

2010

H-Diplo

H-Diplo Article Roundtable Review

www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables

Volume XI, No. 14 (2010)

5 February 2010

Roundtable Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse

Roundtable Web/Production Editor: George Fujii

Guest Editors: Amir Weiner, Stanford University, and John Connelly, University of California, Berkeley

Journal of Contemporary European History, Volume 18, Special Issue Number 3 (August 2009). Revisiting 1989: Causes, Course, and Consequences.

Charles S. Maier. "What Have We Learned since 1989?" 253-269. DOI: 10.1017/S0960777309005037. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0960777309005037>

Vladimir Tismaneanu. "The Revolutions of 1989: Causes, Meanings, Consequences." 271-288. DOI: 10.1017/S0960777309005049. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0960777309005049>

Jeffrey Kopstein. "1989 as a Lens for Communist Past and Post-communist Future." 289-302. DOI: 10.1017/S0960777309005050. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0960777309005050>

Marci Shore. "(The End of) Communism as a Generational History: Some Thoughts on Czechoslovakia and Poland." 303-329. DOI: 10.1017/S0960777309005062. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0960777309005062>

Mark R Beissinger. "Nationalism and the Collapse of Soviet Communism." 331-347. DOI: 10.1017/S0960777309005074. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0960777309005074>

Silvio Pons. "Western Communists, Mikhail Gorbachev and the 1989 Revolutions." 349-362. DOI: 10.1017/S0960777309005086. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0960777309005086>

Andrew A. Michta. "NATO Enlargement post-1989: Successful Adaptation or Decline?" 363-376. DOI: 10.1017/S0960777309005098. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0960777309005098>

Stable URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XI-14.pdf>

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[This introduction was first published in “Revisiting 1989: Causes, Course and Consequences,” *Journal of Contemporary European History* 18:3 (August 2009). It is reprinted with permission —ed.]

The question today is the same as that of twenty years ago: what do we call the events that transformed eastern Europe in 1989? Our improved perspective has not necessarily generated better answers. The most popular term is ‘revolution’, but many observers still hesitate to apply it to largely non-violent change. Can there be a ‘liberal revolution’? Timothy Garton-Ash’s evocative neologism ‘refolution’ (meaning ‘revolution’ and ‘reform’) captures well the ambivalence many feel about describing a gradual transition to democracy as ‘revolutionary’. The processes of civil society formation he observed in the 1980s by no means concluded with 1989; in southeastern Europe in particular the transition to democracy has not been revolutionary but slow and painful. Perhaps ‘democracy’ is not even the right word.

Yet even in places where democracy seems to have taken firm root we witness concerns about keeping a noxious past from filtering into the present. Take for example the lustration of the state apparatus, or the opening of archives for a full investigation of communism. Everywhere we see efforts that frustrate reckoning. Only in the last several years has Poland inaugurated lustration: fifteen years after Czechoslovakia. Yet Czech archival access has been anything but straightforward, especially for non-Czechs. Until last year, Romanian archives for the communist period were accessible only in exceptional cases. Access to the relevant former Soviet archives on the end of the communist era is uneven at best. And so on.

There is also the question of what region we are talking about. If by eastern Europe we mean everything east of Germany and Austria – as is connoted in the German Osteuropa – then we must wonder about Russia. The changes there have been fantastic, though leading in directions diverging from those taken by the newest members of NATO. Yet why, as Mark Beissinger asks, do we speak of east European and not Russian revolutions?

The original meaning of the word revolution as cycle suggests deeper temporal dimensions; if one looks far enough into the past, one sees what Charles Maier, in his contribution to this issue, calls a major chapter in a two-century struggle unleashed by economic modernisation and the ideas of the Enlightenment. If this is the case, then the struggle is between two visions of the world. One suggests that fulfilment arises from individual or even familial gain, from the restless effort to win more, understand more and escape from the gravitational weight of tradition and community. Liberty and individual fulfilment are prized, equality and collective achievement seem less important, except perhaps in the realm of games, which always acts as a psychological counterweight to the discipline required by real life. But, Maier asks, is this tension ever resolved, was 1989 an end?

At all times a dimension of moral commitment attaches to events we call 'revolutions,' and here perhaps the term is useful in showing how the 'revolutions' have failed to live up to revolutionary hopes. Much like the French Revolution two hundred years earlier, whose limited scope fed the desire for a more complete one next time around, and ironically these came about in eastern Europe in 1917 and 1947, the revolutions of 1989 were envisioned as both a total reversal of the existing order and a new beginning. Indeed, when used in 1989 the word suggested open-ended change, unlocking potentials of human freedom that people had only dreamed of. In the meantime dreams have encountered reality, and as James Krapfl of McGill University noted in the meeting at Stanford University where these papers were first presented, practically no one in the Czech or Slovak republics currently talks unreservedly about revolution. In fact the word can only evoke cynicism or disappointment, not analytical description. There were of course revolutionaries, but they lost control over events. In his article Jeffrey Kopstein tells us that 1989 'was a magic moment, but part of what made it so magic is that sovereignty was regained and then, almost instantaneously, handed over to the West'. Those who had aspired for half a century to regain sovereignty often gave it up almost overnight to faceless bureaucrats in Brussels (see the Baltic Referendums).

Vladimir Tismaneanu urges caution to scholars tempted to embrace uniformly gloomy assessments. It is true that the region was not simply engulfed by an irrepressible wave of democratisation, as some observers had forecast, and authoritarian strains have not been banished entirely from political life. Still, 'The importance of these revolutions cannot therefore be overestimated: they represent the triumph of civic dignity and political morality over ideological monism, bureaucratic cynicism and police dictatorship.'

The authors in this special issue do not resolve or even spend much time on terminology, but, each in their own way, approach the miracle year of 1989 from a different angle. The essays seek to unlock fresh perspectives on the processes of change in general, and focus on special subjects that have failed to attract much scholarly attention, some of them on less tangible levels. If 1989 did not always involve sudden spectacular rupture, it was a culmination (and continuation) of more subtle changes, especially in the area of mentality and perception. Much more took place than simply the replacement of one set of regimes by another; one way of interpreting the world replaced another, even in the West.

For scholars of communist eastern Europe, it became not only possible but necessary to use the word 'totalitarian' again, even though, as Charles Maier shows, there was no agreement on precisely how it might be employed. What is clear is that with few exceptions, historians and social scientists not only failed to 'predict' 1989, they also found that they had discarded vocabulary to make sense of it twenty years previously.

Perhaps the last twenty years have been about making sense not of 1989 but of the preceding period. Vaclav Havel called it 'late totalitarian', and social historians in Germany have applied the words 'welfare dictatorship', but Charles Maier prefers the term 'late socialism'. New descriptive devices raise new questions. How does one get from a dictatorship of terror to one of social secularity? In short, the collapse of these regimes,

whatever words one used to describe them, made it possible to gaze on them through lenses not obscured by concerns of the present, at least not totally. But even with a new lens what one sees depends on what one studies. As Charles Maier writes, 'Describe the communist state, and the historian conjures up an image of illiberal surveillance and the manipulation of fear and privilege. Describe the communist society, and one can end up with a trivialisation of coercive mechanisms.'

Much also depends on which precise states one studies. Why did the denouements of major actors differ so markedly in 1989? Radically improved archival access permits historians to look for answers in layers of social history that seemed buried, with the topmost layer of state socialism becoming a settled geological stratum rather than a place of active accretion. Maier suggests reasons for varying patterns: Czechs and Germans, heirs of 'ancient-regime *Polizey*

...developed patterns of risk-avoidance and ample denunciation – in contrast to the Polish pattern of defiance and suppression, or even the Hungarian experience of connivance with the state and party in evasive behaviour'. Vladimir Tismaneanu lists more intermediate conditions:

'the strength or the weakness of the pre-1989 intra-party reformist trends as well as oppositional traditions ...explain the striking distinctions between these events in different countries'. And Jeffrey Kopstein urges us to consider a divide between places with developed bureaucracies and literacy (East Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic) vs. historically less literate and more patrimonial (Bulgaria).

Tensions in argument are unavoidable when making fresh sense of the recent past, and are evident in Vladimir Tismaneanu's contribution: 'The Leninist systems were terminally sick, and the disease affected first and foremost their capacity for self-regeneration' and 'what is now generally taken for granted, the end of Sovietism, was only a possibility, and not even a very likely one, at the beginning of 1989'. Both statements are true, and remind us of the need to make historical judgements while not overdetermining the past. The view from the West appears more definite: 'reform communism' was always an oxymoron, betraying the uncomfortable truism that any idea that requires a human face has an ugly face to cover. Does anyone speak of 'liberalism with a human face?' By 1989 this epitome of 1968 had already become a relic of an irrelevant and disappointing past, and whether they favoured Gorbachev

(Italy) or his enemies in the Soviet leadership (France), Western communist parties went the same way in 1989 as did state socialism: into oblivion.

Marci Shore suggests a new direction for the study of the 1989 revolutions: as a matter of a specific generation. Looking back over the twentieth century in Poland and the Czech lands, she identifies each historical moment as the moment of a different group of people. Questions of 'causation' fade into the background, and it becomes more important to understand each of the styles adopted by the groups who inhabited each of socialism's successive stages. The issue is not so much to explain who killed Marxism as a viable programme for opposition in 1968, but to comprehend how dissidents developed their intellectual personalities when Marxism no longer existed as a framework supporting thought and identity. This focus on context helps us see how intellectuals responded to

changes in the atmosphere. For example, the fascination with Habsburg central Europe of the 1980s was conceivable only in this post-Marxist environment. And after 1989 the issue was not so much socialisation into ideology or anti-ideology; rather the 'young and unencumbered' learned or did not learn to profit from new circumstances, above all through education. Seen in this way the year 1989 appears as something that happened and not something that was made. Shore cites the Czech dissident Jan Urban: 'It's not that we won – it's that they collapsed. And we just had to step in, because there was no one else around.' It was all improvisation, 'just total chaos, but great fun'. Thus throughout the twentieth century new worlds have descended on eastern Europe at regular intervals, with the cast of the previous world swept away by their children.

Shore offers an interesting twist on the historicism of Brezhnev and his infamous doctrine: it was not so much that no socialist society could 'revert' to capitalism, but rather, as Pons suggests, it could not go back to the moment of 'socialism with a human face'. If there is an issue for historians to wonder about, it is not so much who 'caused' the revolution, but how the debates about 'who caused the revolution' have been framed: who promotes one version (the dissidents) or another (the second tier)? Shore interjects her own finding: what really matters is who was old enough to 'be held responsible for choices they made under the communist regime'.

Debates over the causes and course of the 1989 revolutions often evolve around the triad of structures–agency–spark. While many agree on the structural developments that brought about the rupture (globalized economies, increasing exposure to political, social and economic alternatives) and the sparks (the Hungarian decision to open its borders, the Leipzig demonstrations, Solidarity's increasing assertiveness, the Soviet refusal to use force despite having the means and willing organisations), the agencies of revolution are still debated: how much weight should be assigned to the human agency of civil society (if one can actually identify such an entity elsewhere than Poland), whether of dissidents (practically immaterial during and after the Soviet dissolution) or quasi-liberal communist apparatchiks, in pushing forward the revolutionary cycle.

Mark Beissinger pursues the analysis of the causes of the 1989 revolutions in both the Soviet Union and its satellites by looking at the way in which nationalisms played out in the above-mentioned triad. In the rapid succession of events, the roles of structure and agency were ultimately blurred. Herein lay also one of the greatest ironies of the 1989 cataclysm: building on the structures of Soviet ethnofederalism and the Warsaw Pact, nationalism, which was often dismissed as the johnny-come-lately of the socialist states, has turned almost overnight against its creators and into the most potent mobilizational politics and a core socio-political arena throughout the entire Soviet and socialist spheres. To add insult to injury, the new nationalist movements informed and interacted with each other while chipping away at the authority of the communist regimes. The failure to develop nationalism as a legitimising tool for communist regimes in east-central Europe and the deep divisions within the Russian national camp – in sharp contrast to communist regimes in Latin America and Asia – signalled the end of the era of forced internationalism in the Soviet European hemisphere. Not least, nationalism continues to define the geopolitics of the region at present.

For the Soviet Union, 1989 would come in 1991. Needless to say, and without dismissing the role and weight of the local actors on the ground, Moscow was central to the entire episode by what it did and did not do at the time. Ever so insistent on its supremacy in guiding the ideological and political courses within the communist camp – as it repeatedly demonstrated in 1956 and 1968 and in the ensuing Brezhnev doctrine – the Kremlin’s new advocacy of peaceful evolution and dissolution was accompanied by public, voluntary surrender of its infallibility, as Silvio Pons shows. Professing his continued advocacy of socialism, Gorbachev admitted that the Soviet model of socialism bred totalitarianism, repression and aggression. And one could hardly imagine any of Gorbachev’s predecessors telling foreign communist leaders that ‘we, and you, are travelling down similar roads, albeit with the complete autonomy and responsibility of each’, as he conveyed to the leader of the Italian Communist Party in November 1990. And so, when the Pope of the Communist Church renounced his formative doctrine, annulled his own infallibility and consented to the diverging paths of the disciples, one could hardly be surprised to hear his closest advisors stating that the communist international movement was no more.

Ironically, at least for NATO, the success of the 1989 peaceful revolutions also spelled an identity crisis at best and existential threat at worst. Following cautious first steps, argues Andrew Michta, the Alliance opted for eastward enlargement and fixation on inside norm-setting and systemic transformation at the expense of outward strategic vision and military capability. Twenty years after scoring one of the most impressive victories in history – watching its nemesis collapsing with hardly a bullet fired and taking over its prized territorial possessions – the crisis of the Alliance reflects the ambiguity of the 1989 legacy: political and economic freedoms came along with the loss of clarity as their price tag. Notably, however, the liberal democratic fogginess has not bred a viable challenge in the course of the past two decades. One can safely assume that for most post-1989 polities, occasional Ostalgie is an affordable price for what they gained during and after that momentous year.

The conference at which these essays were first gathered occurred at Stanford University in spring 2008.

Participants:

Amir Weiner received his Ph.D. from Columbia University and is an Associate Professor of Soviet History at Stanford University. Weiner’s research concerns Soviet history with an emphasis on the interaction between totalitarian politics, ideology, nationality, and society. His first book, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 2000), analyzed the role and impact of the cataclysm of the Second World War on Soviet society and politics. His current project, *Wild West, Window to the West* engages the territories between the Baltic and Black Seas that were annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939-40, from the initial occupation to present. Weiner has published a number of articles in the *Journal of Modern History*, the *Journal of*

Contemporary European History, the *Slavic Review*, the *Russian Review*, and *Diplomatic History*.

John Connelly earned his Ph.D. from Harvard University and is an Associate Professor at the University of California at Berkeley. His research and teaching focuses on Modern East and Central European political and social history. Some of his publications include *Universitäten in den Diktaturen des 20. Jahrhunderts: Zwischen Autonomie und Anpassung* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002), co-edited with Michael Grüttner *Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945-1956* (University of North Carolina Press, 2000). He has published a number of essays and articles in *Central European History*, the *Journal of Modern European History*, and German and East European journals. Connelly is finishing a book on the race question and Anti-Antisemitism in the Catholic Church.

Konrad H. Jarausch is the Lurcy Professor of European Civilization at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Senior Fellow of the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung in Potsdam. He has written or edited more than three dozen books in modern German history including *The Rush to German Unity* (New York, 1994); *After Unity: Reconfiguring German Identities, 1990-1995* (Oxford, 1997), edited; and *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* (New York, 2006). Starting with Hitler's seizure of power and the First World War, his research interests have moved via the social history of German students and professions to German unification in 1989/90, and to historiography under the Communist GDR, the nature of the East German dictatorship, as well as the debate about historians and the Third Reich. More recently, he has been concerned with the problem of interpreting 20th-century German history in general, the learning processes after 1945, the complicity of German academics with genocide in World War Two and the post-communist transformation of Humboldt University in Berlin. At the same time he has been involved in discussions about quantitative methods in history, problems of postmodernism, and questions of European memory culture. Currently he working on German responses to the challenge of globalization. He has co-founded the UNC Center for European Studies, co-directed a new research institute on contemporary history in Potsdam, Germany, but has now returned to full-time teaching in Chapel Hill.

Günter Bischof studied English, American Studies and History at the Universities of Innsbruck, Vienna and New Orleans and holds a PhD from Harvard University. He is the Marshall Plan Professor and the Director of CenterAustria at the University of New Orleans and serves as a Presidential Counselor to the CEO of the National World War II Museum in New Orleans. He has served as a consultant to the Department of State in the briefing of American ambassadors to Austria. He has been a guest professor at the Universities of Munich, Innsbruck, Salzburg, Vienna and the University of Economics and Business Administration in Vienna, as well as the Post-Katrina Visiting Professor at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. He is the co-editor of many books, including the series *Contemporary Austrian Studies* – volume XVIII on *The Schlüssel Era in Austria* to appear this fall. He is also the co-editor of volumes on the Prague Spring and *Images of the Marshall Plan* to be published later this year. He is currently working on projects on the Vienna Summit of 1961 and a prosopography of Austrian immigrants to the United States since

1918 (from Lazarsfeld and Schumpeter to Schwarzenegger). With his UNO colleague Allan Millett, he is planning a tribute to the late Stephen E. Ambrose during the opening of a new wing of the National World War II Museum in New Orleans in early November.

Christian Hacke Professor(ret.) for Polit.Sc./International relations who taught from 1980 until 2000 at the University of the Armed Forces in Hamburg and from 2000 until 2008 at Bonn University. He has published various books on German and American Foreign policy.

Donal O'Sullivan, wrote his dissertation on "Fear and Fascination- British and German Views of Soviet Russia, 1921-1933" (University of Bonn, Germany) and his Habilitation (second dissertation) on Stalin's foreign policy ("Stalins Cordon Sanitaire", University of Eichstaett, Germany). His recent work is *Dealing with the Devil: Anglo-Soviet Intelligence Cooperation During the Second World War* (Peter Lang, New York) which will be published shortly. His current research interests include a study of historical document forgeries and the religious revival in post-Soviet Ukraine.

Georg Schild is professor of American History at the University of Tübingen, Germany. He received his M.A. from the Free University in Berlin, his Ph.D. from the University of Maryland at College Park in 1993, and his Habilitation from the University of Bonn. His most recent publication is "Abraham Lincoln: Eine politische Biographie" (Paderborn: Schoeningh, 2009).

The end of the Cold War and the political transformations in Central and Eastern Europe and their influence on world history, indeed, deserve the attention of an entire issue of a premier academic journal such as *Contemporary European History*. In fact, it would take more than one issue of *CEH* to give adequate treatment to the meaning of 1989, the nature of its revolutions, and its legacies and specific historical memories in their full historical complexity. The editors of and contributors to this issue have admirably succeeded in offering us sophisticated analyses and new ways to view the revolutions of 1989 and their transitory power. They deserve our gratitude in pushing our heuristic comprehension of these signal events and changes into deeper unknown terrain. These essays profoundly deal with the issues that Stephen Kotkin has posed in his brilliant and succinct *Armageddon Averted*: “the greatest surprise of the Soviet collapse was not that it happened – though that was shocking enough – but the absence of an all-consuming conflagration.”¹

Some of these essays lament the fact that historians and social scientists were insufficiently keen in anticipating the sudden collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989/91. Social scientists who had been working as analysts in the CIA, of course, have faced that charge as well and more justly so. The Agency’s analysts were regularly called upon to predict the future during the Cold War, yet habitually failed (from the North Korean attack in 1950 to the revolutions of 1989). Why should social scientists in academia fare better in divining the future of social systems, no matter how defunct and noisome they appear. Every generation seems to be facing a “sick man of Europe.” Rarely are the doctors’ diagnoses of impending expiration met – just think of George C. Marshall’s famous “the patient is dying while the doctors deliberate” prognosis of May 1947. After all, the case is often made in the literature on the end of the Cold War that the Soviet Union could have muddled through quite a bit longer, had Mikhail Gorbachev not pushed his reforms forward so unrelentingly.² The professional Kremlin watchers during the Cold War failed just as miserably in their profession as soothsayers, as Stephen Kotkin has noted.³ I am

¹ Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse 1970-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 6.

² See, for example, the counterfactual assessment of the seasoned observer Ambassador Jack F. Matlock, Jr.: “The Soviet Union could have weathered that pressure [the military and economic pressure emanating out of the White House] for a decade or more so long as the Communist Party remained in firm control of the country and did not try to match the U.S. defense effort. The Soviet economic decline would have continued, but the political problems that ensued could have been contained for a long time had there not been an attempt to change that system.” See *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York: Random House Pb, 2006), p. XIII

³ “Academic Russia watchers, formerly known as Sovietologists, survived the collapse. Prior to 1989, one side (the left) had staked its reputation on the argument that a reform group would materialize and change the system, perhaps making it democratic; the other (the right) had insisted that the system was incapable of reform. Since Soviet socialism *proved to be* unreformable *and* Gorbachev the reformer presided over the system’s docile replacement by a democratically elected government, each side refused to concede defeat, a boldness backed by tenure [emphasis in original]. Both were wrong. Neither had a clue about the

quite content with having social scientists predict the past adequately – what Charles S. Maier calls the historians’ “urge not only to account for why [revolutions and ruptures such as 1989] occurred, but to contextualize them quickly in a structure of meanings and assign their epochal significance” (p. 254).

The essays by Vladimir Tismaneanu, Jeffrey Kopstein, Marci Shore, and Marc Beissinger push elegant social science analysis to ask deeper questions. What kind of revolution was 1989 and what kind of “world-shattering revolutionary consequences” (Tismaneanu, p. 275) did 1989 produce? Why were the outcomes in building democracy in the region after the collapse of communism so different? Did communism fail because of generational change, or due to a tide of nationalism? Shore’s generational model of explaining the history of communism by way of the intellectual outlook of succeeding generations is particularly attractive because of its *longue durée* approach. Like Robert English in his persuasive book *Russia and the Idea of the West*, Shore traces the successive cycles of hope and disillusionment within the communist movement back to the nineteenth century. Both English and Shore recognize the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia and the suppression of the “Prague Spring” reforms in August 1968 as the death knell of communism in Eastern Europe.

The collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 needs to be seen against this long-term backdrop of the agenda of ending/transforming/reforming communism in East Germany (1953), Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968), Poland (1956, 1980/81). As long the center in Moscow had the will to suppress reforms on the periphery of the empire with violent military intervention – whether justified by Brezhnev Doctrines or not – totalitarian communism prevailed.⁴ When Gorbachev signaled the end of the Kremlin’s determination to intervene to stop reform in his December 1988 speech at the United Nations, the end was near. Beissinger’s powerful metaphor of “the tide of nationalism” spilling all over the empire and the Soviet Union is persuasive. The reforms unleashed by Gorbachev rapidly swept like a tidal wave through Central and Eastern Europe and then spilled over into the Soviet Union and initiated the collapse of the hidebound communist one-party regimes. The beauty of Shore’s essay is to show how communism/Marxism was already spent as a coherent credible ideology after 1968. No one believed in it anymore – neither the intellectuals nor the party apparatchiks, not even the *nomenklatura*.

institutional dynamic that tied the fate of the Union to the fate of socialism—the party’s simultaneous redundancy and indispensability to the federal Soviet state.” See Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, p. 181.

⁴ For a multi-perspective analysis of the Prague Spring and its importance as a turning point in the Cold War, published in 2008 on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary, see the essays and documents in two massive volumes by a multi-national group of Cold War scholars, Stefan Karner et al., eds., *Prager Frühling: Das Internationale Krisenjahr 1968*, 2 vols. (Vienna: Böhlau, 2008); for a smaller English edition of some of these essays, see Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, Peter Ruggenthaler, eds., *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia 1968* (The Harvard Cold War Studies Book Series, ed. Mark Kramer) [Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009 forthcoming].

Silvio Pons' case study of the response of the Italian PCI and the French PCF to Gorbachev's perestroika and the revolutions of 1989 demonstrates the hollowness of communist internationalism by the late 1980s, given the failure of leadership of communist internationalism in the Kremlin. While the Italian PCI sided with the reformers and eventually transformed itself into another party on the left in post-1989 Italian politics, the French PCF's orthodoxy and opposition to Gorbachev's reforms marginalized it and cast it into powerlessness. Pons could have stressed Gorbachev's long-standing fascination with Italian communism moving towards Western European style social democracy even more strongly than he does. It would be interesting to trace the response of the Asia and Latin American communist parties' responses to Kremlin reform politics in a similar fashion as Kopstein does when he asks why communism did not collapse on those continents.

Pons reminds the historian that agency does matter. Gorbachev's crucial role tends to be lost in the structural analyses of the political scientists in this collection and the search for "sparks" (Maier, 250) that triggered the demise of communism. Tismaneanu pays tribute to the role of the "Gorbachev effect" (p. 279). The old ideological battles in the U.S. political arena between Reaganite triumphalism and liberals crediting Gorbachev's crucial role have subsided. These essays stressing the deeper structural factors in the collapse of communism, elevate "end of the Cold War" scholarship to a new and higher level of complexity and sophistication. While it is important to recognize the agency of "civil society" -- the protesting nationalist crowds (Beissinger), the role of the dissidents (Tismaneanu, p. 274), and the "carnavalesque" behavior of the myriad dissident movements (Padraic Kenney) -- we should not diminish the role of the most powerful actors in the political arena such as Gorbachev. We will eventually need to find a balance between the key agency of a Gorbachev and the structures of social movements and cohorts of Marxist intellectuals (Shore) and these essays contribute much to set us on the path for deeper understanding. Finding such an equilibrium among factors leading to the collapse is the big task of future scholarship on 1989.

For the diplomatic historian it comes as a surprise that apart from the essay on NATO enlargement, these authors largely ignore the transformation of international relations as a legacy of 1989. They are concerned with the issues of the nature of the revolution (liberal vs. millennial, Tismaneanu, p. 272), or "refolution" (Timothy Garton Ash's term, cited in Maier, p. 248) of 1989. They are less concerned with the legacies of the collapse of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe and the resulting vacua of power in the international arena. Kopstein's brief references to the role the prospect of European Union accession played in producing "good behavior" among prospective future members (p. 301) suggests another dimension of a changed international environment. (in Kopstein's telling characterization, the EU as the "geopolitical landscape architect" in the region, p. 301). The transformative effect of the collapse of communism in 1989 surely was as profound as the collapse of Hitlerism and Japanese militarism in 1945, and the collapse of the old European "sick men" in 1918. A structured comparison of the changing international relations after such monumental regime collapses would have added to this collection of essays and should be a desideratum for future scholarship. Charles Maier has compared the two postwar eras (post-1918 and post-1945) -- and suggests the merit of

such a comparison with post-1989.⁵ Maybe even Jared Diamond's ideas of the ecological factors in the collapse of societies might be far-fetched when applied to the collapses of 1989, but still could teach us a thing or two as well.⁶

A lack of what the Germans after World War II have called "*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*" – mastering the difficult traumas and the sordid chapters of their nation's history – seems to be one of the central failures in the construction of these "post-socialist" societies. Some of the authors like Tismaneanu do see a moral imperative in "confronting the traumatic past, primarily via remembrance and knowledge"; only such active confrontation would result "in achieving moral justice" (p. 280). Maier too calls for a "moral history of late communism" – which "must be an account of the continuing negotiation between collective or private action and party control and abuse" (p. 267). Or, in Shore's generational scheme, the guilt about the crimes of Stalinism is the specter of the past to be confronted in post-Communist societies. But for 1989 the most important generational question had become "who was old enough to be held responsible for the choices they made under communist regime" (p. 327). A comparative approach to lustration and its failures – of Central and Eastern European "mastering of the past"⁷ -- is a missing chapter in this fine collection of essays.

⁵ Charles S. Maier, "The Two Postwar Eras and the Conditions for Stability in Twentieth-Century Western Europe," *American Historical Review*, vol. 86, no. 2 (April 1981): 327-352, and "Reply": 363-367.

⁶ Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Viking Books, 2006).

⁷ Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

Andrew Michta's article is a provocative and in large parts a realistic account of NATO's achievements and failures after 1989. Concentrating on enlargement, Michta agrees that this process has positively contributed to the political transformation of post-communist states in central Europe but has failed militarily because of a deep division among the European members. Therefore a necessary provision of the requisite military capabilities seems impossible.

In the context of geostrategic vulnerability and historical discontinuity of states it seemed appropriate that enlargement was viewed as the preferred solution to the security dilemma. But then the NATO operations in the Balkan underscored the paucity of European military power, as Michta rightly observes. So NATO enlargement has given the US broader and deeper access to the defense planning of its European allies. But at the same time the practical military utility of the Europeans has dramatically dropped, a process that has accelerated during the years especially in the light of the Afghanistan war.

Since the Kosovo war the new NATO as a collective defense organisation has become more and more useless because internal tensions in military and political terms become obvious. Michta does not use this term but it is fair to notice that in his eyes, the core of NATO as the original military defense treaty has moved from West- to Central Europe. In a way NATO membership has become attractive only to post-communist states because they believe in the American security guarantee via NATO. But for further reassurance they strengthen their security ties additionally on bilateral terms with the US while old and strong European democracies like Finland, Sweden and Austria stay away from NATO membership.

It is true, that the old NATO has disappeared but in Michta's eyes the performance of the new NATO seems not to be very reassuring because members have failed to match the political scope of enlargement with an adequate military transformation after 9/11 and in the course of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Therefore Michta's blunt assessment seems appropriate: NATO today is torn between European enlargement and new global missions. While on the one hand the US, Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark, Italy and most of the new members support the new global perspective, "old" Europe remains reluctant and favours a regional- european approach.

Enlargement of NATO has anchored post-communist Europe politically in the West, in the Atlantic Civilization, to use Hannah Arendt's famous dictum, while at the same time the military core of the Organization has wandered towards the East. Because of this paradox dynamic the utility and the unity of NATO is declining. This central observation of Andrew Michta is adequate. Therefore the central question for the future remains whether the new NATO will endure long enough to sustain the structure of Euro- Atlantic security or will it transform into a large collective security organisation with obvious minimal military capabilities and minimal common political will.

Although Michta acknowledges the political achievements of the process of enlargement he is very pessimistic with regard to the military side. NATO has become hollowed out as a defense organisation. There is no doubt about that. Consequently he finally gives a contradictory interpretation of Senator Richard Lugar's famous dictum and asks at the end of his impressive article: "are we beginning to realize that while NATO has gone out of area it may also well go out of business? It seems that nobody has the courage to admit that just yet." (p. 376)

But although I sympathize with many aspects of Michta's critical assessment I perceive the future NATO a bit more optimistically:

1. NATO remains the essential strategic transatlantic link for European security with regard to the nuclear dimension, a topic not mentioned by Michta.
2. A new open discussion about the new strategic concept will not solve all the problems but will be crucial especially for more public understanding and support of NATO in Europe, a point Michta fails to mention
3. NATO will and has to adapt to the new globalization age with its dangers for Western industrial democracies -- a perspective not touched upon by Michta
4. A new Russian assertiveness creates new challenges for NATO at several levels. This continuous challenge has been largely neglected by Michta.

But with regard to these four tasks which afford a combined effort within NATO, the key problem as mentioned by Michta remains: NATO's future will depend on whether Allies realize that solidarity in today's world is no longer measured by the sheer size of their countries' forces but by their willingness to act even if the going gets rough. And here the West Europeans and especially the Germans still have to do some home work.

Instructors sometimes encounter blank stares from students when they mention terms such as 'mutually assured destruction', a 'planned economy' or the 'Berlin Wall'. The Cold War seems ancient history, and yet, those among us old enough to remember those days grapple with the challenge of combining detached analysis with personal experiences. In the special issue of *Contemporary European History*, several of the authors invited by Amir Weiner of Stanford University and John Connelly of UC Berkeley discuss the question of contemporary revolutions. Twenty years on, the fall of the Berlin Wall evokes a mix of responses, and although some authors express skepticism and disillusionment, most agree that the events of 1989-1991 qualify as a revolution. In their excellent introduction, Weiner and Connelly reflect on the challenges of writing contemporary history, hoping that the essays offer fresh perspectives on the processes of change in general.

In the first contribution, Charles S. Maier of Harvard University reminds us that almost all social scientists failed to foresee the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe and the demise of the Soviet Union. Few questioned the stability of one-party states. However, once the collapse happened, many Western observers embarked on 'triumphalism', charting an inevitable development towards democracy and progress, or, famously, the 'end of history'. The skeptics of 1989 concentrate on the subsequent opening of 'Pandora's box' (Marc Shore): the emergence of inequality, racism, proto-fascist parties and ethnic tension, leading some to express nostalgia about life under Socialism. The wars in Yugoslavia served as another cautionary reminder of the dark legacies of 20th century European history. Several authors recognize ideology and history as engines of change while others emphasize national or generational attitudes. This review will concentrate on several points: the balance sheet of twenty years of post-revolutionary development, the discussion about the causes of revolution, and the renewed debate on how to integrate the Communist period into European history.

Charles S. Maier contends that the transformation in Eastern and Central Europe has been 'extraordinarily successful' (p. 256). Jeffrey Kopstein agrees, calling the coupling of democratic progress with the promise of integration into the EU a spectacular success (p. 302). The region has -- despite recent setbacks -- enjoyed unprecedented growth and stability, without experiencing any of the feared upheavals. For example, victims have not taken revenge on the communist bureaucrats, instead, most successor states have been lenient on the former oppressors, offering them pensions and benefits. However, some sense of disillusionment came naturally after the ecstasy of a bloodless revolution, according to Maier. Not all hopes could be fulfilled, and the new governments, often composed of the second tier of old elites, became embroiled in scandals and corruption. While not mentioning German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's famous promise of 'flourishing landscapes' explicitly, Maier suggests that ordinary citizens now enjoy far greater opportunities than under communism.

The expansion of NATO and the European Union accelerated the pace of democratic transition, according to Jeffrey Kopstein of the University of Toronto. Referring to his

grandfather's dispassionate assessment of change in history, Kopstein describes the 'historical turn' of political scientists. Not being able to explain the variations of the democratic transition in Eastern Europe with abstract models, scholars began to differentiate Communist regimes and their effect on society. While East Germany and Czechoslovakia could count on a strong bureaucracy and a mobilized working class, Hungary and Poland had to accommodate a nationalist elite. Bulgaria, on the other hand, picked up on prewar patrimonial administrative traditions. Studies also underscore pre-communist political culture. Consequently, while East-Central Europe successfully moved towards liberal democracy, Eastern and Southeastern Europe experienced more 'growing pains', and some scholars even question the adequacy of presuming a trajectory towards democracy, for example in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

For Kopstein, Communism's most lasting effect was altering social structures. Citing studies of the Caucasus, he enumerates three distinctive classes: A tiny nomenklatura elite, a massive proletariat and a sub-proletariat of criminal elements and black marketeers. For the proletariat, 'life chances improved steadily', and 'one could take pride in being part of an alternative world power' (p. 297). Kopstein's view may hold some water for the Soviet worker, but societies in Eastern and Central Europe were far more differentiated socially and shared distinctive memories and identities. He may be correct that the average workers' income increased, and the workers enjoyed job security. But how does that explain the emergence of the Polish trade union Solidarity (which is not mentioned at all in the contributions)? The workers' revolt delegitimized the Party's claim to represent the proletariat. Russian coal-miners' strikes followed suit in the Gorbachev period. Scholars may also find another thesis debatable. Kopstein mentions Rolf Dahrendorf's thesis on the Nazi destruction of old elites. Dahrendorf credited the Nazis with unintentionally contributing to the establishment of democracy in postwar West Germany. Kopstein argues that communist social engineering 'undermined the inter-war status culture'. In his view, once the party bosses were pushed aside, social reality was much more favorable to healthy liberal democracy than before.

Possibly, but Communist authoritarian rule also crushed civic culture and bourgeois values, with its respect for property and the rule of law. The enforced proletarian values and the campaigns against religion and humanitarian ethics in general went a long way to create 'homo sovieticus', a species not known to facilitate the development of an open society. It can be argued that many of the post-1989 phenomena, from xenophobia to neofascist agitation, have their roots not only in pre-Communist society, but also in totalitarian education and propaganda.

If they were able to change social structures radically, why did the Communist systems crumble so quickly? And what role did social and/or ideological factors play in the demise of the 'barracks socialism'? Maier explains that officials never managed to administer a complex modern society. On the other hand, dictatorships rarely embrace efficiency or 'modernity'. For Maier, forty years of rule – in the USSR, seventy years – inevitably weakened the revolutionary fervor of rank-and-file members and officials. The 'discrepancy between ideological project and social reality' increased (p. 263). Finding itself in a continual crisis of legitimacy, the Communist Party was unable to respond, and

‘corruption replaced commitment’ (p. 268). The ever-present cynicism acted as a slow poison to undermine ideological enthusiasm.

Why did most revolutions proceed peacefully in 1989? For Maier, ‘luck and prudence’ played a large part. State suppression of the demonstrations in Leipzig remained a possibility for some time, and, although few contributors mention it, the Chinese model of Tiananmen Square loomed large in the minds of the reform activists. Faced with indecisive governments, citizens overcame their sense of fear and lost respect for their leaders. In Vaclav Havel’s famous image, the apolitical greengrocer stopped putting the party slogan in his window.

For Mark R. Beissinger of Princeton University, the revival of dormant nationalism provided an important positive value to fill the ideological vacuum. Even in Russia, nationalism could replace Communism as a promise. The growing ‘de-Sovietisation’ of Russia allowed Russian society to imagine a future without the Communist power monopoly. While not the sole cause for the demise of Communism, Beissinger identifies nationalist movements with providing mobilization and models for change. Interestingly, he highlights the ‘transnational’ character of these movements, indicating that the leaders looked towards each other for inspiration and ideas (p. 340). Because of the ‘ethnofederalist’ Soviet structure, the dissent could be channeled into the emerging sovereign nations, an important step to prevent chaos and bloodshed, Beissinger asserts.

In a common trait, Vladimir Tismaneanu notes the ‘return of history’, explaining cleavages between countries and within societies by pointing to their respective historical experience. The ‘Leninist systems’ were terminally sick and unable to readjust and save themselves. For Tismaneanu, the demise of the USSR was inextricably linked to the collapse of the ‘outer empire’ in Eastern Europe, linking it to the ‘long European ideological warfare’ set in motion by the October Revolution in 1917. He describes the revolutions of 1989 as, in their first phase, liberal and non-utopian, directed against the Communist belief of a vanguard running society on their behalf. 1989 empowered millions of people, and despite subsequent ‘ethnic rivalries, unsavory political bickering, rampant political and economic corruption, and the rise of illiberal parties and movements’, Tismaneanu lauds the revolutions as embodying a ‘generous message’ (p. 272). In a way, the dissidents’ belief in ushering in a new age of ‘non-Machiavellian’ values such as authenticity, transparency, and civility may be compared to Gorbachev’s hopes of reforming Communism – naïve and utopian. However, they felt the pulse of society better than outside observers impressed by the facades and rituals of dictatorial power. Tismaneanu disagrees with Tony Judt’s assertion that the liberal dissidents never had a strong impact on their societies. True, many Czechs and Slovaks might not have been familiar with Havel’s writings, just as many Soviet citizens signed declarations denouncing Andrei Sakharov without having read a single page of his writings. But the sheer existence of another ‘voice’ undermined the alleged ‘unity of party and people’ and made alternatives possible. The fact that many dissidents lost their prominent positions in the aftermath of 1989 does not mean their ideas were defeated, according to Tismaneanu. He asserts that, although forty years of Leninism have certainly left their mark, the rediscovery of civic participation is a real

change (p. 283). And while political classes remain self-centered and corrupt, the political culture of 'Sovietism' broke down comprehensively in 1989-1991.

For Marci Shore of Yale University, Czechoslovak and Polish intellectuals experienced Communism in distinctively generational ways, with very different outcomes. In a series of interviews with mostly Czech intellectuals, she traces the familiar story of infatuation, guilt and shame right down to the complete ignorance of today's teenagers about their country's past. Her analysis, while offering some important points, fails to convince fully. Certainly, the Czechoslovak intellectuals felt betrayed by the West since Munich and created their own fairyland version of Communist ideology, leading to deep feelings of complicity and guilt later. Former young Stalinists then became the vanguard of reform in 1968, in the words of Milan Kundera, 'rebellling against their own youth' (p. 312). Unfortunately, Shore succeeds only partially in painting the picture of intellectuals under Communism. She only casually mentions events such as the Slánsky trial, Stalin's death and Khrushchev's Secret Speech without discussing their impact. In her view, the Polish anti-Semitic campaign of 1968 appeared to be a 'strange merger' of ideologies. In fact, Communist anti-Zionist campaigns, for example in East Germany and the USSR, liberally and regularly borrowed from fascist hate propaganda.

Most authors rightly identify 'economic decay' as a main factor accelerating revolution. Maier correctly points to the Communist dogmatic belief in the primacy of politics as being responsible for underestimating the economic factor. Gorbachev's reform project helped steer his country and the satellite states towards slowly abandoning key communist tenets such as the party monopoly and censorship. Silvio Pons documents the international dimension by comparing the response of the French and Italian Communist parties. While the French CP, marginalized by the Socialists, remained dogmatic and conservative, the PCI enthusiastically greeted Gorbachev's reform. The French responded like some of the more conservative Eastern European leaders, while the Italians found themselves on good terms with Moscow from 1988 onwards. The protocols of Gorbachev's meetings with foreign communists underscore his rather vague vision to renew international communism. His advisor Anatoly Chernyayev put it more bluntly when he stated that a communist movement 'does not exist' (p. 354). Gorbachev's wavering led him to promise to avoid destabilizing Eastern Europe while at the same time arguing for radical change (p. 356). While the French communists eventually disavowed Gorbachev and even welcomed the coup against him, the Italians began to promote their view of a 'new left' beyond communist traditions.

After 1989, Western institutions struggled to come to terms with radical change. Andrew A. Michta presents an ambiguous balance sheet of NATO enlargement. He argues that the more NATO has expanded into peacekeeping in the former Yugoslavia and integrating new members, the less it seems able to deal with real threats such as Afghanistan. Nonetheless, rapid NATO enlargement prevented a 'grey area' in Eastern Europe. Ever since Russia intensified its objection to NATO enlargement, the Kosovo crisis and the crisis over the US intervention in Iraq, and the continued challenges on the periphery, in the Middle East, NATO cohesion and capabilities are in doubt. It seems military alliances suffer hardship even when they are successful and their adversary is removed from the scene.

Missing from the volume is the voice of the revolutionaries themselves. While the authors frequently quote Havel, Michnik and others, few manage to outline the spirit 'from below', with Tismaneanu's contribution coming closest. Some aspects are sorely missed, for example, the role of religion, significant not only in Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine. The horrendous environmental pollution under socialism, mobilizing many otherwise apolitical citizens, deserves additional attention. International broadcasting, tourism and cultural exchange also played a role in undermining the monopoly of information. Another aspect worthy of investigation is the reluctance of the European Left to acknowledge the revolution behind the Iron Curtain. Revolution was something that happened in Cuba and Nicaragua. Correctly, Charles S. Maier states that the redeployment of a totalitarian model after 1989 emerged from an international reaction against the fact that the political left had been 'too willing to make peace with communist rule in Europe (p. 262). A well-known handbook on the GDR, published in the 1980s in West Germany, did not contain a single entry on the Stasi. Some of this tendency can still be found in attempts to view the East German experience in terms of a 'modern industrial society' and downplaying the dictatorial aspects.

Maier fittingly points out the paternalistic attitude of the Communist state. The state treated its subjects like children, telling them what to study, where to work, and what to say and think. This parental notion ended in 1989, yet left a deep legacy. Some former Communist subjects still yearn for the good old days: no choice, but also no autonomy, no responsibility. The collapse of the red nanny state explains why people have had problems adapting to sudden individual responsibility, and it underscores the rapid subsequent success of the 'bullies' who thrived in chaotic times.

It is indeed difficult for outsiders to judge what it must have been like to grow up under Communism. Perhaps the best one can do is to visit one of the museums, like the Stasi Prison Museum in Berlin-Hohenschönhausen. It is perfectly preserved, up to the point of including the characteristic GDR 'smell'. It looks as if the guards and interrogators just left for a short coffee break. In Vladimir Tismaneanu's words, history is never a one-way street, and there is always more than one alternative (p. 273). Amir Weiner and John Connolly have assembled a collection of highly stimulating contributions.

Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, many former East Germans seem uncertain about how they should remember life under the old order. Cities such as Leipzig and Dresden look much cleaner and brighter today than ever before and the housing situation has greatly improved. *Trabbis*, powered by old-fashioned two-stroke engines, have given way to modern VW Golfs and Opel Astras. However, unemployment has become an issue and one of Germany's most recent political parties, *Die Linkspartei*, clearly caters to those who are disappointed with free market capitalism and who instead long for the social services of the old GDR. But there is more to the question about how East Germans remember the history of their former country. Recently, Germans debated whether the GDR was an *Unrechtsstaat*, a government not bound by principles of law and justice. Some Germans claimed that a government that killed its citizens rather than let them leave the country to live in freedom was the very definition of an *Unrechtsstaat*. Others felt that such a sweeping condemnation of the country was uncalled for. Most East Germans worked hard to rebuild the country after the war and made life better for themselves and for others and had nothing to do with the infamous *Staatssicherheit*.

In 1989, Soviet domination of Eastern Europe came to an end and was replaced by efforts to establish democracy and market capitalism. However, the search for a new order has not yet come to an end in all countries. Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the editors of *Contemporary European History* asked some of the leading political scientists and historians studying Eastern European affairs to evaluate the events of 1989. I have been asked to comment on those articles even though I am not a scholar of Eastern European history. My comments are those of a German citizen who witnessed the events from afar as a graduate student in the United States and who now teaches American history at a German university.

Arguably the most important questions concerning 1989 are why there were so many sudden uprisings all over Eastern Europe and why there was almost no bloodshed associated with them. Was there a sudden collective exhaustion of Marxist-Leninist ideology that prevented the Soviet government from sending tanks to East Berlin to stop the revolt? Did reform-oriented governments such as the one in Hungary or domestic pressure groups such as the civil rights movement in the GDR, Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, or Solidarity in Poland pave the way for change? Or did the uprisings succeed because the Soviet Union relaxed its grip on the Eastern European satellites with the consequence that the old order simply collapsed? The articles make clear that there is no simple answer to those questions. There were reform oriented governments in some Eastern European countries and hard line regimes in others. There was not *one* revolution in Eastern Europe, but *revolutions* that differed from country to country but had the common goal of establishing a new political order.

While the forces behind the reform movements differed in each country, the events of 1989 clearly would have been inconceivable without Mikhail Gorbachev. Historians have assumed for a long time that Soviet political and economic exhaustion was a prime factor

behind the events of 1989. But the decline of the Soviet Union had begun much earlier. Gorbachev could have ignored those problems as his predecessors had done before. Instead, he became the first general secretary of the CPSU who admitted that the country needed to undergo reforms. Gorbachev also signaled the Kremlin's willingness to set the Eastern European satellites free. In a speech before the United Nations General Assembly in December 1988 he buried the Brezhnev doctrine and announced a significant cutback in Soviet troop levels. Gorbachev's speech was directed toward a Western audience (delivered, after all, in New York) and toward the leadership of the Eastern European client states. We know today that the Soviets were aware at the time that their reform policies would undermine the position of hard line regimes such as the one in East Germany. Nevertheless, Gorbachev decided to move ahead. Ironically, progress toward improving East-West relations slowed down in early 1989 because the incoming George H.W. Bush administration needed time to develop its own approach toward the Soviet government. Once Bush had his foreign policy team in place, the U.S. president complemented Gorbachev's willingness to tear down the wall and to withdraw from Afghanistan with a vision of a new political order. All European countries should live in freedom and security.

The articles in *Contemporary European History* do not challenge the view that Gorbachev's reforms were an essential ingredient to the success of the revolutions of 1989. However, some authors question Gorbachev's goals. Vladimir Tismaneanu and Mark Beissinger see him as an accidental reformer at best. The "Gorbachev factor" only came into place after the communist elites had given up hope to maintain power. "Gorbachev was not the liberator of eastern Europe and even less was he a conscious, deliberate gravedigger of Sovietism," Tismaneanu writes. Instead, Gorbachev sought to repair communism. Those reform efforts quickly spun out of control. In his book *A Failed Empire*, Vladislav Zubok describes the confusion in the Kremlin when it was reported that the East German government had opened the border crossings between East and West Berlin. Western governments, too, were unsure how to react to Gorbachev's policy. Charles Powell, a foreign policy advisor to British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, recently revealed that the British government was reluctant to support the West German quest for reunification in 1989/90 because it could have weakened Gorbachev's position at home and could have prevented further reform efforts in Eastern Europe (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 10 September 2009). When Gorbachev realized that he had lost control over events and that he could only reestablish domination over Eastern Europe by using military means, he "rejected the Leninist (or realpolitik) position that might creates right" (Tismaneanu, p. 279-80). Beissinger notes that while Gorbachev's policy of glasnost was crucial for the success of the revolutions, the collapse of communism was an "unintended result" of his policy (p. 335).

I do not disagree with Tismaneanu's and Beissinger's assessments. In fact, I think it would have been highly unlikely for Gorbachev to become a member of the Soviet politburo had he been a lifelong Jeffersonian democrat. But the question whether the reforms he initiated in the Soviet Union only removed roadblocks to achieving democracy or whether they paved the way to reach that goal goes deeper than Gorbachev's initial motives. The question is not only what he wanted to achieve in the early years 1985 through 1988, but how the people of Eastern Europe came to view him and how he reacted to becoming a

symbol of freedom. One wonders whether there would have been a revolution in East Germany if the country hadn't celebrated its 40th birthday in early October 1989 with Gorbachev in attendance.

Thanks (at least in part) to Gorbachev, the revolutions in Eastern Europe were successful. However, that was only the first step toward achieving democracy and prosperity. No other Eastern European country had as much outside help in this process as the GDR. After twenty years there are political and economic success stories such as Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. But there were disappointments as well. Particularly Russia, Belorussia, and Ukraine have not fulfilled democratic hopes and expectations. The reasons can be found in a lack of democratic traditions in those countries, but also in a certain longing (in the case of Russia) to return to the old days of empire. The 70th anniversary of the signing of the Hitler-Stalin-Pact in August 2009 reminded the world that the Russian leadership has not completely distanced itself from the Soviet dictator's aggressive policies but instead tried to justify them.

Russia's failure to develop a real democracy is one of the obvious shortcomings of the events after 1989. But is that enough to question the outcome of the revolutions twenty years ago? For a brief moment in time, there was an exuberance in the West about what "1989" meant. The American political scientist Francis Fukuyama even saw the "end of history." Very little of this feeling of enthusiasm is left, as Charles Maier points out. "The Gorbachev-Yeltsin reforms may have dismantled communism, but the far longer legacy of bureaucratic state-building appears to have remained powerful underneath," he writes. Maier calls the Cold War a "major chapter in a two-century struggle unleashed by economic modernization and the ideas of enlightenment." Between 1945 and 1990, a libertarian vision of the world that prized individual fulfillment clashed with the alternative concept that stressed equality and collective achievement. 1989 did not mark the end of the battle of the visions. In fact "there can be no final victory for the one or the other of these tendencies ... they will always be in conflict ... there can be no end to this contention and coexistence of fundamental orientation" (p. 269). Other authors disagree with this statement and instead speak of the "world-shattering revolutionary consequences" of the events of 1989 (Tismaneanu, p. 275). As a European I wonder how Maier defines the clash between freedom and "equality and collective achievement." Those are goals most West Europeans would subscribe to and don't have anything to do with Soviet style dictatorship.

Against the background of the success of the revolutions of 1989 in overthrowing Soviet domination one might ask whether the same result could have been achieved years earlier. There were frequent uprisings in Eastern European capitals between 1953 and 1980. However, American and European governments refrained from intervening on behalf of the rioters for two reasons. First, there were few expectations prior to Gorbachev that the Soviet Union would ever peacefully relinquish control over Eastern Europe. This passivity in the face of uprisings in the East was part of the Cold War compact to prevent nuclear war. This compact relied on the strict non-interference in the sphere of influence of the opponent. Second, the West's political goal after signing the Helsinki accord in 1975 was to improve the living conditions of the people of Eastern Europe in exchange for a guarantee of the existing borders. Détente came at the price of accepting Soviet domination of

Eastern Europe. The Cold War ended roughly a decade after the United States had given up détente and returned to a policy of confrontation. Historians will be debating for a long time whether the Ronald Reagan of the first administration who announced the Strategic Defense Initiative or the Ronald Reagan of the second administration who signed the IMF treaty and who strolled down Red Square with his friend Mikhail Gorbachev ended the Cold War.

If the West could have done little to change the political order of Eastern Europe before 1989, which role did the Western countries play after the revolutions? Jeffrey Kopstein points out that the integration of the western states in the European Economic Community was largely due to the looming threat from the Soviet Union. But the idea of European integration had become so popular in Eastern Europe that the newly sovereign states immediately sought membership in the EU: “[S]overeignty was regained and then, almost instantaneously, handed over to the West” (p. 300). The European Union promised economic prosperity and protection from Russia. It redistributes financial resources from the richer to the poorer countries and is reminiscent of the greatest success of U.S. diplomacy, the European Recovery Plan after the Second World War.

The European Union was not the only international institutions that expanded east after the end of the Cold War. I find myself in almost total agreement with Andrew Michta’s piece on NATO enlargement. The inclusion of Central and Eastern European countries into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was a political success (“anchored post-communist Europe in the West [and] accelerated democratization,” p. 375) that came at the price of threatening NATO’s long-term viability as the core transatlantic security anchor. NATO membership of Eastern European countries contributed to the political stability of that region. One could argue that that was in Russia’s interest as well. However, the Kremlin repeatedly expressed uneasiness about the extension of the Western defense organization closer to the Russian border. But Moscow had few options preventing countries like Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic from joining NATO. The Caucasus is a different matter. The Kremlin considers a NATO membership of Georgia a very serious security threat. The Russo-Georgian war of 2008 was a warning to the West. NATO understood this warning and for the time being has given up plans to offer membership to Tbilisi.

Twenty years after a revolution is as good a time as any to time to write about the events. Many political actors are still alive and may be willing to talk. At the same time, archival material gradually becomes available. The articles published in *Contemporary European History* provide a good synthesis of the research done over the last two decades. They do not present previously unknown facts or provide any new documentary evidence - some authors even reprinted parts of older publications - and they generally do not challenge established views.

Most authors teach at North American and Western European universities. One wonders whether the inclusion of historians living and teaching in Eastern Europe including Russia would have provided different perspectives. How do Russian historians view events of the past twenty years? Do they consider Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin liberators or do they criticize them for undermining Soviet world power status? What role do Russian political

scientists see for their country in the future? Will Moscow seek cooperation with the West or does the Kremlin define Russia's role as that of one of four (U.S., EU, China, Russia) independent powers that compete for global influence?

As a German I could not help but noticing that much more could have been said about the revolution in Germany and the difficult process of uniting two parts of a country that were separated for forty years. Twenty years after 1989, Germany is split between those who condemn the socialist past and those who have fond memories of the old order (*Ostalgie*).

In his article "What Have We Learned since 1989," Charles Maier repeatedly refers to works by the German historian Stefan Wolle. Wolle's 1999 book *Die heile Welt der Diktatur* is an analysis of what East Germans thought about socialism, about their country's political leadership, and what they knew about the West. According to Wolle, the GDR went under because the people realized that their government was exhausted and helpless in the face of mounting economic problems. Socialism was never able to solve any question that confronted a modern society better than market economies and democracies. I have yet to hear a better explanation for the collapse of the socialist system.

Concluding thoughts by Konrad Jarausch, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

People Power? Towards an Explanation of 1989

As the most important European event since 1945, the overthrow of Communism during 1989-1991 poses a double challenge for retrospective understanding. Because the recent wave of commemorations at the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Wall largely promoted an anti-Communist agenda, the democratic awakening needs to be rescued from such instrumentalization by contemporary memory politics. Since most of the media specials, public exhibitions, press editorials and numerous monographs have concentrated on retelling an inspiring story, a more critical analytical effort is necessary in order to comprehend what really happened during this exciting year and to assess its long-range implications. Participants, journalists and academic commentators have presented a number of partial explanations that compete with each other without coalescing into a comprehensive view. A more convincing reading must look at longer time perspective and approach the revival of civil society as a transnational process engulfing all of Eastern Europe.

A case in point for the difficulties in grappling with this unexpected caesura are the following reviews of the symposium "Revisiting 1989: Causes, Course, Consequences." In the August 2009 issue of the *Journal of Contemporary European History* Amir Weiner and John Connelly brought together a number of leading experts in political science and history to offer their interpretation of the democratic awakening in East Central Europe twenty years after the event. Reviewing these essays, Günter Bischof, Christian Hacke, Donal O'Sullivan and Georg Schild have attempted to evaluate and systematize their explanations, presenting their own views. The recurrent themes of their reviews focus on the issue of communist collapse or peaceful revolution, on the relative weight of the Gorbachev factor or the influence of Western policy, and on the importance of such causes as economic stagnation, erosion of ideology and dissident challenges. Instead of heightening the confusion by commenting on the commentators, the following remarks will focus on some of the central explanatory challenges regarding 1989.

1. Causes

In trying to explain surprising caesuras, historians tend to distinguish between long-range underlying causes and short-range events, triggering actual changes. Among the former, a key reason was the stagnation of the planned economy that made the Soviet bloc fall behind in the production of consumer goods and therefore inspired Gorbachev to push for reforms in Russia. Another important element was the improvement of the international climate that ended the second Cold War and promoted détente, because the lessening of hostility allowed Moscow to repeal the Brezhnev doctrine. The greater latitude thereby permitted to the satellite states also encouraged the revival of civil society and the formation of a domestic opposition pushing for the recovery of human rights. Often overlooked is finally the loss of utopian belief and of ideological self-confidence among the

ruling Communist parties, which made some younger leaders break with the older incorrigibles and experiment with pragmatic reforms. The initial challenge is therefore to compare and weigh these various structural causes.

It took a combination of extraordinary events to turn this structural erosion of Communist power into an acute crisis during the summer and fall 1989. The first open challenge came from the independent Polish trade union Solidarnosc which even the proclamation of martial law could not contain permanently. The second step was the liberalization of the Hungarian leadership which decided to open the Iron Curtain symbolically, triggering an exodus of vacationing East Germans to the West which turned into a mass flight that discredited the Honecker regime and led to his fall. The third step was the rapid growth of public protests in cities like Leipzig and later also in Prague that spread from a few hundred intrepid dissidents to hundreds of thousands and could therefore not be suppressed by force after the agreement of October 9th. Confronted with such unheard of civil resistance, the communist parties themselves began to dissolve, losing members as well as their will to fight. A second task is therefore the untangling of the concatenation of events which precipitated the acute crisis.

Social scientists who have analyzed the process of mobilization stress that during the democratic awakening of 1989 exit and voice tended to reinforce each other rather than serving as alternatives. No doubt the contagion started with the dissidents themselves who had elaborated a human rights critique of Communism like the IFM in the GDR or Charta 77 in Czechoslovakia. Crucial for spreading the message was also the reporting by West German TV, which served as alternative information source in East Germany, and by Radio Free Europe which broadcast news to other East European countries. Decisive was, however, the demonstration experience itself, because the feeling of solidarity in a crowd of likeminded protesters broke through the grip of fear which had held people in check for so long. Less visible but highly debilitating was finally the seepage of doubt among the party members who had to decide whether to follow the Chinese example of bloody repression or Gorbachev's perestroika course. A third interpretative step is the reconstruction of the mobilization process that drew in ever more citizens.

2. Processes

After dealing with multiple causes, analysts also need to come to terms with the precise nature of the process of upheaval of 1989. Instead of being merely seen as a collapse of Communism, the *Wende* might be interpreted as a contestation which began as a movement to reform socialism and ended up in a veritable revolution by overthrowing it altogether. Communism did not just crumble from above but was rather overthrown by mass pressure from below. The early stages of the confrontation between the dissidents, restive population and Communist cadres followed the traditional script of mounting unrest in which a range of regime critics tried to recapture public space in order to express their frustration. The recovery of an increasing measure of human rights then allowed opposition groups to organize openly and mount a public challenge. Between September and November 1989 the chanted slogans and written demands escalated in a predictable pattern from calls for free speech to criticism of specific policies to the replacement of the

regime as such. The Communist rulers did not abandon their power, but sought to preserve it by authorizing a public dialogue that eventually escaped their control.

The democratic awakening of 1989 deviated from the established pattern of revolutionary bloodshed, however, by remaining nonviolent and ultimately transferring power through negotiations in a process that resembled a pacted transition. Though the protests teetered on the brink of violence initially, the massive security forces did not shoot (except in Romania) since the protesting citizens followed the call of religious leaders to remain non-violent. Because the weakening regime made reluctant concessions such as the opening of the Wall on November 9, the opposition negotiated with the ruling party in a series of Round Tables that maintained public order by opening a channel for the demands for change. Even the emotional confrontations over the dissolution of the secret service, called Stasi in the GDR, remained peaceful, since citizen committees succeeded in occupying its headquarters and sealing the remaining files. Ultimately it was the agreement on free elections which each side could hope to win that allowed the question of power to be decided by the ballot box rather than by violence on the streets.

Another major difference from many prior revolutions was the national impetus which dissolved the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, but also led to German unification. In the former case, the long suppressed desires for ethno-national independence led to the break-up of the Russian Empire as well as the dissolution of two important Versailles states, thereby largely restoring the map of Brest-Litowsk. In the latter instance, unification provided the most rapid form of transformation into a post-Communist mold, characterized by democratic politics, market-style economics, a Western welfare state and cultural pluralism. The overwhelming vote of East German citizens in March 1990 for rapid unity compelled the last GDR government to sign the unification treaty and to join the Federal Republic in the form of five new states. The two-plus-four negotiations led to international approval for this reordering of Central Europe by getting the Red Army to leave and the Germans to accept the Potsdam frontiers. While the gradual transition in Poland and Hungary has been called a “refolution,” the quicker protest driven changes in the GDR and Czechoslovakia ought to be considered a real revolution, through the Bulgarian and Rumanian transitions rather resembled palace coups.

3. Results

Finally, the consequences of the upheaval need to be included into an explanation, since their extent is proof of its revolutionary nature. According to this criterion the post-Communist transformation was a true revolution, since it left hardly any sphere of life, be it public or private, untouched. The domestic transition from dictatorship to democracy was complicated by the lack of popular experience with parliamentary government, the involvement of former Communist cadres and the importation of a functioning democratic system from the FRG in East Germany. The introduction of a market economy turned out to be even more traumatic, since the concurrent adjustment to global competition destroyed much moribund industry and thereby created massive unemployment. Also the social reorientation from state-subsidized egalitarianism and group solidarity to individual responsibility and competitive restratification was not easy. In contrast, intellectuals and

the public welcomed the return of cultural pluralism because it increased creative freedom and offered more interesting popular entertainment.

On the whole the international repercussions of the dissolution of the Soviet bloc were drastic but benign for Eastern Europe, since the various peoples regained a measure of self-determination. The end of the Cold War hastened the departure of the Russian troops, a precondition for independence, and the conclusion of the arms race made considerable disarmament possible. The massive costs of unification also kept the Germans from becoming an openly hegemonic power, forcing them instead to concentrate on the task of rehabilitating the five new member states and the new old capital of Berlin. No doubt, the nationalism which reemerged from under the cover of socialist internationalism also led to ugly confrontations, but the civil war in the former Yugoslavia remained an exception, predicated upon an earlier history of deep-seated Balkan enmities. The lifting of the Iron Curtain allowed the East Central Europeans to reconnect with Western Europe by joining NATO and the EU, thereby reuniting the Old Continent and stabilizing the new post-Communist governments.

The price of freedom has, however, been a wrenching adjustment that has led to resentment among displaced elites and disappointment among dissidents and the population at large. Western-style democracy has turned out to be cumbersome, not at all similar to the excitement of direct participation during the heady days of 1989. Moreover, coping with economic competition, dealing with unemployment and facing insecurity was hard for many people, accustomed to the safety-net of socialist welfare. Western financial transfers and investments had strings of outside control attached and the staggering amount needed, 1.5 trillion Euros in the German case alone, was never enough in order to create “flourishing landscapes” over night. At the same time the psychological adjustment that was required by the new circumstances proved difficult for a population which had gotten used to suppressing its feelings, but now had to express them in public in order to gain attention. The depth of the domestic transformation, international restructuring and personal adaptation indicates that this was, indeed, a revolutionary change.

The concept that comes closest to describing the exhilarating events of 1989 is the notion of a new kind of revolution, stemming from “people power.” In contrast to earlier caesuras of the 20th century, the fall of the Wall was neither the product of a world war nor of a dictatorship. Instead the democratic awakening started as another attempt to liberalize Communism, but unlike in 1953, 1956, 1968 or 1981 it overthrew it because it was not stopped by force. Hence it might be interpreted as a result of civil resistance which initially sought to democratize socialism but ultimately abolished it altogether. Both the process and the result were revolutionary because they were driven by popular demands for a fundamental political, economic, social and cultural transformation of Eastern Europe. But this revolution was different from prior contestations since it was successful, peaceful and in some cases also national. By toppling Communism the dissidents and people of Eastern Europe created a new model of negotiated transition, successfully imitated in the Ukraine and Serbia, even if it could not be exported everywhere (China).

In spite of subsequent disappointments, the rapidity and extent of the transformation, initiated by the peaceful revolution, remain nothing short of miraculous. The democratic awakening ended four decades of confrontation, known as the Cold War, which brought the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation. The collapse of Communism pulled the Soviet Union down with it, since the desire for national self-determination brought statehood to areas like the Ukraine or Belarus that had long been part of the Russian Empire. The two-plus-four negotiations after the fall of the Wall also solved the “German problem” that had bedeviled Europe ever since 1871 by restoring a diminished and democratic nation state with accepted frontiers. The revival of East Central European independence finally overcame the division of Europe and extended Western security and economic organizations like NATO and the EU until the Russian frontiers.... Even if this did not mark the “end of history,” explaining how a change of this magnitude could come about without violence remains an abiding challenge to the historical imagination.

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