents of the moral standards rooted in Christianity. The recent global financial and consequent economic crisis has demonstrated the fragility of the foundations on which this particular

fetish rests. However, the vast majority of observers of the global stage do not see this event as a warning which requires a relatively radical reorientation of the objectives espoused by the family of the most economically developed countries. This crisis, even if presented in catastrophic overtones, is in fact being interpreted as a negative swing which must be overcome in order to enjoy again the untroubled growth and a corresponding

increase in consumption. In authoritarian countries, especially where public life and governance structures are not clearly separated from religious structures, as is usually the case in the Islamic world, an aggressive fundamentalism is being propagated. This type of fundamentalism uses the dominant religion instrumentally in order to legitimise purely political purposes and to mobilise the masses which derive their identity, reason for

action and membership of a well-integrated community from fundamentalist ideologies. The 21st century will have to deal with the beguiling influence of these two fetishes. Otherwise the next global economic crisis will bring irreversible consequences to the climate and the spread of fundamentalism, as demonstrated by 11th September 2001, will easily exceed the borders of nation-states and hit the

most sensitive elements of the infrastructure of the Western world.

The Gdansk Conference is an excellent opportunity to appeal to the largest global players, particularly the US, the European Union, Japan, China and Russia, to reflect seriously on the future of the globalised world. Global problems do not respect the borders of nationstates, and even the most powerful nations cannot solve the global challenges of today alone, without the

cooperation of the rest of the world. The 21st century will be either an era of close international collaboration of governments and civil society organisations, or it will see spectacular disasters with irreversible consequences. The choice must be made as early as today, without waiting for the sanity of subsequent generations.

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Ana Blandiana  
Romania

# An autobiography - between two Europes

*Ana Blandiana (born 1942)  
Real name: Otilia-Valeria  
Rusan. Romanian poet,  
essayist, dissident. After the  
Romanian Revolution of 1989,  
Ana passionately campaigned*

*to remove communists from the administrative office. She initiated the creation of The Memorial of the Victims of Communism and of the Resistance, one of the most important monuments of remembrance in Europe. Furthermore, as a leader of the Civic Alliance Foundation, with upmost dedication she advocates remembrance of the victims of communism and members of the Resistance movement.*

For decades, any “autobiography” – an established term used to

describe something between an interrogation and a biographical entry, wherein it was necessary to mention one's bourgeois or proletarian descent (which was considered "proper" or "improper" back then), the political affiliation of one's family (mother, father, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandmothers, grandfathers) with parties other than the Communist party, etc. - was divided into two parts: pre-23rd August 1944 and post-23rd

August 1944 (the date the Red Army entered Romania). In contrast, the recent years have brought about major changes, as 23rd August 1944 no longer constitutes to be the dividing line marking out significant periods in our lives, but it is 22nd December 1989, the date Ceausescu fled.

Before 22nd December 1989, I was a writer with a lifework of 24 published books, two lying in my drawer, three banned and

with one underlying obsession: to write in accordance with my beliefs and to publish what has been written. Writing did not pose any difficulties but publishing was indeed every writer's feat. Being "banned" or "afflicted with a publication ban" meant that your name could not appear in newspapers nor on the covers of books; it was even forbidden for another writer to quote such an author. I was subjected to a prohibition

for the first time for the simple reason that my father had been imprisoned. Later, I was imprisoned twice because of my poems. The first publishing ban lasted four years, while the third would probably have been life-long, had it not been interrupted by the events of 22nd December 1989. Thus, I was the author of 24 books, but for the Romanian audience (and even, I dare say, for the Romanian nation) I was not only the author of books but

also - or perhaps primarily - the author of 'silence', since among the published books were those that were banned and constituted a separate entity. Before I even gained acknowledgement as a writer, I had become known as a 'banned author'. Later, after my third prohibition, not only were my new books banned but also my previous books were withdrawn from libraries. This prohibition encompassed not only the

present and the future but also the past. In a society whose only abundant commodity was the lie and whose only reality was the repressive apparatus, the smallest grain of truth achieved political level as it was a form of freedom.

In my case, all these prohibitions bore fruit in my transformation, somewhat against my will. I transformed from the symbol of a writer stubbornly standing up for the truth that I had been for

decades into a symbol of political dimension. The post-Communist leaders tried to manipulate this symbol after the events of 22nd December, offering me the position of Vice-President of the National Salvation Front. When driven by common sense I refused almost without a single thought, I became a kind of black sheep for the new government. Besides, paradoxically, freedom of expression led to its devaluation. Freedom

proved to be more complicated than its absence.

For many years, freedom - with greater or lesser success - had been our response to terror, but when terror finally passed, with trepidation we noticed that our awareness of what being free means was effaced. It is much easier to define concepts by contrasting them with their opposites, rather than by giving them autonomous meanings. Present-day

Romanians are people who, having had no opportunity to take a deep breath after 50 years of communist oppression, are discovering in terror the face of savage capitalism, which is still dominated by the same, albeit recycled, political and social minority based on past structures and power relations. This gives rise to the dangerous impression that this whole change is only a devious stratagem aimed at concocting a greater evil to save the

previous one. With the exception of some specific differences, this remark also applies to the other nations of Eastern Europe.

I am referring to “the nations of Eastern Europe”, since - obviously - there are still at least two Europes. One of them is Western Europe, which has for centuries haughtily ignored the events occurring several hundred kilometres away from its borders and which to this day is uncertain as to the Baltic countries' names,

and whether Budapest is the capital of Romania or Hungary. In contrast, the other Europe, in the East, has always dreamed about coming closer to and becoming more similar to the former, idealising it exactly because of its inaccessibility. Both of these parts are still alien to each other, even if the former's ignorance stems from undervaluation and the latter's, overvaluation. In the course of mutual learning resulting from the

process of European integration there still exists a high risk of disillusionment - especially in those who are moving from East to West. However, in my opinion, the most important issue is to cause this integration process to unite not only the economic or diplomatic strategies, but also the obsessions. Furthermore, of paramount importance is the fact that after removing the consequences of the former diseases, Eastern Europe

has its legacy of suffering to offer to the West; the legacy which constitutes the significant heritage of all great historic formations.

For this reason, for the past twenty years my main preoccupation has not been literature, although I still continue to write, but the first Memorial of the Victims of Communism and of the Resistance, a vast museum (50 rooms) established under the aegis of the Council of Europe in a former Stalinist prison in

Romania.

The biggest victory of communism - a victory the significance of which was dramatically revealed after 1989 - was the birth of a human without memory, the new human, a brainwashed human deprived of the memory of his own past, memory of the state of possession and activities before the communist regime. Memory is a form of truth, which is why those who intend to destroy or manipulate the

truth have to destroy memory. The destruction of memory, which is both a crime against nature as well as against history, is the fundamental achievement of Communism.

The opening of the Sighet Memorial was not an aim in itself for us but a means to an end. Our initiative, which at the same time constituted our desperate desire, was the revival of collective memory, as the destruction of memory was

Communism's battle horse. Unlike all other dictatorships and persecutions in the history of humankind, Communism not only demands total submission from its subjects but also their satisfaction and content from the fact of being acquiescent. Only memory allows us to protect ourselves against humiliation and aberration, as memory is the building block of all societies. Once Communism is destroyed - which it almost managed to

achieve – society becomes a kind of an amorphous and supine creature. The Sighet Memorial constitutes both an argument for and a symbol of the crucial importance and necessity of a civic society possessing its own memory, without which its people turn into mob and history becomes a mere story about the distortion of community spirit.

The Memorial was opened in Sighet, a small town in northern Romania near the

Ukrainian border, in a former political prison. In 1950-1955, more than 200 dignitaries, academics and prelates were imprisoned here (mostly without trial). They were imprisoned in secret, only two kilometres away from the Soviet border, intended to secure the prison and stifle any rebellion. During a five-year detention period, 53 of the 200 prisoners died as a result of the slow extermination regime implemented there (the

prisoners were elderly, the oldest of them being 91).

One of the most frequently recurring questions regarding the Memorial has been “Why was Sighet chosen if there were so many larger, better known and perhaps more terrible prisons?” Our response is simple and has always been the same: Because it all started from Sighet. Sighet was the place where, with an almost clinical clarity the processes and stages of repression

were implemented and disclosed, which, in order to be truly effective, had to destroy the elite above all. Sighet was where, from the very beginning, the political, cultural, religious, as well as social, professional and moral elites were exterminated. Sighet was where society's highest layer, regardless of its nature, was preventively cut off from the rest of society, thus cleverly eliminating any possibility of rebuilding a civic society.

In 1993, we submitted a project to the Council of Europe, the objective of which was to transform this prison into an international institution for the preservation of the memory of Communist repression. The Council of Europe agreed to take it under its auspices. In 1997, the Romanian Parliament recognized the Memorial as “a complex of national significance”, granting it an annual subsidy.

However, the most

difficult step was to establish scientific methods of transforming the prison cells into museum rooms.

We have recorded almost 3,000 hours of verbal historical accounts (partly deposited at the Hoover Institute at Stanford - California). We have organized 10 symposia at Sighet profiling 45 years of communism (the "Sighet Annals" series includes 7,000 pages of text - a comprehensive collection of academic papers and

personal memoirs). We have also published thousands of written documents as part of another series entitled "Documents." Also, the "Sighet Library" series includes thousands of pages of analysis and memoirs. The 19-20 seminars which have been held have enabled us to develop a chronological profile of given topics. Our last project which has still been in progress aims to prepare a List of the camp population in the years

1945-1989, using statistical and sociological research tools based on 93,000 prison files which are now stored in the Memorial's archives.

The Museum itself has been entirely computerised and includes CDs with sound recordings of historical accounts. Visitors have the opportunity to read documents, view photos, and hear historical accounts and memoirs. All these enable them to assimilate this dramatic

history as though it was a holographic image revealing class hatred mechanisms and disrespect for the most elementary human rights - hatred understood as the driving force of history.

In fact, hatred and fanaticism still persist despite the disappearance of the institutional forms that afforded them such dynamic development. This is possible because despite the fact that Communism vanished as a system, it has

not disappeared as a collection of methods and ways of thinking. Thus an analysis of its nature is a beneficial process for both the past and the future. It is sufficient to be aware that the members of terrorist organisations in the nineteen sixties, seventies and eighties were trained in camps and centres located in Eastern Europe and used Soviet and Czech weapons, in order to understand that the study of Communism and its methods can also be

considered an intelligent tool for understanding and solving contemporary problems.

In this very way, our project has contributed over the past 12 years, thanks to the Summer School (Stéphane Courtois is its President), to becoming open to the future, complementing the search and presentation of truth with the media resources addressed to future generations. Therefore, the Sighet Memorial, the

crowning achievement of which is the Summer School, is a way and place where today's young people, unaware of what life was like in the gloomy shadows of past pathologies, may learn what they could not find out from their own parents: who they are as a result of the genetics of history and who they can become as the architects of their own destiny. The Summer School has enabled the Memorial Museum to become a living

museum, a constantly developing dynamic institution of remembrance, which conveys to new generations the truths without which it is impossible to advance.

A measure of the Museum's achievements is the number of visitors and the entries they leave in the visitor's books. Its pages disclose an evocative picture of surprise, emotions and gratitude for the information provided. I must admit that this was

our very intention - to avoid talking about history in a sensationalist way (we could have done this as it would have been much simpler!). Instead, we have focused on persuasion (sometimes even invoking emotions), harnessing for this purpose the gravity of the documents, photos, statistics, personal memoirs and even the presence of several works of art showing perhaps more suggestively and in a more subtle way than raw scientific data, the

very extent of suffering which constitutes the true substance of the research work.

There are also many suggestions on the pages of our visitor's book. I will address one example which has affected the creation of the Museum: the Czech delegation led by Ms Šuštrova, the former spokesperson of "Charter 77", proposed that the Memorial opens separate halls dedicated to given Eastern European countries.

To date, the *Solidarity* Room prepared by the Polish Institute has been opened. There is also a room dedicated to the “Prague Spring” and the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Furthermore, in cooperation with the Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution in Budapest, a room commemorating this event has been opened. Two other rooms have been devoted to the 1953 Revolt and the construction of the Berlin

Wall, as well as to great Soviet dissidents of the seventies. (At this point, I would like to stress the particularly close links we have maintained at all times with the Solidarity Centre Foundation and Mr Bogdan Lis, who has presented his lectures at the Memorial's School on many occasions). In addition, as a result of certain suggestions and within the established cooperation, the Memorial has hosted temporary exhibitions from

Poland, the Republic of Moldova and the Czech Republic. In turn, the Memorial has organized a touring exhibition which has so far visited ten German cities (inaugurated by Dr Joachim Gauck in Frankfurt in 1999; it has toured Tübingen, Hamburg, Munich, Dortmund, Berlin, Düsseldorf, Augsburg, Heidelberg and Cologne). In 2007, an exhibition was opened in Paris. Moreover, the exhibition on the Cold War opened in July 2006 in

Sighet has since evolved into a touring exhibition and in the summer of 2007 it was displayed in Hungary, Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic.

The famous statement attributed to General de Gaulle expresses the thought that Europe stretches from the Atlantic to the Urals, but heaven forbid, that it should stretch from the Urals to the Atlantic. From the geographical point of view, Eastern Europe occupies the

middle of this space. There is even a legend stating that somewhere in north Romania there is a pole marking the very centre of Europe (I am, however, aware that similar legends exist in Poland as well as in the Czech Republic). However, the centre of the region in geography textbooks is becoming the periphery in popular understanding according to which Europe ends on the German border. Our place in Europe is a geometrical

point between the persistent desire to satisfy our eternal dream of integration and the reality of the truth according to which history is primarily geography.

There remains no doubt that humanity is currently experiencing a crisis. Nevertheless, can it be said that a moment unaffected by crisis actually ever existed in its long history? From the point of view of etymology, the word "crisis" in ancient Greek is derived

from “Krinein”, meaning “to judge”, “to analyse.” In both the past and the present we submit ourselves to judgement and analyse our next steps. The sense of an acute crisis is currently connected with the fact that time has lost its patience and we have all fallen into unhealthy acceleration making us similar to the farmer from the famous Chinese tale who pulled at the plant’s leaves to make them grow faster. Faster – but in which direction? And

for what purpose?

If the situation develops along the lines mapped at the beginning of this century, in 50 years from now Europe will become the most globalised continent in the world. It will be - a kind of 'Tower of Babel' where everyone will speak English in a way which will make Shakespeare turn in his grave and where no one will feel at home: some because their home will have changed beyond recognition, while others

because in spite of the political correctness (replacing both religion and the Inquisition), there will always be a way to remind them that this is not their home. It is evident that we are re-experiencing the era of great migration of peoples whose destination is our continent and their driving force is the desire to achieve higher standards of living. History will continue to revolve from East to West and Europe will once again become a melting pot

where from a new stage of history will emerge.

In an increasingly globalised world, continuing my writing vocation and being translated into an increasing number of languages (45 books translated into 23 languages), I am using the suffering of five decades of Communism and the painful last two decades of transition from one system to another and from one Europe to another, as the main creative material.

It only remains for me to express the hope that love, as the driving force of life and the arts, will continue to prevail over hatred, the driving force of history and death. However, most of all we are left with the profound belief that all the difficulties, suffering and tragedies constitute a heritage which can enrich us, even if - in the words of one theologian - at a time when the West announced that God is dead, man was brutally murdered in the

East. And who can state what is more difficult - the revival of God or of man?

Dr hab. Włodzimierz Marciniak  
Poland

# A comparative perspective on the events of 1989

*Dr hab. Włodzimierz  
Marciniak (born 1954)  
Diplomat and Professor of  
political science. From 1980 he  
was a scholar at the Central  
School of Planning and*

Statistics (renamed the Warsaw School of Economics in 1991) and then the Dean of Economics and Social Science Faculty (1991-1992). Furthermore, he was the commercial counsellor at the Polish Embassy in Russia during the years 1992-1997. He completed his postdoctoral habilitation in political science at the Institute of Political Studies, the Polish Academy of Science in 2001, where he is the Head of Comparative Studies of the Post-Soviet Research Department. Since 2008 he has been a member of Polish-Russian Group to solve

*difficult problems.*

The collapse of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe was an important event in the history of the entire continent. It brought an end to the totalitarian communist systems in the eastern part of Europe and thus to the geopolitical division of the continent into two opposing political and military blocs. The collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe

is defined by three groups of factors.

The first factor is the deep economic, political and military crisis of the Soviet empire. Soviet troops which were stationed in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Poland, and Hungary did not intervene during the 1989 events.

The second factor is the crisis of legitimacy of power and the crisis of manoeuvrability in all communist countries. Both these crises caused

divisions within the nomenklatura and the rise of mass social activity.

The third factor is the empire's growing economic dependence on the global system. The dependance manifested itself for instance, in the raw-material orientation of the empire's export, the empire's rapidly rising debt, and technological backwardness. All these meant that democratisation and market reforms seemed to be the best possible way

out of the crisis. This in turn, required the dismantling of the communist regime. On the other hand, the collapse of communism, by itself did not abolish those differences between the eastern and western parts of the continent which referred to different pace, extent and depth of the modernisation processes.

A change of political regime is not an extraordinary event in history. During the initial 50

years after the Second World War (1946-1996), 133 cases of political regime change were reported, either from authoritarianism toward democracy or in the opposite direction, from democracy to authoritarianism. The most diverse experiences in this respect are those shared by two continents: Latin America and Africa. There, the changes of regimes were often accompanied by violence. The experience of

replacing authoritarianism with democracy has been generalised in the form of the political transition theory. Initially, the theory described the experience of dismantling authoritarian regimes and consolidation of democracy in some countries of Latin America and Southern Europe. After 1989 it came to be used to study the systemic transformation in Central and Eastern Europe.

Political transition assumes, first of all, that

a society maintains a national consensus, since the majority of citizens do not question their affiliation to a national political community. In the transition process itself, certain key moments can be mentioned; taking the decision to hold competitive elections and then holding them. The measure of the success of any given transition is the first democratic alternation of power and the 'consolidation' of the

democratic rules of the game. However, this general pattern does not mean that the transition proceeded everywhere and always in an identical manner. Closer analysis of the 1989 events shows that in every European country of the Soviet Bloc, the transition proceeded in different ways. One can distinguish a whole group of Central European ways (variants) of transition toward democracy, although several common

features should be mentioned. These include the peaceful nature of the changes; the large role of new, non-violent social movements; the frequent, although not widespread, use of a 'round table' mechanism, and the significant role of social elites in the process of change.

A specific feature of the political transition in Poland, compared to other Soviet Bloc countries, was the existence of an

organised and relatively mass opposition which included workers of state enterprises and members of the illegal trade union *Solidarity*. The growing economic crisis and lack of prospects for overcoming it within the Soviet empire made the communists begin to work toward a deeper integration of the Polish People's Republic with the global system, while retaining political power. Initial attempts to include some opposition

groups into a licensed political dialogue failed. In these circumstances, the communists began to implement the strategy of 'reforming and co-opting', all the time accompanying it with limited social pressure. In summer 1988, talks began between the Minister of the Interior, Czesław Kiszczak and the head of *Solidarity*, Lech Wałęsa. The talks resulted in the launch of the 'round table' mechanism. This led to the general elections to

two chambers of parliament, held on 4th June 1989. The elections were similar to the 'curial' elections which took place in many European countries during the decline of absolutism.

This bicameral parliament elected the Communist Party leader Wojciech Jaruzelski as president. The next step was the formation of a coalition government by Tadeusz Mazowiecki on 12th September 1989. The general presidential

election of 1990 won by the legendary *Solidarity* leader Lech Wałęsa, took place on 25th November (the first round) and 9th December (the second round). The first fully democratic parliamentary elections were held on 27th October 1991. The elections of 1989 may therefore be considered to have had a twofold effect. On the one hand, there was a significant expansion of political participation, on the other hand, the mechanism for

political competition and the electoral rotation of power was launched. Regardless of which party won the elections, political competition always continued in the form of a party-based rivalry. A similar mechanism developed also in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, notwithstanding the political parties were based on social networks of illegal or semi-illegal opposition, or on the structure of the

apparatus of former communist parties.

The Hungarian experience differs from the Polish one in that there was no strong “from the bottom up” pressure, nevertheless the economic situation was much more difficult. The state’s debt was comparable to the size of the GDP. This exerted a much stronger pressure on the communist camp to carry out economic reforms consistent with the monetarist ideology. This in

turn, raised the pressure on co-opting the opposition into the political system. The change gathered pace when in 1988 the long-standing Secretary-General of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, János Kádár, was forced to resign and was replaced by Károly Grosz. Meanwhile, the large-scale social discontent was expressed primarily by elite groups which in spring 1989 convened an opposition 'round table'. On 13th June, talks began

between the communists and the oppositionists at a triangular table. On 18th September the negotiations ended with the agreement to hold free elections. This was a case of a typically elitist agreement allowing the peaceful dismantling of the communist regime. The opposition won the elections of 25th March 1990, and formed the government led by József Antall. A few months later, the parliament elected Árpád Göncz as president.

In Czechoslovakia, after Miloš Jakeš took the office of the first secretary of the Communist Party in December 1987, efforts were made to improve the mechanism of central planning and to overcome the state's self-isolation. The communist regime used its increased economic dependence on Western countries to strengthen its own position, also in relation to the Soviet Union. In 1988, demonstrations took place on the twentieth

anniversary of the Warsaw Pact invasion and on the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the Republic. The nascent social discontent was exploited more for the purpose of internal party games, rather than to co-opt the opposition into the system. The radicalisation of social moods led to student demonstrations on the 17th November 1989, which launched the Velvet Revolution. Although the social mobilisation was

short-lived, the events in Czechoslovakia best resembled the classic revolutions: mass demonstrations, clashes with the police, negotiations between the oppositionists and the communists, a general strike, and the rally as a central form of political activity. Under the pressure of these events, the Communist Prime Minister Ladislav Adamec resigned and President Gustáv Husák formed an interim

government led by Marián Čalfa, which prepared free elections. Then Husák stepped down as president on 10th December 1989 and was replaced by Václav Havel. Free parliamentary elections were held in June 1990.

In East Germany, the change also began by overcoming political and economic self-isolation and stopping the rise of the national debt. This policy was intended to strengthen Erich Honecker's team in

the face of the changes taking place in the Soviet Union. In spring 1989 social protests began to mount and in the summer, a massive exodus of GDR citizens to the West began. On 18th October 1989 Egon Krenz became the Party's First Secretary and began a policy of gradual change. Successive waves of demonstrations forced his resignation and the events in the GDR came to be called a revolution, by analogy with the

'Springtime of Nations'. On 13th November, the government was taken over by Hans Modrow. He originally announced the *democratic rebuilding of socialism*, but by December he had accepted the Round Table's recommendations and agreed to hold free elections on 18th March 1990. The accelerated collapse of the GDR led to a rapid reunification of Germany, first in the form of monetary union (1st July) and then the formal

Reunification on 3rd October 1990.

Bulgaria's communists, following the changing international situation and inspired by Moscow, decided to run ahead of events. On 10th November 1989, the long-standing party leader Todor Zhivkov was removed and Petyr Madenov took his place. The sole aim of the coup d'état was to overthrow the dictator and to maintain the political regime. Following the Romanian experience,

Bulgarian communists entered into talks with a weak opposition within the round-table formula, winning the first free elections in June 1990. As a result of spontaneous protests by the opposition, President Mladenov resigned and the National Assembly elected Zhelyu Zhelev, the leader of the opposition Alliance of Democratic Forces, to this office. In the subsequent 1991 elections, the Alliance of Democratic Forces won

the largest number of votes, but it failed to gain a majority in parliament, while President Zhelev reaffirmed his mandate in the 1992 general election. Bulgaria's example demonstrates well the great importance of the geopolitical factor in Central and Eastern Europe - the disintegration of the empire. The change of political regime in the satellite countries of the empire was closely connected with the process

of their integration with the worldwide system.

In Romania, the change of power also took place within the communist nomenklatura. Part of them exploited the mass protests and street demonstrations to remove Nicolae Ceaușescu from power. On 15th November 1989 protests started in Brașov and spread to other regions of the country, reaching Bucharest after a month. The explosion of social discontent and mass

rebellion turned into a revolution. The Army refused to support the dictator and fights between the armed forces and the political police started. As a result of armed clashes, Nicolae Ceaușescu was executed and power was seized by a faction of the former communist nomenklatura, which formed the National Salvation Front. The Front's leader, Ion Iliescu became interim President. The communists made use of

the weakness of the opposition and won the parliamentary and presidential elections in 1990. The Romanian Social Democratic Party, which was formed as a result of the conversion of the National Salvation Front, won parliamentary elections in 1992. Iliescu remained in power for seven years until the 1996 elections when Emil Constantinescu, the leader of the Democratic Convention, became President. Iliescu returned

to power in 2000. The change of political regime in Romania recalled the bloody coup d'états in some Latin American or African countries, but its results were similar to the mechanism of popular democracy.

An important feature of the change of political regime in Romania was the communists' intentional references to the traditional semantics of revolution, with the specific concepts of 'the people', 'the will of

the 'people', and a revolutionary organisation supposedly expressing and implementing that will. In Romania, a dispute on how to assess the 1989 events occurred. Iliescu's supporters have seen them as a 'real revolution', but opponents have called it a 'false' or 'stolen' revolution'. The mythology of revolution, although not central to social deliberations, is important for understanding the consequences of the

political transitions in 1989.

Timothy Garton Ash, describing the events of 1989, was probably the first to use the term 'revolution', clearly differentiating between the revolution in Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Romania, and 'refolution', namely the "top-down" change in Poland and Hungary. This opened a debate in which Charles Tilly argued that 1989's 'Autumn of Nations' resembled classic European revolutions, despite the

relative absence of violence, a class basis, any utopian social vision, or resistance from the class being removed from power<sup>[58]</sup>. Therefore, these events are often referred to as 'velvet revolutions', 'peaceful', 'regulated'<sup>[59]</sup>, 'negotiated'<sup>[60]</sup>, 'quiet' and 'sad'<sup>[61]</sup> and 'self-limiting revolutions' in relation to the *Solidarity* movement of 1980-81<sup>[62]</sup>, or as a 'top-down revolution'<sup>[63]</sup>. All these expressions point to

a lack of any 'pathos of novelty' around the 1989 events, which Hannah Arendt, under the impression of the Great Revolution's pathos, considered to be a characteristic of each revolution. According to Arendt, one can talk about revolution only when the pathos of novelty is associated with the idea of freedom<sup>[64]</sup>. It is against this background that the myth of the 'betrayed revolution', the 'stolen

revolution' or the 'lost revolution' becomes meaningful<sup>[65]</sup>. On the one hand, in Central and Eastern Europe, the myth of revolution is the answer to the lost continuity and the sense of chaos that characterised the post-communist period. On the other hand, the myth expresses a longing for a lost time, when against the backdrop of a carnival on a town square there was a sense of a real political community based on

liberation from the prevailing relations and ideology. In Poland, the yearning for the revolutionary carnival of '*Solidarity*', which was unfulfilled in 1989, has returned a few times, even during the Ukraine's 'Orange Revolution', or in the form of the 'moral revolution' postulate. The ambivalent myth of revolution obliges us to consider the seemingly non-alternative nature of the postcommunist status quo.

Yet, when expressed as the myth of 'betrayed revolution', which is still present in the left-wing tradition, it restores hope for the next phase of the revolution.

The 'self-limiting revolution' was intended to establish enclaves of freedom outside the structures of the empire. Therefore, it used the language of 'antipolitics', the best example of which, was the selfgoverning and independent trade unions in

Poland. Dissident and opposition movements in the Soviet Bloc were distinguished by their human-rights and civil-society discourses. Therefore, the unexpected triumph of the neo-liberal ideology in this part of the world. Together with the monetary economic policy and the theory of political transition, this triumph came as a great surprise. 'Anti-politics' was unexpectedly replaced by 'post-politics', with its

concept of power exercised from a distance by means of the use of the procedures of adjustment to the modern civilisation requirements and the market economy rules. The process was accompanied by the rejection of third way concepts, which were still present in the electoral programme of the Polish anti-communist opposition in 1989. Leszek Balcerowicz, Vaclav Klaus, Yegor Gaidar and other 'post-political' reformers,

after years of experimentation, wanted to return to a regular and natural system of market economy. Liberal dogmatism, which was crucial for the strength of the reformers, at deeper levels of thought, represented the Marxist philosophy of history, only the conclusion differed. The historical conflict among the three formations of feudalism, capitalism and socialism, was supposed to end with the final triumph

of capitalism and the socialist countries' return to a natural path of development<sup>[66]</sup>. Gaidar's book *State and Evolution*<sup>[67]</sup>, a manifesto of Marxism à rebours, is very important in this context. A few years later, a close associate of Gaidar, Vladimir Mau, co-authored with Irina Starodubrovskaya the work *Great Revolutions: From Cromwell to Putin*<sup>[68]</sup>, referring to the Crane Brinton's natural theory of revolution.

Mau and Starodubrovskaya treat revolution as a mechanism of systemic transformation in the conditions of a weak state which is incapable of steering social and economic processes. The most important forms of state weakness are endless inflationary processes and the systematic redistribution of property. Revolution goes through the following phases: the antagonism between revolutionaries and the

ruling class, the struggle between moderates and radicals ending with the dictatorship of the latter, the centralisation of power in the hands of a strong individual, followed by a successful recovery. The Russian authors were most interested in the prolonged period of post-revolutionary instability, resulting from the lack of national consensus pivotal for the successful political transition of a political regime. According to Mau

and Starodubrovskaya, after the revolution, a 10 to 15 year long period of intensive concentration of power shall follow. After its completion, there is a long period of instability which starts the second revolutionary cycle. This concept may be an interesting starting point for reflection on the Russian history from the point of view of the theory of revolutionary cycles. Only two conclusions are relevant here. First, the transformation in the Soviet

Union in the late 1980s led to a long-standing absence of national consensus, which disproves the theory of political transition. Second, the problem of secondary revolutions, which has been well described in Marxist political literature, may be an appropriate key to understanding the current phase of the concentration of power in Russia.

Political reforms in the Soviet Union started at the end of the 1980s, slightly

ahead of the rest of the Soviet Bloc. The reasons for the reforms were similar to those in Poland, Hungary and East Germany; the failure of attempts to strengthen central planning 'acceleration', and the Soviet economy's dependence on the global system (the dramatic collapse of oil prices in 1985 and the rising cost of foreign debt service). In the case of the Soviet Union, the 'military revolution' was also of crucial importance.

In 1987-88, the economic crisis began to transform into three structural crises, which Gaidar identified as the loyalty crisis of the empire's satellite countries, the population's loyalty crisis, and the repression apparatus' loyalty crisis.

The loyalty crisis of the empire's satellites resulted from the geopolitical structure of the Soviet Empire, the centre of which was the Communist Party. The first imperial circle was the Russian union republic,

the second imperial circle consisted of the Union's other republics, and the third was the socialist states. The beginning of the systemic changes in Central and Eastern Europe dates back to 1987-88. At that time the conflict between the republics and the Soviet Union on the concept of the republican economic settlement started and in August 1987 the anniversary of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact was commemorated. On

16th November 1988, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Estonia adopted the declaration on state sovereignty within the Soviet Union. The declaration provided for the primacy of the republican over the union law. Such declarations were adopted by Lithuania, Latvia, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan in 1989, whereas by Russia, Moldova, Belarus and Ukraine, in 1990. During this time, Lithuania, Latvia, Armenia and

Georgia adopted  
declarations of  
independence.

The population's loyalty crisis resulted mainly from supply shortages, the budget deficit, inflation and the freezing of savings. In 1987, private business activity was legalised and the autonomy of state enterprises was increased. The deepening economic crisis generated increasingly massive protests leading to political general strikes in spring

1991.

The repression apparatus' loyalty crisis was related to the 'military revolution' and the decline in defence spending. In February 1988 Soviet troops began withdrawing from Afghanistan. At the same time, a discussion on plans for the conversion of the arms industry started. The repression apparatus' loyalty crisis was of key importance for the Communist Party because of the systemic memory of

the illicit origin of the Soviet government and of the critical importance of force for its maintenance. In this context, the communists' restraint in using violence is striking. This essential novelty, not only in the history of communism, but also in the history of revolution, was for the first time revealed during the 1989 'Velvet Revolution', then again in the Soviet Union in August 1991, and later in the 'colour revolutions' in Georgia and

Ukraine. When force is used, the winner is not the party with greater resources, but the party who is willing to make sacrifices in the name of supra-individual goals. The lack of this determination in August 1991 meant that the still formally ruling Communist Party was not the subject of the state of emergency, or in other words, it was not the sovereign. The abstinence of the repression apparatus ensured the persistence of at least two

totalitarian institutions in the Soviet Union/Russia. Those institutions are the repression apparatus and the propaganda apparatus, which over time formulated the idea of a sovereign democracy, expressing their dominant position in society.

Mikhail Gorbachev sought to avert the crisis of sovereignty by launching political reforms in summer 1989. In December 1988 when, as a result of hunger strike, Anatoly Marchenko

died in prison in Christopol, political prisoners were released and the penal code was revised. At the same time, amendments to the Constitution were introduced. Now, the state's highest authority was to be the Congress of People's Deputies. The Congress appointed two other authorities: the Supreme Soviet and the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, and from March 1990, the President of the Soviet Union. The election of

people's deputies were held in March 1989, when the round-table talks were still ongoing in Poland. Two-thirds of the deputies were chosen in electoral districts, and one-third were elected by social organisations (the Communist Party, the Komsomol, trade unions, and others). On average, two candidates bid for each mandate, but there were districts in which the voter had no alternative. The effects of the elections for people's deputies were

twofold. First, they inaugurated mechanisms for political competition, which were consolidated a year later in the course of the Republican parliamentary elections in spring 1990. Second, the Congress of People's Deputies legalised a new state authority by electing Gorbachev as the President of the Soviet Union in March 1990.

Immediately after his election, Gorbachev began to expand his authority,

seeking extraordinary powers. Later, the process was repeated by Boris Yeltsin in the Russian Federation. After the election of Gorbachev, an idea was floated to set up the offices of the presidents of the republics, which was the crowning of the sovereignisation process. Thus, the Soviet Union and its republics, instead of a mechanism of party competition, developed a rivalry between sovereign states and the empire, and

between presidents and legislative assemblies. As a result, the political parties started to fade, political participation began to shrink, and a plebiscitary presidency occupied the key place in the political system.

In Europe, the first plebiscitary presidential elections took place in France on 10th December 1848 and were won by Louis Bonaparte thanks to the votes of peasants and workers. According to Karl

Marx, this constituted an evidence of both the inability to reconcile socialism with democracy and the need for a proletariat dictatorship. In the early twentieth century, Max Weber proposed the introduction of a plebiscitary presidency in Russia in order to overcome the crisis of modernisation and the crisis of legitimacy in the Romanov empire. To make Boris Yeltsin independent of the Congress of People's

Deputies, the idea was realised at the end of the century. On 12th June 1991, he won the first presidential elections in Russia. Since then, the incumbent president, a person acting as president, or an officially designated successor, has always won the elections. The Russian Federation is a state unique in Europe, in that it has seen no alternation of power since 1991. Consequently, whereas the 1989 changes have resulted in

establishing political systems in Central and Eastern Europe which espoused the principles of the distribution and rotation of power, Russia has developed a system of non-alternative presidential rule. The interesting issue is that the line separating the areas of dominance of different political systems roughly coincides in Eastern Europe with the western border of the Soviet Union in 1939. Moldova and Ukraine have already

experienced alternations of power, and in Belarus the first presidential election was won by an opposition representative. Only thereafter did the political system began to move in the direction of non-alternative presidential rule.

The earth-shaking events of 1989 in Eastern Europe have unleashed deep political, economic and social changes, but the scope and coverage of these changes coincide with the geopolitical structure of

imperial circles.

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[58] Cf. C. Tilly, *Rewolucje europejskie 1492-1922*. Krąg-Wolumen. Warszawa 1997, p. 300.

[59] Cf. A. Dudek, *Reglamentowana rewolucja*. Arcana. Kraków 2004.

[60] Cf. L. Bruszt, '1989: *The Negotiated Revolution in Hungary*,' *Social Research*, vol. 57, N° 2, summer 1990.

[61] Cf. A. Arato,

*'Revolution and Restoration'*  
in C. Bryant, E. Mokrzycki,  
*The new great  
transformation? Change  
and Continuity in East  
Central Europe.* Routledge.  
London 1994, p. 103.

[62] Cf. J. Staniszkis,  
*Poland's Self-Limiting  
Revolution.* Princeton  
University Press. Princeton  
1984.

[63] Cf. J. Staniszkis,  
*Postkomunizm,* Wyd.  
Słowo/Obraz/Terytoria.  
Gdańsk 2001, p. 7.

[64] Cf. H. Arendt, O

*rewolucji.* Czytelnik.  
Warszawa 2003, p. 38.

[65] Cf. A. Arato,  
*Revolution and  
Restoration...*, p. 105.

[66] Cf. Ackerman B.,  
*Przyszłość rewolucji  
liberalnej.* Oficyna  
Naukowa. Warszawa 1996,  
p. 39.

[67] Cf. Y. Gaidar, *State and  
evolution.* Evrazia. Moscow  
1995.

[68] Cf. Starodubrovskaya  
I., Mau W., *Velikie Revolutsii  
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*[Great Revolutions from Cromwell to Putin]*. Vagrius. Moscow 2001.

Prof. Georges Mink  
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**1989–2009:  
twenty years  
on – preventing  
rivalry within  
the group of  
victors**

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*douloureux (2007). Decorated with the Cross of Merit of the Republic of Poland for his devotion to developing Polish-French relations.*

In descriptions of 1989, the year of the revolution and the destruction of the Soviet totalitarianism, the metaphor about the domino effect comes to mind instantly. However, the metaphor is misleading. Everything started with a fraudulent poker game, which later transformed into a game of chess and

finally ended with a domino effect.

It may be worthwhile recalling the events of 1989 in order to protect history against gimmicks and distortion, so as to avoid misrepresenting the image before the anniversary.

The very calendar of events speaks volumes. It all started on 6th February from the Polish Round Table and ended with the historic signing of the compromise between the negotiators from the Government and

Opposition representatives on 5th April 1989. The Polish people gained the legalisation of the *Solidarity* trade union, almost free elections to Parliament (Sejm), completely free elections to the Senate and an uncensored Gazeta Wyborcza daily. Later, there are two Round Table scenes in Hungary - in March 1989 and then from June until September the same year. The Hungarians, convinced about the lack of reaction of the Soviet side, want

something more and eventually get free elections and a referendum, from which a representative of the opposition, writer Arpad Goncz is elected as the country's president. The Czechoslovakian Round Table (or tables to be more precise) took place between 26 November and 9 December but the negotiations were restricted by the Opposition to the exchange of the political cadre, the creation of a non-communist government,

the post of president for Vaclav Havel and the position of the chairman of the Federal Assembly for Alexander Dubček. In the GDR, the negotiations started on 7 December 1989 after the fall of the Berlin Wall but the process of the reunification of Germany takes prominence very quickly. The symbolism of the table loses its importance and the course of events causes this formula to become anachronistic. While in

Romania the negotiations were replaced by a hurriedly administered justice. It was only Bulgaria which organised a true round table, where the negotiations began on 3rd January 1990.

Being the first, the Polish Round Table debated in a climate of uncertainty associated with the context of its creation. As negotiations progressed, the argument about the use of force underwent gradual erosion. The conservative

wing in the Communist Party lost ground not only because of the lack of reaction, but mainly because of Gorbachev's consent. General Jaruzelski, the main communist initiator of the negotiations in Poland, later said *according to Gorbachev, the result of the Polish round table could act as a tranquilliser on other East European leaders, showing that the cooperation with the opposition forces without leading to white*

*terror is possible.*

The Poles are only blazing the trail, while shattering suspicion requires time. Nothing is certain yet. These conditions should be remembered because they illustrate cognitive limitations for audaciousness and the strategy of protagonists. A pessimistic mood reigned in the mid-1980s. The theories about the unavoidable Soviet normalisation are more frequent than

considerations concerning the end of Communism despite Gorbachevism with its difficulties to be regarded as something more than yet another ruse of Communism. Does anyone still remember Jean François Revel's words? In his bestseller, How Democracies Perish, he stated that 'some day democracy will be perceived as an episode on the trail of history, as an interlude which is nearing its end before our eyes'. It is

necessary to remember that Henry Kissinger went to Moscow the moment Polish communists were experiencing grand defeat to propose, as an antidote, to the Finlandisation of some Central European states, the US promise that it would not make an attempt to draw them into the American orbit. President Bush senior visiting Poland and Hungary in the same year, 1989, also thought in terms of the scenario drawn up by the

Communists in the form of a 'two-headed authority'.

In this way, the developments in Poland were of capital importance for 'informing' others. The Polish example ensured the flow of information, diminishing the effectiveness of arguments in favour of the possible use of force. Still, in April, Polish negotiations brought an electrifying effect as they showed the neighbouring countries that trade union freedom and pluralism,

along with the freedom of association were admissible. This was accompanied by the revelation that an existence of an independent daily (Gazeta Wyborcza) was possible. In June, it was evident that not only was it possible to have elections which would be less restricted than before but most importantly, that the Opposition could win the elections and the authorities would tolerate such a result. On 4th June,

the day of *Solidarity's* election victory, conservative Communists from Central Europe pinned their hopes on the Chinese alternative, having seen how the tanks crushed the reformist movement on Tiananmen Square. However, there is no way of return.

The bold actions that would ensue later, originated in Warsaw. The most important signal came in September. The non-communist Prime Minister,

Tadeusz Mazowiecki, formed a government in an environment still marked by Soviet influence. In this way, the range of possibilities expanded with the passage of time and the participants on the political scene in East-Central Europe became increasingly radical.

For several years now the former 'fraternal countries' have been engaged in a rivalry over which of them was the biggest victim of the historic storm or which

one defeated Communism. In 2006, the Hungarians recalled the anniversary of the Budapest Uprising. The year 2008 belonged to the Czechs who commemorated the 1938 Munich treachery committed by western countries, the Communist revolt in February 1948 and the defeat of the Prague Spring in 1968. *Poland First to Fight* was the slogan adopted by the Polish Government aimed at frustrating the attempts of those who refused Poland

its merits. On the anniversary ground, this rivalry is supported by historic diplomacy. It is evident that the rivalry will be especially acute in 2009, which is hardly in line with the policy of the European Union aiming at reaching a consensus in the field of historic memory. This however, brings profit, and the politicians, who are becoming entrepreneurs specialising in anniversary celebrations, understand it perfectly well.

While there is no denying that Poles hold a special place in the history of those events and that they were an example for others, would it not be worthwhile to ponder whether the celebrations should be universal? After all, the disintegration of the dishonourable system has a global dimension.

Prof. Jadwiga Staniszkis  
Poland

A few  
comments on  
Communism,  
Solidarity, post-  
Communism  
and forgetting

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a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences and a professor at Warsaw University. In 1968 she was arrested for taking part in student strikes and was banned from the university where she was a junior lecturer. Therefore, she completed her PhD (1971) and habilitation (1978) whilst working as a teacher at nursing college. She was admitted to university again in 1981. At this time she was also a member of the Experts Commission of the Solidarity Committee. Soon after the signing of the August Agreements and the creation

*of the Solidarnosc trade union she was an advisor to workers and members of the union. During the imposition of martial law in Poland she was lecturing at the Solidarity clandestine school and was publishing in the underground press. She is a highly respected academic and the author of numerous publications. She was decorated with the Commander's Cross of the Order Polonia Restituta (2006).*

Communism, as I remember it, was no longer homicidal. It moved

into its authoritarian, 'milder' phase, defined as 'repressive tolerance', with its 'control through crisis'<sup>[69]</sup> which succeeded in transforming any rebellion into an unintended association in extending the life of the regime. As before, it continued trying to exploit peoples' worst traits and weaknesses, in order to force its victims' complicity in destroying their own moral subjectivity. My youth coincided with the post-Stalinist phase, the

hypocrisy of the Gomułka period and the demoralisation of the Gierek period. This was characterised by its rituals of self-criticism<sup>[70]</sup> and imposition of penalties on oneself (an act which constituted an unwitting recognition of the persecutors' points) by interrogations, during which the questions asked were not recorded to give the reader the impression that the 'hooligans' were squealing spontaneously.

For many today, however, that era often means primarily social advancement and rude consumerism. I still remember this selective use of repression (often inversely proportional to the real level of involvement), aimed at destroying solidarity and trust, pushing people into a culture of empty gestures in order to keep their hands clean and creating small localised niches instead of systemic freedom. This resulted in

a lack of accountability because the public had no real impact on anything. Ironically, today, when we are free (and often helpless in the face of the extreme difficulties of building capitalism and democracy in conditions of advanced globalisation), that lack of accountability appears to be a luxury which we miss, albeit not always consciously.

Communism as I remember it, was a predictable and boring

system which also trapped the communist nomenclature itself. Full power over the people did not mean real control over material processes, which was already true at the level of language. As I demonstrate in *The Ontology of Socialism*<sup>[71]</sup>, communism was an “illusory being” as understood by Hegel in *Science of Logic*. Real communism was in fact something other than that declared by its ideological

'assumptive reality' and remained unexplored even to itself<sup>[72]</sup>. It was unable to reject these assumptions (and the language it involved), as that would have revealed naked absurdity and coercion as the only foundation of its power. Furthermore, it would have destroyed the system of internal communication within the party machinery, as well as the internal determinants of 'rationality' of the individual institutions related to these

assumptions.

Communism today has been quickly forgotten and its knowledge is not being passed on to the young generation (except in burlesque form of the kind of Bareja's "Miś [Teddy Bear]", a popular semi-satirical film from the early 1980s). One of the reasons for this is the collective guilty conscience of those who lived through it.

What is also being forgotten is the moment of (temporary) purgation,

which was the beautiful feast of *Solidarity*, with its rebellion in the name of dignity and the conflict between the authorities and society at large, expressed (so accurately!) above all in moral terms and not just in political or material terms. In August 1980, this explosive attempt to regain dignity, which mobilised millions began, as hundreds of earlier strikes had done, from economic demands. Then in the second phase when values came to be at

stake (that is, solidarity with the workers of factories where prior agreements had been reneged upon) a breakthrough was made. The moral experience (taking risks in the name of values) became a cognitive experience at the same time. Such ethical categories as 'good' and 'evil', 'the truth' and 'the lie' were activated and reintroduced to public language.

It is in these terms that the axis of conflict was

determined, as they responded to their exclusion from governance by excluding the communist machinery from the moral domain (which, by reference to a myth, created a surreal similarity between the opposing parties). At the same time, this appeal to the myth of the 'good' fighting the 'evil' was decisive for the 'revolutionary' character of *Solidarity*, for it made communication, 'politicking', and co-

optation impossible.

It is in these terms that in 1980, a vision of an 'ethical economy' and of *Solidarity's* anti-political utopia (wherein the state and society made do without the mediation of politics, because they operated according to the same system of values) was expressed.

Finally, it is in that language that attempts were made in the 1980s to lead a peculiar cultural revolution including

*Solidarity's* 'peoples' academies' and lectures in factory halls and churches, which were designed not only to restore the truth about the Polish peoples' own history, but also to reduce the cultural distance related to the limited language code, which the workers painfully experienced (and which aided the communists to manipulate them)<sup>[73]</sup>.

This celebration of *Solidarity* ended with martial law. The model of

repression which the communists' then adopted was primarily geared towards destroying the conviction of moral virtue in the people of *Solidarity* (particularly among the workers, where the moral fervour resulting from their recovered dignity and their determination to say 'no' was the greatest)<sup>[74]</sup> and thus the destruction of *Solidarity's* founding principle of 'speaking in values'.

The end of communism

came years later, when the myth of *Solidarity* had already been effectively tarnished. The strikes of 1988 were only a pastiche, partly provoked and intended to demonstrate Wałęsa's value as a guarantor of peace to party hardliners. This was something invaluable both to the regime in relation to the deepening economic crisis and also to the already nascent forces of 'political capitalism'.

The *Solidarity* experience

has now been forgotten and difficult to explain to the young generation in a similar way to communism itself but for other reasons. When the myth of moral virtue has vanished, the language in which people lived through the experience of *Solidarity* has disappeared as well. This initially happened as a result of breaking people's will during martial law. Then, throughout the first years of transition, as *Solidarity's* utopia was

denied, as the communist machinery was actually enfranchised and as the industrial working class came to be the main loser. Silence and the difficulty of expressing the collective experience known from times past has returned. This time not because of the appearance of an ideology (in which the enslaved worker whom the government shot at was presented as the ruling proletarian) but by the complexity of the new world

of networks and the soft 'structural violence'<sup>[75]</sup> introduced by global logic. The sense of community, which had been so dominant in the 1980s, has also broken apart. Instead, a massive process of learning 'formal rationality' (in contrast to the 'substantial rationality' which was of key importance to *Solidarity*) has started. Most importantly an accelerated process of individualisation has begun. In the situation

of being 'abandoned by the state' which was shocking at the beginning people started to learn on a massive scale how to rely on themselves alone. This was necessary because of the progressive commercialisation of the state through a network of agencies and earmarked funds to carry out its existing tasks via the market, which was most frequently used for a client-based partisan redistribution of public

funds. It is this individualisation, as well as the strengthening of family ties, that allows Poles today to keep faith in their ability to survive in all circumstances in times of crisis. However, that is not enough to make a massive leap forward in modernisation.

The overthrow of communism in Eastern Europe involved a change in dependency (and the type of that dependency). Membership of the autarkic,

armaments-oriented Soviet Bloc with its politically-founded dependency was replaced by opening up to unequal competition with global capital. As shown in a report in The Economist<sup>[76]</sup> the price of this move was high. The region of post-communist countries as a whole had not recovered its 1989 production levels until 2006. In 2009 this level should be exceeded by 25% but the current global economic crisis makes this

forecast highly doubtful. The developed countries of Europe have made greater progress during that time, according to the same report in 2009 the ratio of the average income per head in post-communist countries to the average income in EU-15 will be slightly worse than it was in 1989.

Today, as the global crisis ruins the brittle model of 'dependent development' in post-communist countries, both the helplessness of the

state and the weakness of national capital are clear. Even before the crisis, the effects of unequal competition with global capital (including, in particular, with financial capital) could be discerned in the post-communist economies. The recovery of freedom has unfortunately been accompanied by de-industrialisation and de-technicisation. The acquisition of many of the more modern communist period plants by foreign

companies swept away their local partners as well. Scattered islands of modern technologies have failed to raise the general level of advancement. On the contrary, the 'dependent' nature of development has decreased the number of national research centres in industry. Today, as globalisation retreats (in connection with the crisis), we can see an accelerated withdrawal of capital from these countries, foreign banks scaling back their

loans and the closure of assembly and logistics centres. This not only immobilises the regional factors of production but risks permanent structural regression. There is no longer any opportunity to return to the relative autonomy and 'completeness' of post-communist economies. After the crisis, the economic structures of these countries will be even less compatible with that of developed countries and

will lack the capacity to accumulate capital for autonomous development. The acquisition of systemicity, which was lost in the phase of 'dependent development' (such as becoming independent from the excessive cooperative imports which produce a sustained current account deficit), may take place mainly at the cost of structural and technological regression and a stronger reliance on the grey economy.

The European Union has also been changing in a way unfavourable to the post-communist countries. The current retreat from the network method of process regulation back towards the hierarchical formula, which is currently happening under pressure from the global crisis, is very undesirable for these countries. The former Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek has even spoken of a new 'Iron Curtain'. This concerns not only the

withdrawal from post-politics (whose crowning moment was the unratified Lisbon Treaty) but also the return to politics understood as a battle for supremacy conducted by nation states. It was enough to weaken the emphasis on the 'community moment' (and to limit the importance of the European Commission) in order to return to the inter-governmental level as the main stage for decision-making. On this level, Central and Eastern Europe,

which is already divided by its rivalries in the field of 'dependent development', has no chance of success. The principle of 'flexibility' in the EU has begun to transform itself into permanent regionalisation (with conflicts expressed openly) and a 'multi-speed' policy which marginalises the postcommunist countries. The system of regional powers which, since the weakening of the Commission, have played the role of the political

guarantors of external relations in which EU agendas are displaced by business consortia has returned to prominence. We do not play any significant role in this mechanism.

Returning to recent history, it should be highlighted that the real end of communism (in the sense of achieving the critical mass of institutional transition, discrete connections and interests which made a return to communism impossible)

came only with the fortunately unsuccessful putsch by Yanayev and his associates in Moscow in August 1991. This rebellion resulted in the accelerated disintegration of the Empire and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from East Germany and Central Europe.

The key to this last chord lay in three previous processes. Firstly, the so-called “military revolution”<sup>[77]</sup> or in other words, a hot end to the Cold

War (from the late 1970s until 1985, when on the 30th anniversary of Austrian neutrality Gromyko announced in Vienna a similar option for Central Europe). This launched Gorbachev's Perestroika as the PR of this policy as well as, more importantly, negotiations between Moscow and Washington. Divisions within the Moscow power elite and negotiations with the West led to the rollback of the so-called external empire. This

process began to threaten the internal empire and so it led to the putsch. The same people who had earlier backed Gorbachev were imprisoned after the coup, including Kryuchkov, the head of the KGB in 1989-90, who took part in the formation of first post-communist governments, deciding which faction of the opposition was "constructive".

Changes proved to be inevitable also due to a second mechanism that of

so-called political capitalism. The mass enfranchisement of the communist nomenklatura, which had intensified in the 1980s, accelerated even more at the beginning of the transformation period. This process produced a strong economic interest in privatisation, something which was missing in *Solidarity*. *Solidarity* became both the guarantor and the beneficiary of this interest. The mechanism of political capitalism

developed in line with Professor Davidov's concept<sup>[78]</sup>. Being an expert in dependency (in Latin America), he accurately foresaw what the institutional forms of 'dependent development' would look like. First of all, the capitalist class created "from the top down", then a short phase of liberal, free-market capitalism and finally a rapid transition to a highly concentrated (in Russia even an oligarchic) model, with financial capital

playing the leading role. Hence the nomenklatura's attempt to control the sphere of finance, an attempt which has failed to withstand competition with global capital. Even in the mid-1990s, the political capitalists mostly became rentiers, selling their shareholdings. Then there appeared another, still more prodigal formula, namely public-sector capitalism, exploiting the commercialisation of public finance. The previous form,

even though it too was unethical, at least allowed for a smooth redeployment of assets from communist times and in fact aided entry into the structures of 'dependent development'.

Both formulas have increased the costs of change in the direction (and the type) of dependency which was mentioned above, when the economies deformed by communism were opened up to (unequal) competition and became a reservoir for

global capitalism.

Finally, the key factor was the phenomenon of *Solidarity* which was described above. Paradoxically, at the beginning of the transition, it was not so much a vehicle of 'moral revolution' and mobilisation but a guarantor of stability and even of demobilisation. Perhaps if Poland had used the US model of democracy, which relies on strong community feelings (but also individualism), an

emphasis on the self-government of a 'political society' and the moral aspect, *Solidarity's* fate would have been different. However, a liberal, not a Republican model of 'citizenship' has been chosen with regard to abstract rights and as such this represents a departure from *Solidarity's* utopia. Subsequent attempts at Republicanism have proved to be caricatures.

The balance of the processes described here,

despite the tone of bitterness in my essay, is strongly positive. Errors were made but the general direction of 'dependent development' has been largely inevitable. The errors were made by people who have had the courage to take on the burden of responsibility and I cannot criticise them because I did not take such a burden upon myself.

The transition was accompanied by the gradual fading of the

Communist heritage and the rise of global logic and mechanisms related to the European integration. Institutions have become of key importance. We have also noticed the significance of our cultural heritage. The same thing which helped articulate *Solidarity* revolution's slogans of human dignity and justice must face today the world of syncretism in the sphere of values, an economy of standards and a limit to the 'natural rights'

approach. Sovereignty has been transformed into self-organisation within the limits set by well-defined boundary conditions derived from a variety of ethical systems. It is difficult to operate in a reality where our intellectual tradition lacks the nominalist phase of discovering the autonomy of form and also the liberal, Lockean form of freedom as a cognitive situation. Often, especially in conditions of crisis, we are treated as

a resource and not as a partner.

However, we should be proud of ourselves and first and foremost we should remember. Remember what communism was. Remember *Solidarity*. That is the aim of my participation on this panel.

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[69] See J. Staniszkis, Poland: *The Self-Limiting Revolution*, (Princeton Univ. Press 1985).

[70] For instance, the ritual

of apology at the Radom stadium (following the events of 1976), when a fake delegation of workers apologised to Gierek, and the intimidated and humiliated workers who had been driven to the stadium stood in silence. Also Gierek's conversation with the strikers at the Shipyards (January 1971), cynically exploiting the inequality in the two sides' linguistic competence. I wrote about this in *Poland: Self-Limiting ... op. cit.*

[71] Polish edition, Wydawnictwo Krag, 1989. English edition, Oxford - Clarendon Press 1993.

[72] Even when communism was coming to an end and the Polish Communist Party was dissolving, the communists were unable to determine what had caused the collapse of the communism system: whether communist institutions had been implemented “prematurely”, “too much” or “too little”. I wrote about

this discussion in *The Dynamics of Breakthrough in Eastern Europe* (California Univ. Press, 1991).

[73] The role of language competence in the situation of protest, see *Poland: Self-Limiting ...*, op. cit.

[74] See my text in the samizdat *Krytyka*, “*Trzy lata po Sierpniu [Three Years After August]*”, 1983.

[75] I wrote about structural violence in *Władza globalizacji*, Scholar 2003.

[76] The World in 2009, p. 50 (January 2009).

[77] For “military revolution”, see J. Staniszkis, *Postkomunizm: próba opisu*, Słowo-Obraz-Terytoria 2001. Also, *Post-Communism: the Emerging Enigma* ISP PAN 1999.

[78] Davidov’s concept in the chapter about epistemology of control (in *Postkomunizm... op. cit.*).

Oles Shevchenko  
Ukraine

Ukraine -  
brushing the  
occupiers dirt  
from its feet

*Oles Shevchenko (born 1940)  
A journalist and an Activist of  
the National Liberation  
Movement. He worked in  
Kolkhoz, studied at technical  
school in Kiev and was*

employed as an electrician. In the 60's he participated in the student protests against the discrimination of the Ukrainian language. In 1976 he was a clandestine member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group working closely with the Moscow Helsinki Group. During his hospitalisation in 1980 he was arrested and during interrogation he was assaulted on many occasions, put into solitary confinement and finally sent to Kazakhstan. After his release, following the change of government in Moscow in 1987, he was elected as the head of the Helsinki Group in

*1988. From 1990-1994 he was a member of the Supreme Council of Ukraine (Ukrainian Parliament). He is also the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Apostle Andrew Brotherhood.*

The last millennium of the Ukrainian nation's history was characterised in its beginnings by a political, economic and cultural national prosperity. In fact, Kievan Rus was a developed European state. The gradual decline in the power of the Kievan state in the following centuries, the renaissance

of the statehood in the form of the Christian and Cossack Hetmanate and at the end of the 17th century, the tragic transformation of Ukraine into a colony of the Muscovite Empire, deprived the country of all rights and of its freedom.

The First World War and the democratic Russian revolution in February 1917 influenced the formation of the new geopolitical situation in Europe. Here, one should point out that at the beginning of the 18th

century, in the reign of Tsar Peter I, Moscow borrowed the name 'Rus' from Ukraine and started to refer to itself as Russia and not Muscovy. Ukrainians revived their statehood in the form of the Ukrainian People's Republic and the second Hetmanate. However, the Bolshevik coup of October 1917 and the gaining of power by a group of international adventurists in Petersburg, headed by Ulyanov-Blank-Lenin, led to the armed occupation of

Ukraine and the lengthy and most terrible oppression of the Ukrainian people by the Russian Empire under the red flag of communist ideology.

For the Russian invaders, the Ukrainian nation constituted an obstacle preventing the free use of rich and extensive natural resources located within its territory, therefore they methodically strove to remove this obstacle by way of famine, forced collectivisation, mass

executions and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians to Siberia. The famine which engulfed Ukraine in 1932-1933 was a terrible crime against humanity, organised and carried out under the strict control of Moscow's authorities. This genocide wiped out over 10 million citizens living in rural areas. They were the genetic carriers of the Ukrainian nation. Overall, Moscow's authorities killed five times more Ukrainians

in Ukraine during peace times than actually died during the Second World War

The first ray of hope for the enslaved nations of the USSR appeared when Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin's personality cult, at the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). However, the de-Stalinisation process was suppressed by another Kremlin coup in 1964 when Khrushchev was

overthrown. The young Ukrainian generation which fervently supported the idea of a national renaissance was cynically attacked. In 1965-1966, several groups of the Ukrainian intelligentsia were accused of nationalist activities and sentenced to long imprisonment. This generation, whose objective was to defend national culture, etched itself into history under the name of the "Sixties' Generation" [Shestydesiatnyki]. From

the moral and ethical perspectives, this was fundamentally a new generation of young artists, writers, critics and film producers who were not able to accept the ruling socialist realism framework, lies and deception.

The budding Ukrainian resistance could not be stifled. Moreover, it began to flourish and its clandestine activities expanded forming an independent publishing house called Samvydav.

Political life in Ukraine was divided into the official and the unofficial one. The Kremlin's patience had snapped and by virtue of a secret decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union called *On the methods of counteracting illegal distribution of anti-Soviet and other politically detrimental materials*, an order was issued demanding effective "eradication" (искоренить) of Samvydav. In January

1972, the KGB reaped another harvest among the intellectuals. Several dozen eminent representatives of Ukrainian culture received long-term prison sentences based on the “Anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda” clause. An even greater punishment was the locking up of people with ‘different views’, in special psychiatric hospitals for an indefinite term. The response to the protests of international community was always the same: “We shall not allow

anybody to interfere with our internal affairs.”

On 1st August 1975 in Helsinki, the Soviet Union, along with the other 34 countries present, signed the Helsinki Final Act, which required the Russian government to observe international laws concerning human rights in exchange for receipt of the highest trade privileges. This provided a base for Ukrainian human rights activists to found the Public Group to Promote the

Implementation of the Helsinki Accords which revealed instances where the authorities violated human and civil rights. They reported such instances to the other signatory states of the Helsinki Act, however, it did not last long, as in 1978, all the members of this group were sentenced and put into prison.

Another wave of arrests of Ukrainian human rights activists swept across Ukraine on the eve of the Olympic Games in 1980.

Society was overcome by extreme dejection. Independent thought was strictly prohibited. All areas of life, including private life, were controlled by the KGB. The Kremlin gerontocracy, in the form of the Political Office of the CPSU Central Committee, was a personification of atrocity and outdatedness of the imperial totalitarian system. After the death of L. Brezhnev, the position of General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee

was assumed by the KGB Chief J. Andropov. This gave rise to a 'coven' of this atrocious and grim government department. Cinema screenings in Kiev were interrupted in order to inspect the documents of viewers to check whether they were perhaps spending time in the cinema instead of at work. Similar situations took place on public transport. The brutality of the regime reached its zenith in concentration camps for

political prisoners, where people were pressed to the limit of human endurance. The author of these words was punished with, a record for USSR prison punishments, solitary confinement of 66 days in a cold punishment cell with a pitiful one meal per day. Many eminent Ukrainian citizens died in prisons: the Nobel Prize candidate and poet Vasyl Stus, the teacher and columnist Oleksa Tychyj, the poet Jurij Lytvyn, the journalist Valerij

Marchenko, the leader of the Independent Youth Union of Armenia Ishan Mkrtchyan, as well as the Moscow dissident Anatolij Marchenko.

The 1980s which, according to the forecasts of N. Khrushchev, was to be the final period of the rise of communism in the USSR, became the period of complete breakdown of the administrative command economy, which failed to withstand the world arms race competition from the

West. The new Kremlin administrator M. Gorbaczev had no other option but to look for new relations with the Western world, which is why he was forced to agree to the democratisation of society. In December 1986, he released Academy of Sciences' member, Andrei Sakharov, from exile in the town of Gorky and in 1987, set free the remaining political prisoners from concentration camps. In August 1987, the former political prisoners: Jevhen

Sverstiuk, Serhij Naboka, Oles Shevchenko, Olga Hejko-Matushevich, Vitalij Shevchenko, Leonid Milawski, Inna Cherniavska, Larysa Lohvycka and Vasyl Hurdzan established the Ukrainian Culturological Club (UCC). It was the first independent national organisation in the Soviet Ukraine of the Gorbachev period. UCC united people with democratic views. The meetings concerned the current problems of Ukrainian reality: the

compulsory Russification of Ukraine, covering up genocide performed on the Ukrainian nation in 1932-1933, concealment of the effects of the Chernobyl disaster, protection of historic buildings and monuments and disclosure of falsified aspects of Ukrainian history. UCC sessions gathered up as many as 400 participants. Having no way of curbing the club, the authorities refused to lease premises to them and tried to discredit

the UCC in the mass media. All UCC members remained under the watchful eye of the KGB. Nevertheless, this did not stop the club and it convened its meetings in private flats. Daredevils from Lviv, Odessa, Dniepropietrovsk and Czernihov secretly travelled to participate in those meetings. In 1988, all the members of the UCC joined the Ukrainian Helsinki Union (UHU), the first political opposition.

The establishment of the

UHU was announced in Lviv on 7th July 1988 at a meeting attended by several thousand people. This was an epoch-making event for the historic process taking place at the time. The UHU was founded as a federative union of self-government groups defending rights and organisation in oblasts, regions and cities of Ukraine, as well as outside its borders. The UHU became the first large-scale opposition organisation in

Soviet Ukraine that possessed its own political programme, referred to as “the UHU Declaration of Principles.”

The founding of the UHU was justified in an open and convincing manner in the Declaration: *From the experiences of 66 years of the presence of Ukraine in the USSR results that both the government of the USSR which in reality never was an independent government but merely an executive government of*

*the central authorities, as well as the Communist Party of Ukraine, which is merely a regional branch of the CPSU, could not and in principle did not want to defend the Ukrainian society from total starvation, from the barbaric destruction of its productive powers and of the intellectual potential of the nation, from the destruction of the national identity of the Ukrainian people and non-Russian minorities, from the artificial*

*change of the ethnic composition of the people of Ukraine.*

The authorities treated the creation of the UHU as a challenge to the Soviet state. The governing party bodies, the KGB and the militia, directed their efforts at countering the newly-emerged and daring opposition using official and unofficial warnings, intimidations, detentions, administrative arrests up to 15 days, as well as discrediting and

misinforming campaigns in the Communist Press.

However, the authority of the UHU only increased as a result of such actions. The Union began to establish international contacts and gave rise to the Popular Movement of Ukraine which was established a year later and became even more radical, making it possible for national democratic forces at the elections to the Supreme Council [Verkhovna Rada] in March 1990, to gain full victory in

Kiev and in the western oblasts of Ukraine.

The principles of the UHU Declaration were reflected in the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine, adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic on 16 July 1990, which became the first official step towards an independent state.

In the years 1988-1990, contact among oppositional movements of the oppressed nations of the communist block started to

flourish. Meetings of their representatives took place in Lviv, Vilnius, Riga, Tallinn, Minsk and Yerevan.

The sensational victory of the Polish *Solidarity* over the Communist coalition during the 1989 June elections (261 seats in the Sejm and Senate against 206) significantly reinforced and strengthened the directed actions of the radical wing of the legendary Polish Solidarity, the Fighting Solidarity, particularly its Eastern

Division, which was geared towards establishing effective contacts with the oppositional forces of the USSR. Talks were held in Poland as well as in the Soviet Republics. The great activists of the Eastern Division, Piotr Hlebowicz and Jadwiga Chmielowska, were frequent guests in Kiev and the Crimea. Invitations were sent from Warsaw by the Citizen's Committee and the Chairman of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union Solidarity, Lech

Walesa. Fighting Solidarity provided the national democratic movements with printing presses, electronic means of communication, as well as printed materials issued in different languages. Illegal printing courses were held in Poland for the young oppositionists from the USSR, particularly for Ukrainian students.

In 1990, the Eastern Division of Fighting Solidarity and the representatives of the

national democratic movements in the oppressed nations of the USSR jointly established the Warsaw Coordination Centre "Warsaw-90". This created new possibilities for the national problems to be discussed and for joint actions against the totalitarian regime of Moscow to be devised and coordinated.

The Ukrainian Culturological Club and the Ukrainian Helsinki Union became a powerful impulse

helping society to overcome the psychological barrier of fear and make it more active in civic and social life. Many new democratic, civic and social organisations followed suit. Those included were the Green World [Zelenyj Swit], the Taras Shevchenko Language Society, the All-Ukrainian Association for Political Prisoners and Victims of Repression "Memorial", the Ukrainian Association of Students and the Association of

Independent Ukrainian Youth. The establishment of the All-Ukrainian Civic Association called the “Ukrainian Peoples’ Movement for Restructuring”, similar to the Polish Solidarity and the Latvian “Sajudisu”, played a particularly important role.

Once the communist leaders realised that the creation of a similar organisation in Ukraine was inevitable, they directed their efforts to ensure that

such a large social organisation would not fall under the leadership of “political extremists” from the Ukrainian Helsinki Union, who, after all, were former political prisoners. For this purpose, they gave their support to several Ukrainian writers in the organisation of the People’s Movement.

Although some of the prominent writers diligently carried out the instructions of the Party, the ideological domination among the

members of the UHU in the People's Movement was undisputed. It was thanks to the very influence of the UHU that at the second assembly of the People's Movement, the phrase "for restructuring" was removed and the objective introduced into the Programme was to obtain state sovereignty. This goal was indeed accomplished on 24 August 1991.

The independence of Ukraine was not obtained as a result of the coup d'état at

the Kremlin on 19th August 1991. On the contrary, Ukraine was the very reason for this revolution. Ukraine refused to sign the new Union Treaty in the Moscow of Gorbachev rule on 20th August. The secret meeting of the empire's leaders decided that the Treaty shall not be signed without Ukraine because it would lead to the legal ascertainment of Ukraine withdrawing from the USSR. Gorbachev consented to this desperate experiment

and waited for the outcome at his datcha in the Crimea. Indeed, it ended in the collapse of the Evil Empire.

# Governance in Times of Change

Dr Jan Carnogursky  
Slovakia

# Communism as a warning

*Dr Jan Carnogursky (born 1944) A Slovak politician, the former Prime Minister of Slovakia (1991-1992), co-founder and former chairman of the Christian Democratic Movement (1990-2000). A Lawyer who provided legal advice to opposition (Charter 77) and religious activists, that*

*is why in 1981 he was excluded from the Bar Association. From December 1989 to April 1990 he was the first Deputy Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia, then in 1991-1992 he was appointed the Prime Minister of the Slovak Government. Following the 1998 election he was the Minister for Justice of Slovakia until 2002.*

Twenty years have passed since the collapse of communism in Europe. Although in historical terms this is not really a long period of time, it suffices to

look at it in an analytical way. The final stage of the fall of communism seems relatively fast and easy. In Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and eventually the Soviet Union, communism has ended without any major resistance. This virtually victimless collapse of communism resulted later in speculations that it was a staged deal between the communist secret service and the dissidents.

One cannot forget that after the Second World War

when the communist legacy was introduced in Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia it took the shape of a civil war won by the communists. In Czechoslovakia and Hungary however, such civil war did not occur, instead, at a later stage it resulted in a heavier death toll. Bearing in mind what happened in 1989 one should question the reasons why after World War II the communists came to power in Central Europe with such speed. True, in some countries the

communists had to break armed resistance and did it for without a fail. Therefore, in this context, the severe trauma of World War II may not be forgotten. Before and after the war, the nations of Central Europe faced a direct threat of their obliteration. The defeat of Nazi Germany seemed to be almost a miracle and the nations geographically located between Russia and Germany grew convinced, that the threat of their national desolation should

never be allowed again. The Communists appeared to have the power to guarantee their national safety. Thus, it was not the social utopia of communism but its overall victory which resulted in the creation of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc that became the deciding force in the establishment of communism in our countries.

In the 1946 elections in Czechoslovakia, the Communist party won,

getting a majority of the votes from the people living in the borderline territory of today's Czech Republic, the area annexed by Germany after the Munich Conference. This was followed by a process, which at that point was already legal. Communism was an artificial social system, invented in the British Museum. Such a system was unable to meet the needs of people and establish conditions suitable for the

development of societies, nations and countries. Communist states started to lag far behind other countries. They failed to keep pace in economic, cultural and even military aspects. I live in Bratislava. In a straight line, it is approximately two kilometres from the city centre to the Austrian border. Due to its proximity, since the early 1960s we were able to watch Austrian television. Gradually, more and more Austrians started

visiting Bratislava. Austrian TV programs were very appealing to us, the cars driven by the Austrians were far better than our Skoda or Trabant, not to mention the fact that we did not have the possibility to travel abroad. Historical prerequisites leading to the fall of communism were developing. Neither the repression of the uprisings in Germany in 1953, in Poland and Hungary in 1956, in the Czech Republic in 1968, nor the attempted

suppression of the *Solidarity* movement in Poland in 1981 helped the communists. Naturally, such historical conditions finally enforced the change that followed. The election of the Polish Pope was a very important historical feature of the fall of communism. In his home country, the Pope broke the erroneous perception that communism was the dominant force. I came to Krakow during John Paul II's first pilgrimage to Poland in

1979. Enormous militia forces from various parts of the country were gathered in the city but a short walk down the streets was enough to convince me that the city belonged to the Pope and his followers. Later on in Bratislava I heard one communist functionary say that the Pope's visit to Poland ideologically regressed the way of thinking in the country for at least 10 years. He did not realise that it regressed much

further than just a decade. Ultimately the burden of the artificial social system was too heavy to bare even for the Soviet Union.

Apart from the purely power related causes of the collapse of communism, it is worth considering the remaining aspects of the issue. Communism claimed to be a scientific ideology, more so, to be the most scientific of all the ideologies in history. However, it was not able to adopt new scientific and

technical advances. Furthermore, it was unable to accept the BigBang theory as the beginning of the universe. Not in an unsimilar manner, communism initially rejected new fields of knowledge such as sociology and cybernetics. Poland was the first one to recognise sociology as a branch of the social sciences, due to this fact, in the 1960s the country outpaced Eastern bloc countries and became the

leader in this field. The explosion of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant tragically accelerated the process of marxist understanding, that the environment has to be treated with care and in an economical manner. Czechoslovak dissident writer Milan Šimečka then wrote that *the Communists would only begin to deal with the environmental protection issues when the very last fish died*. Once the satellite television was

invented, be it during international negotiations, the communist states strongly opposed free television transmissions across national borders in fear of losing their information monopoly. At that time, they were not aware that the era of computers, mobile technology and the internet was imminent. The artificial character of communism was also manifested in the fact that the technological development was perceived

as a threat to it.

I have already mentioned the division of Europe after World War II, to a large extent it was due to the pre and post war existential fear of the countries to lose their national identity. The West reacted exactly in the opposite way to the East. It did not become a closed military camp but on the contrary, the West kept on evolving and resulted in what is today known as the European Union. In fact, EU membership has become an

aim for many former communist states and it remains an inspiration for further democratic transformations to this day.

The strife of the 20th century became a great warning for the Central European nations. Those countries understood that fighting with each other would bring no gain but, on the contrary, they could lose a lot. Before World War II Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary were rivals. After the fall of communism they

called into being, first the Visegrad Triangle and later the Quadrangle, which, despite the surfacing problems, is a forum of cooperation. The collaboration between those countries already been born in the cooperation of the opponents of communism. Underground activists from those countries met together organising common actions against the political system and built foundations for the future cooperation of the

democratic governments of their states.

After the fall of communism, Czechoslovakia withheld the construction of a cellulose plant in northern Moravia near the Polish border because the smoke from its chimneys would destroy Polish forests. The Holy Father's visit to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary was always accompanied by the opening of borders of the neighbouring countries so

that the pilgrims could come to meet the Pope. A bridge between Slovakia and Hungary in Szturovo on the Danube River, blown up by the retreating Germans during the war, was reconstructed. Both countries filed the motion to the International Tribunal of Justice in The Hague to settle the dispute between them with regard to the construction of the Gabczikovo-Nagymaros dam. In different circumstances, the division

of Czechoslovakia would come as a shock for the entire region. The division of Czechoslovakia in 1993 took a smooth course. It did not appear as an earthquake in the mutual relations of the Czech Republic and Slovakia with other states and also in the relations between Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Currently, relations between the Czechs and Slovaks are better than at any time in the past during the existence of a common

state. In 2004, we jointly acceded to the European Union and today we are members of all the important international organisations. Our countries' soldiers jointly ensure peace and fight against terrorism across the world. At least in certain economic issues, the governments of our countries are able to act collectively on the international stage. Poland occupies a special place in the unification of the

Central European countries. Being the largest and most politically significant country in the region, it has the ability to associate the position of other countries and their gradually expanding range of issues. The unification of our countries' around the issues of international importance will only be successful when we are able to respect our differences, the differences shaped by history. Generalising, it can be concluded for historical

reasons, Poland has the best relations with the United States of America, Hungary with Germany and Slovakia with Russia. The Czech Republic still seems to seek its strategic orientation in foreign policy. Our focus on different points of foreign policy could become a means to extend a common foreign policy for Central Europe and not to curtail it.

The struggle against communism allowed our societies to get to know the

meaning of Christianity. Christian churches were the source of strength for society in the fight for the preservation of freedom against the communist dictatorship. We have to be courageous enough to repeat that cognition in the modern European institutions of which we are members. The Western part of our continent, which took a different path of development, does not put such emphasis on Christian values. It would be good if

our members in the European Parliament and representatives in other European and international institutions recalled our experience in this respect. It seems that the world discovers Christian values anew only when it finds itself in a crisis.

It seems that after the entire 20th century, Central Europe became a quieter part of our continent. More terrorist attacks threaten Western Europe and the influx of illegal immigrants,

particularly from Africa is also a greater issue there. If Central Europe will have time for a historical rest, we must make perfect use of it. Paradoxically, the experiences and warnings acquired during the time of communism will help us to make up for all delays, which originated during the communist era.

Vaclav Havel  
Czech Republic

# Revolution, Change, The Future

*Vaclav Havel (born 1936)  
President of Czechoslovakia  
1989-1992. President of the  
Czech Republic 1993-2003.  
During the communist era he  
was the founder and signatory  
of Charter 77 and author of  
numerous papers for the*

Czechoslovakian opposition. He was imprisoned numerous times. President Havel is also a recognised writer, his political dramas reflected the harsh reality of socialist society. Due to his unyielding political stance through the years of communist totality, Václav Havel became a recognised moral authority. Since leaving office of President of the Czech Republic in 2003, he has focused his activities on charity work and the respect of human rights worldwide, as well as on his literary work. President Havel was decorated with the

*highest Polish honour of the Order of the White Eagle.*

The 20th anniversary of the transformation in Central Europe, which brought an end to over 40 years of communist dictatorship in this part of the World, is also an opportunity to ponder once more over the meaning of moral behaviour and free action in politics. Today, we live in a democratic society, but many people – not only in the Czech Republic – still

believe that they are not true masters of their destiny. They have lost faith in the possibility of exerting much influence on political development, feeling that they are not influential as for the direction in which our civilisation is evolving. Especially at the time when the global economic crisis is surrounding us.

In the Czech Republic November 17 is considered to be the beginning of our Velvet Revolution. That day was not a bolt from the blue

though it may have seemed like it. Throughout the whole '70s and '80s, foreign journalists who visited me periodically used to tell me that the Charter 77 (dissident human rights movement) was an isolated grouplet of quixotic intellectuals, that the Czechoslovak society was apathetic and regime conservative, and that nothing could change without factory workers rising en masse against the regime. I kept telling them:

'Be careful, it's not that simple'. The reality under totalitarian regime is not always intelligible when viewed from a distance. In the absence of freedom of expression, very few people have insight into the lower - I would say, subconscious - levels of social life and shifts which occur. No one knows exactly which occurrences will prove to be significant, how they will mature, and what they will turn into. No one knows which inconspicuous

snowball has the capacity to set off an avalanche which, to the surprise of all observers, will radically change the political situation. November 17 confirmed my assessment of the situation. The disgust with our conservative communist regime and the desire for a change reached such a level that one event was enough to become a snowball which set off an avalanche. I cannot overstate the importance of the atmosphere of general

understanding, tolerance and self-sacrifice which accompanied those days. To a large degree, the atmosphere also reflected the idea of peaceful resistance as embodied by the Charter 77. We have been building upon those foundations ever since. They cemented the foundations of our new democracy - at that time Czechoslovak, today Czech and Slovak - certain values and ideals which still continue to exert their

influence. The first Czechoslovak President Tomas Garrigue Masaryk once wrote that states are sustained by those ideals by which they were established. And it may be true in these circumstances as well.

The dissident movement was not typically ideological. Of course, some of us tended more to the right, others to the left; some were close to one trend in opinion or politics, others to another.

Nevertheless, I think this was not the most important issue. What was essential was something different: the courage to confront evil together and in solidarity, the will to come to an agreement and to cooperate, the willingness to place the common and general interest over any personal or group interests, the feeling of common responsibility for the world and the willingness to face one's own deeds. The truth and certain elementary

values such as respect for human rights, civil society, the indivisibility of freedom, the rule of law were those notions which bound us together and made it worth to enter again and again into an unequal struggle with the powers.

The Czechoslovak revolution, which began with the beating of students in November but otherwise unfolded surprisingly peacefully and swiftly, has been called a gentle, kindly,

peaceful, and amiable revolution. Naturally, we are glad that there was so little bloodshed, but all the same we cannot forget those peoples who had to pay for their freedom with blood, and without whose sacrifice we could scarcely have awakened to freedom so quickly and, on the whole, so painlessly. I have already emphasized many times - and I am happy to repeat it here - that the Hungarians and the Poles bled for us. We are well aware of this

and will not forget it. In a certain sense, the Romanians paid for our freedom too, even though their revolution came after ours. We have no way of assessing whether the dark forces in our country might not have found a way to counterattack had they not been paralysed by the Romanian example which demonstrated that the population was capable of courageously defending itself.

In short, although no one

gave us any direct help in our revolution - which is a genuine historical novelty in our country - we know that without the long years of the Poles' struggle, without the efforts of other nations to liberate themselves, without the memories of the German uprising of 1953 and the Hungarian revolt of 1956, our freshly won freedom and the relative ease with which it was all carried off, would be hard to imagine. We also know, of course,

that the Polish *Solidarity* movement, led by Lech Walesa, was the first to find a peaceful and effective way to offer continuous resistance to the totalitarian system.

I also remember vividly how in one October evening of 1989 I stood in the Malá Strana Square in Prague and watched as buses full of the former German Democratic Republic citizens, who had spent weeks in the West German embassy, drove off to

freedom. The square was packed with Prague citizens who greeted with joyful applause each departing bus. Public expressions of that kind were still very dangerous at the time in Czechoslovakia. Even so, my fellow citizens were not afraid to show whose side they were on.

That event moved me in a very special way. There was more going on there than just an expression of human sympathy towards those who had chosen

freedom. Neither was it just an expression of delight that they had triumphed over the authorities. That spontaneous gathering was, in fact, greeting the dawn of a new historical era.

It was as though those people felt that the straitjacket of communism was finally beginning to burst at the seams and that we had all found ourselves on the threshold of far-reaching changes. It was as if they felt that the small victory of East German

refugees signalled the approach of a major victory of freedom in our part of Europe. There was something electrifying in the air, as though it suddenly became clear that this was not just an episode, after which everything would return to its old ways, but that it was an important moment in the great history of Europe, and thus of the world.

The premonition turned out to be true. Shortly afterwards, the regime in

our country collapsed as well. The communism collapsed, and along with it the whole former unnatural European order. Europe was faced with a great historical task: the task of discovering itself anew.

The atmosphere on the Malá Strana Square in October 1989 prefigured the enthusiastic atmosphere of solidarity, unity, and will to work disinterestedly for the common cause which, in Czechoslovakia and

elsewhere in the former Soviet Bloc, characterised that historic moment at the end of the last decade.

I have many friends in Poland who, as so-called „dissidents”, for years resisted the Communist regime. I myself was in a similar position for a long time. We used to meet, aware of the closeness, perhaps even identity, of our departure points and our aims. We felt that we were in the same boat and we tried through all

available means to help one another and to work together. We were hounded by the police, arrested, locked up, ridiculed. It is true that we laughed at our guardians and we delighted in giving them the slip, but if anyone had told us that some years later we would be members of parliament, ministers or presidents, we might have laughed even louder. And yet it happened.

The totalitarian systems of the Soviet Bloc collapsed and we, who had done no

more than saying aloud what we had thought and for which we had been imprisoned, had suddenly found ourselves in prominent political positions and, for the most part, we could laugh only when the television cameras were not trained upon us. Our revolutions have triumphed and the general euphoria surrounding them has long since dissipated. The time for hard, everyday work began. It was the time

when problems and their difficult solutions were laid bare, the time for the complex construction of the new world.

A great deal of issues changed in 1989. The most important change is that the era in which hopes were periodically aroused and dashed, the merrygo-round of eternal illusion and disillusion, the hellish dance of freedom and death, have definitively come to an end. For the first time it

appeared to be certain that democracy and freedom, justice and national autonomy were winning, and that the process taking us there was irreversible. This certainty derived chiefly from the fact that our efforts at self-liberation were not isolated being surrounded by a sea of misunderstanding, but rather flew together to form a single, common stream. The changes won by the Polish nation, the important changes in the Soviet

Union, the attempts to create democratic conditions in Hungary and the German Democratic Republic followed by our own peaceful revolution in Czechoslovakia, the heroic and costly victory of the Romanians over the autocracy of Dracula, and finally, the changes we were witnessing in Bulgaria - all of these flew into a single river which no dam could stop.

The idea of manufacturing a paradise

on earth did not triumph and it had been very difficult for it ever to do so. Such a notion could only feed the arrogant minds of those who were persuaded that they understood everything, that there were no longer any higher, mysterious institutions above them, and that they could give directives to history. The idea of a paradise on earth had failed and we knew that there would be many difficult periods ahead of us.

What triumphed was the realistic hope that together we could return to Europe as free, independent and democratic nations.

Our main role - and now I am no longer speaking about my Polish and Czechoslovak friends, but entire nations - was to put our minds to what could be done with this freshly won freedom.

First of all, we tried to take advantage of the fact that after many decades, the prospect of a genuine

friendship between the nations of Europe lied in front of us. Ancient conflicts, rivalries, and animosities were covered by the common experience of totalitarianism. The so-called „druzba” - that formal and stage-managed demonstration of friendship within the framework of the Warsaw Pact and Comecon - was vanishing along with the totalitarian systems. Along with them, the covert, quiet and malicious incitement of nationalistic

and selfish tendencies - carried out in the spirit of „divide and conquer” - was vanishing as well.

The years of similar destinies and struggles for similar ideals ought therefore to be assessed in the light of genuine friendship and mutual respect. It was precisely in the same spirit that dominated the years during which secret independent literature was smuggled in rucksacks across our common mountain ranges,

an activity that ultimately led to the autumn Festival of Independent Czechoslovak Culture in Wroclaw, which was such a marvellous success. Unintentionally, this became one of the prologues to our Czechoslovak revolution.

This authentic friendship – based on a proper understanding of the destiny imposed upon both our countries, on the common lessons it taught us, and above all on the

common ideals which united us - should ultimately inform and inspire our countries' policies in building new Europe and new World order. We should assist each other in the same spirit of solidarity with which, in darker days, you protested against our persecution as we did against yours.

During the communist era, most people believed that individual efforts to effect change did not make sense. Communist leaders

insisted that the system was the result of history's objective laws which could not be challenged and those who refused this logic were punished - just in case. Unfortunately, the way of thinking which supported Communist dictatorships has not disappeared entirely. Some politicians and pundits maintain that Communism collapsed merely under its own weight - again, owing to "objective laws" of history. Here also, individual

responsibility and actions have been belittled. Communism, as we are told, was only one of the dead ends of Western rationalism. Therefore, it was sufficient to wait passively for it to fail.

The very same people often believe in other manifestations of inevitability, such as various supposed laws of the market and other “invisible hands” which direct our lives. As there is not much space in such thinking for

an individual moral action, social critics are often ridiculed as naive moralists or elitists.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why 20 years after the fall of Communism, in the face of the global economic crisis, we again are witnessing political apathy. Democracy is increasingly seen as a mere ritual. In general, it seems that our societies are experiencing a certain crisis of the democratic ethos and active citizenship.

It is possible that what we are witnessing is a mere change of paradigm, caused by new technologies and economic challenges, therefore we have nothing to worry about. But perhaps the problem is deeper. Global corporations, media cartels, and powerful bureaucracies are transforming political parties into organisations whose main task is no longer public service, but the protection of specific clientele and interests.

Politics is becoming a battleground for lobbyists; media trivialise serious problems; democracy often looks like a virtual game for consumers, rather than a serious business for serious citizens.

We are well aware today that when dreaming about a democratic future, we-dissidents certainly had some utopian illusions. However, we were not mistaken when we argued that Communism was not a mere dead end of Western

rationalism.

Bureaucratisation, anonymous manipulation, and emphasis on mass conformism were brought to “perfection” in the Communist system. Yet, some of the very same threats are still with us today. We were already certain then that if democracy is emptied of values and reduced to a competition of political parties which have “guaranteed” solutions to everything, it can be quite

undemocratic. This is why we put so much emphasis on the moral dimension of politics and a vibrant civil society as counterweights to political parties and state institutions.

We also dreamed about a more just international order. The end of the bipolar world provided a great opportunity to make the international order more humane. Instead, we have witnessed a process of economic globalisation which has escaped political

control and, as such, has been causing economic havoc as well as ecological devastation in many parts of the world.

The fall of Communism was an opportunity to create more effective global political institutions based on democratic principles. Such institutions that could stop what appears to be, in its current form, the self-destructive tendency of our industrial world. If we do not want to be overrun by anonymous forces, the

principles of freedom, equality and solidarity must start working globally.

But, above all, it is necessary - just as it was during the Communist era - not to lose faith in the meaning of alternative centres of thought and civic action. Let's not allow ourselves to be manipulated into believing that attempts to change the "established" order and "objective" laws do not make sense. Let's try to build a global civil society, and let's insist that

politics is not just a technology of power but needs to have a moral dimension.

We, the Europeans, have one specific task. Industrial civilisation which now spans the whole world, originated in Europe. All of its miracles, as well as its terrifying contradictions, can be explained as consequences of an ethos that is initially European. Therefore, united Europe should set an example for the rest of the world regarding the way to

face various dangers and horrors which are engulfing us today.

The starting point of our struggle against the totalitarian rule imposed upon us by the Stalinist Soviet Union after the Second World War was the struggle for human rights. We have to ask ourselves if we are capable, even today, of declaring clearly and jointly that respect for human rights in the widest sense of the word is the

common starting point of our policies?

Then we can approach the richer nations of Western Europe not as poor failures or helpless, recently amnestied prisoners, but as countries which can make a genuine contribution. What we have to offer are spiritual and moral impulses, courageous peace initiatives, under-exploited creative potential, and the special ethos created by our relatively freshly won freedom. We can offer the

inspiration to consider swift and daring solutions.

The general ideal is perhaps clear to all of us. We wish to build Europe which is an amicable community of independent nations and democratic states, Europe which is stabilized, not divided into blocs and pacts, Europe which does not need to be defended by superpowers because it is capable of defending itself and of building its own security system.

So far, 20 years after the collapse of communism and 5 years after the great accession of the 10 new countries, Europe on the face of it, appeared united. Having scratched the surface though, we can reveal those still existing deep divisions which, with the economic crisis, are getting even stronger. There are still walls more dangerous than those which divided Europe. There are walls which divide individual people from one

another and there are walls which divide our own souls. It is these walls above all that I would like to urge against and I will pursue the struggle.

Nowadays, the most dangerous enemies of the good cause are no longer the dark forces of totalitarianism, with its hostile and plotting mafias, but our own bad qualities. My presidential programme was to bring into politics a sense of culture, of moral responsibility, of humanity,

of humility and respect for the fact that there is something higher above us, that our behaviour is not lost in the black hole of time but is written down and evaluated somewhere, that we have neither the right nor the reason to think that we understand everything and have license to do anything we wish. Since then many years have passed but aiming at the above goals remains my deepest concern and my strongest message to

present leaders.

I think that the Poles, with their strong religiousness which was embodied in the marvellous personality of the Pope you had given to the world, may have a special understanding of this programme for the future.

The coexistence of our neighbouring countries in the heart of Europe has always had special and frequently fateful significance for European politics. In 1989 we used

a historical chance to make the ancient dream of Europe come true: Europe as a continent of peace and cooperation; Europe founded on respect for human rights and rejection of alienating ideologies, nationalism, intolerance and a sense of superiority; Europe unified in its differences. It was an aspect of our common sense of responsibility for Europe that we should step by step help make that dream come true.

One can imagine, for instance, a foreign policy initiative which demonstrably does not merely pursue the selfish interests of a country but which instead displays a feeling of common responsibility for the fate of all of the human society, its freedom, its plurality and its life in peace. A domestic policy aimed at integration, stabilisation, and the creation of a space in which mutual understanding is possible might display the

same qualities. Such economic, ecological, social and even educational and cultural policies can be imagined in which policy-makers are obviously concerned more about general and lasting interests than about particular, momentary interests. You could tell they were concerned more about the multi-dimensionality of social life than about a single dimension of it, that they were concerned more about creating human

and humanly bearable conditions than about quick political gain or the implementation of a particular ideological proposition. You would know that the centre of their interest is the unique human being, not just some political theory.

It is possible to imagine thousands of tiny, inconspicuous, everyday decisions the common denominator of which is precisely the spirit and ethos of politics which is

aware of a global threat to the human race and which does not support general consumer resignation but rather seeks to awaken a deeper interest in the state of the world and rally the will to confront the threats hanging over it. Above all, it is possible to imagine that through the agency of thousands of properly chosen, carefully combined, and well-timed public actions, the positive local climate in a country that is a climate of

solidarity, creativity,  
cooperation, tolerance and  
deepening civic  
responsibility is slowly,  
inconspicuously, but  
steadily strengthened.

What is at issue here is  
not a set of dogmas,  
postulates and ideological  
theses but a political style,  
a political atmosphere, the  
inner spirit of politics. The  
point is that political  
activity ought to have  
human contours. Human  
interests can never be  
forced into a single,

unambiguous demand. All forms of general knowledge are important, of course, but only when their application is accompanied by apparently banal and mysterious factors such as compassion, a sense of peace, taste, appropriateness, solicitude, understanding, solidarity.

I will repeat once again that all these are easy to say but difficult to do. In order to follow this path one demands infinite tenacity, infinite patience, much

ingenuity, iron nerves, great dedication, and last but not least, great courage. I am in no way claiming that I know how to walk this path myself. Nevertheless, I feel that in today's dramatic, confused and generally endangered world, that is precisely the path we must take. And I feel that the specific dissident experience can, if carefully thought through and evaluated, provide the kind of politics with a solid foundation, with inspiration,

with something to measure up to. Naturally, I do not know whether we will succeed. Only time can tell.

Based on the speeches and articles by Vaclav Havel:

25.01.1990 The Polish Sejm and Senate, Warsaw

21.12.1992 Wroclaw University, Wroclaw

16.11.2004 Project Syndicate - „What Communism Still Teaches Us”, Fall of the Communism

Lord Douglas Hurd of Westwell  
United Kingdom

**Poland 1989-  
2009**

*Lord Douglas R Hurd of Westwell CH CBE (born 1930) British politician, diplomat and novelist. He pursued a career in the Diplomatic Service before turning to politics. Entering the House of Commons in 1974, he held a succession of posts in Margaret Thatcher's*

*government before serving in the Cabinet as Secretary for Northern Ireland (1984-85), Home Secretary (1985-89) and Foreign Secretary (1989-95). He continued his role as Foreign Secretary under John Major and was commended for his handling of Britain's stance in the Persian Gulf War. Viewed as one of the Conservative Party's senior elder statesmen, he is a patron of the Tory Reform Group and remains an active figure in public life.*

This year 2009 is a year of anniversaries, happy and at the same time painful as we

remember past sufferings, but above all the success of Poland and other countries of Eastern Europe in freeing themselves from Communist rule.

Between Poland and the British the memories are particularly poignant. I am old enough to remember the outbreak of the Second World War, when Britain honoured her pledge to go to war when Hitler invaded Poland, but was completely unable to give the Poles any help in resisting that

invasion. My generation has a keen memory of the help which Polish soldiers, sailors and airmen gave us in the years which followed. On the 50th anniversary of "D-Day" in June 1994 I stood beside President Walesa on the Queen's Royal Yacht Britannia as we passed a Polish destroyer drawn up with other allied vessels in the English Channel. The President dropped a red and white wreath into the sea to honour the Polish dead. That was a moment which

brought tears to many eyes, including my own. I well remember my first visit to Gdansk with President Walesa long before he became President, during the critical days of *Solidarity*. For me the most emotional monument in Europe is that of the little Polish messenger boy, who commemorates the Warsaw Rising on the ancient walls of that city. More practically I have a happy recollection of working closely with my Polish colleague in the

negotiations on German unification which finally ratified the western boundary of Poland.

So much for memories, which rightly play a part in shaping our ideas and convictions today. Now we see a brighter picture. Poland is a strong and effective partner of Britain and Western Europe both in the European Union and in NATO. Both organisations, and indeed the whole global system of international co-operation,

face massive tests in the present unruly even chaotic world. On the economic front some members of the European Union in Eastern Europe face particular strains as a result of the global upheaval and are, in my view, entitled to full support from the rest of the European Union, not simply from the Euro zone members but from partners like Britain and Sweden who remain outside the single currency.

On the diplomatic front

we Europeans suffer from our own failure to work out a cool long term united European policy towards Russia. Individual leaders of major western countries, including Britain, France, Germany and Italy, have in the past foolishly competed for the personal favours of President Putin to gain somewhat fictitious national advantages. In fact the interest of all of us lies in a concerted European policy, quiet but firm, in dealing with Russian

restlessness.

This is not a matter of ideology, but a calculation of our practical need. It remains true whether or not the Lisbon Treaty is ratified with the changes of diplomatic machinery which it includes.

Personally I am not in favour of the early entry of Georgia or the Ukraine into NATO. NATO is not a tennis club to which we admit our friends as a matter of course as soon as they express a wish to join. The

members of NATO should take seriously their obligations under Article 5 of the Treaty to come to each others defence, an undertaking which requires serious forethought and planning. This is a commitment which must contain greater substance than earlier arrangements, for example the guarantee which Britain gave Poland in 1939. But the independence of Ukraine and Georgia is of crucial importance to all of us, and

Russia cannot expect a normal working friendship with the rest of Europe were she to act in ways which undermine that independence. A similar solidarity is required on the security of energy supplies to Western Europe. Here again individual Western European countries have acted without consideration for each other and this short sightedness has postponed achievement of a valid equality in negotiating with the Russian Government

and the different organisations of the Russian state.

In all these matters the role of Poland is crucial. I look forward to joining in the conference organised by the European Solidarity Centre, partly because it is right to commemorate the sufferings and the achievements of the past and partly because I am sure that the conference will give us an opportunity to explore these challenges of the present and the future.

George H.W. Bush  
USA

# Message

*George Herbert Walker Bush (born 1924) The 41st President of the United States from 1989 to 1993. A former World War II pilot, Republican congressman, U.N. ambassador and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency before serving as Vice President under Ronald Reagan. President Bush devoted much of his time to foreign affairs, his leadership*

*has assisted in ushering the Cold War to an end. From the 9-11 July 1989, he came to Poland on a visit to lend support for the changes in Eastern Europe. After the fall of communism in the Eastern bloc, he forged meaningful relationships with Gorbachev and Eduard Shevardnadze which resulted in a successfully redefined relationship with the Soviet Union during the post-Cold War! environment.*

Twenty years ago I stood in Gdańsk by the Monument of the Three Crosses, appealing to thousands of

Polish shipyard workers to follow their dream for a better life for themselves and their children. Through their determination, that dream is now reality. I congratulate you, people of Poland as individuals and as a nation. Your triumph has surpassed all expectations.

Poland's irrepressible sense of national pride, solidarity and tireless determination to engage in the fight for human rights and freedom, brought to an

end the utopian legacy of prosecution and torment. *Solidarność*, the Round Table talks and in June 1989, the first partly-free elections in four decades, set an undeniable precedent to downfall of the communist regime in your country. In fact, that astonishing victory heralded the end of totalitarian rule across Central and Eastern Europe, bringing an end to the cold war.

Today Poland and other Eastern European countries

again enjoy their undeniable right to freedom and justice. These are the fundamental democratic values we all avow. Nevertheless, the events that led to the political pluralism and economic rebirth of Central and Eastern Europe, shall never be forgotten. We must keep on learning from the lessons of the past and do our utmost to ensure the barriers, which once divided the East from the West, remain dismantled forever.

(verbatim)

# European Solidarity Centre

The European Solidarity Centre is a multifunctional institution combining scientific, cultural and educational activity with a modern museum and archive, documenting freedom movements in the modern history of Poland

and Europe.

The Letter of Intent to create ESC was signed by the heads of states and governments who gathered in Gdansk in 2005, on the 25th anniversary of the establishment of Solidarność.

The Centre was established in Gdańsk on 8th of November 2007 by the Minister of Culture, the Marshall of the Pomeranian Voievodship, the President of Gdańsk, the President of the Foundation - European

Solidarity Centre and the Chairman of the NSZZ Solidarność Trade Union.

The main purpose of the European Solidarity Centre is to preserve heritage and retain a fond memory of Solidarność in order to hand it down to future generations, while stressing its relevance and universal value.

The first task, retrospective in its nature, will be realised by a modern, interactive museum demonstrating

how the events in the Gdańsk Shipyard initiated the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Centre will be also accommodating a multimedia archive and library, and collecting all dispersed and neglected souvenirs of Solidarność. Together with exhibitions – permanent as well as mobile – ESC would act to strengthen awareness of modern history, which is pivotal in building a European identity.

The second goal of ESC activity, the prospective one, is to hand down the heritage, ideas and notion of solidarity onto future generations. We would like to confirm that solidarity - understood as the concern about the well being and common interest, unity with the respect for diversity - is still very relevant in the modern society and worthy of all efforts of enhancement. Therefore, one of the most important areas of activity in this

respect is education. ESC is organising workshops, seminars, lectures and debates for young people from all over Europe, for their teachers and local leaders.

We are also a cultural institution creating our own events and projects, inspiring fresh and new artistic movements, organising concerts and festivals.

Finally, we are active in historical research and social sciences. We aim to

understand and explain the notion of freedom, justice and solidarity in order to become a centre of cooperation and integration sharing the heritage of solidarity and its advocacy for justice, democracy and human rights with those who are deprived of it.

# Solidarity and the Fall of Communism

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