



Michael Gehler, Piotr H. Kosicki, Helmut Wohnout, eds. *Christian Democracy and the Fall of Communism*. Civitas: Studies in Christian Democracy Series. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019. 352 pp. \$79.50, cloth, ISBN 978-946270216-5.

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A tremendous number of publications analyze the 1989 collapse of communism but few examine the role particular political partisanship played in it. And no comprehensive books look at the role of social democracy in helping to end the Cold War, with the exception of this interesting volume, edited by Michael Gehler, Piotr H. Kosicki, and Helmut Wohnout. *Christian Democracy and the Fall of Communism* offers a compact and thoughtful view of Christian Democracy in the context of the fall of communism. It is arranged into three thematic sections: “Christian Democracy in the International System: International Institutions and the Groundwork for 1989,” “From West to East: Cross-Iron Curtain Movement-Building Efforts,” and “Made behind the Iron Curtain: Homegrown Catholic Politics and the Rise and Fall of Christian Democracy in Eastern Europe.” Two underlying topics are threaded throughout the book: the revolutions of 1989 and the impact of Christian Democracy on the collapse of communism.

Gehler’s introduction provides not only a succinct outline of the book’s structure and content but also brief assessments of the 1989 revolutions and their ties to Christian Democracy. Gehler makes a questionable claim that one decisive factor, namely, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, predominated in the revolutions. That the Soviet

leader did not appear as a simple *deus ex machina* but was picked out by the Kremlin politburo in a desperate reaction to US president Ronald Reagan’s overwhelming anti-Soviet offensive is not mentioned at all.

Kim Christiaens, in the first chapter of section 1, portrays the rather awkward relationship between international labor organizations and the 1980s Polish anti-communist Solidarność trade union movement as “the failure of a third way” (p. 33). In the second chapter, “The CSCE Vienna Follow-up Meeting and Alois Mock, 1986-1989,” Andrea Brait and Gehler pursue the role of Alois Mock in the 1986-89 Vienna Follow-up Meeting. They claim that Austrian mediation reinforced the urgency to tackle the key issue of human rights violations by communist dictators in Central and Eastern Europe. . Gehler and Johannes Schönner’s last chapter of this section, “Helping Hands’ across the Fence,” turns to the approach of the European Democrat Union (EDU) toward developments in Central and Eastern Europe. They state that in the wake of 1989, the EDU represented Christian Democratic and conservative parties in both Western and Eastern Europe. The authors point out that the importance of the EDU underscores the necessity to focus on non-state actors and their role in the revolutions. Unintentionally,

this chapter also reveals an EDU issue concerning its Atlanticism by implicitly tying it to Moscow and Washington equally.

At the outset of the second section, Thomas Gronier examines the influence of the French Taizé community on the revolutions. He argues that the meetings initiated by the community between 1980 and 1987 and the follow-up Taizé meetings on the other side of the Iron Curtain contributed to the peaceful revolution of 1989. In the second chapter of this section, Wahnout scrutinizes Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP, Austrian People's Party) contacts with political opposition in Central and Eastern Europe. The ÖVP had contacts with dissidents from behind the Iron Curtain since the 1980s. In 1988-89, they ÖVP developed personal contacts with individual dissidents rather than systematic strategies. Wahnout concludes that despite the fact that the first generation of Christian Democratic politicians in post-communist states of Europe did not succeed over a long period, their significance in surmounting communism in terms of Christian responsibility is beyond dispute. The topic of West German chancellor Helmut Kohl's impact on the fledgling Center-Right in Central and Eastern Europe is presented by Alexander Brakel in the following chapter. His coherent study portrays Kohl's efforts as a failed crusade. The unstable nature of the bulk of the Christian Democratic Parties behind the former Iron Curtain caused the dissolution of the originally solid web between them and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) to which Kohl contributed. The author also explains Kohl's unrealistic clinging to post-1989 geopolitical stability vis-à-vis the Soviet Union versus future Baltic states, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. The last chapter of this section, by Giovanni Mario Ceci, focuses on the Italian Christian Democratic Party (DC) confronting the revolutions. Based on thorough archival research, the essay concludes that for the DC the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, which amounted to the end of the Cold War, was an unexpected historic turn. The events in the first half of 1989

were felt in terms of crisis and uncertainty and the DC had a wait-and-see attitude. In the second half of 1989 as the end of communism loomed on the horizon, the prevailing mood in the DC changed into confusion about what would happen. The immediate impact of the fall of the Berlin Wall on the DC headquarters was a triumph of satisfaction and triumphalism. However, this triumph eventually gave way to the DC's demise.

The last section starts with Kosicki's diligent account of Poland's prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki's place in the context of the end of Polish Catholic politics. The author excuses Mazowiecki's dark period in his youth of public support of the Polish communist totalitarian dictatorship in the 1950s. Kosicki portrays Mazowiecki's career and his gradual development from a Catholic socialist to a leading anti-communist dissident. In this context, the *aggiornamento* (modernization of the Catholic Church) inspired Mazowiecki to broker a dialogue between Catholics and Marxists in the 1960s. Still, a turning point for his ambitious position in communist Poland was marked by his falling into disfavor in the aftermath of the suppression of worker protests in Gdańsk in December 1970. Since then, Mazowiecki became one of the principal Catholic anti-communist figures in East Central Europe. On the other hand, his siding with privatization measures at the expense of the welfare state only underscored his and Poland's farewell to Christian Democracy. In the following contribution to this section, Anton Pelinka disagrees with referring to the 1989 events in Hungary as a revolution. He believes that non-violent revolutions, such as the 1989 dramatic changes, are not easily understood as real revolutions. In his account, two different approaches characterize the 1989 transition in Hungary: as liberation from foreign rule or as substitution of dictatorship for democracy. With the rise of the European Union, the first one seems to be prevailing now. As a result, at least as Pelinka states, Hungary will contribute to a policy of dismemberment of the contemporary European Union. The follow-

ing chapter, by Ladislav Cabada, focuses on Czechoslovakia. In his analysis, a significant cause for the survival of Christian Democratic and conservative political consciousness in the communist totalitarian era was the continuity of seminal personnel. Regrouped and trained Christian Democratic and conservative intellectuals from the 1960s became highly active during the Czechoslovak revolution and afterward. Nowadays, the Christian Democratic and conservative camps in both the Czech and Slovak Republic are splintered. The topic of restoration of Christian Democracy in Lithuania is covered by Artūras Svarauskas. He accentuates a specific political strategy of Lithuanian Christian Democrats in 1989-90, which consisted of supporting the national umbrella movement for Lithuanian independence, Sajudis. Just after Lithuania became an independent state, the Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party (LCDP) became a fully individual political entity. As a result, alas, the LCDP failed completely, both domestically and in terms of integrating into international Christian Democratic networks. In the last chapter of this final section, Slawomir Lukasiewicz deals with 1989 in the context of a discontinuation of Cold War cooperation among emigré Central and Eastern European Christian Democrats. By his account, the 1989 revolutions did not result in united representations of both Western and Eastern European Christian Democracy. In his inference, due to Central and Eastern European discords there is no chance of anything like a revival of Cold War cooperation between Western European Christian Democrats and Central and Eastern European exiles.

The book's conclusion by Kosicki examines the disappointed hopes of Christian Democracy in the countries from behind the former Iron Curtain beyond 1989. As evidenced by the book's findings, the author emphasizes that the greatest contributing influence of Western European Catholics to the fall of communism did not come from Christian Democratic Parties but from prayer and reflection communities. Kosicki argues that although Christi-

an Democracy contributed to the fall of communism, it glaringly failed to appeal to the Central and Eastern European homegrown democratic environment in the long term. As a "third way" product of the Cold War era, it turned into a blind alley on both sides of the former Iron Curtain.

Christian Democracy and the Fall of Communism provides a thoroughly researched and original contribution to the scholarship on the West-East implications in the context of the 1989 historic milestone in general and in terms of Christian Democracy in particular. Individual contributions to this volume are solidly evidence based, in terms of both primary and secondary sources. Their specific viewpoints implicitly complete each other into a sort of a harmonized whole. The resulting picture documents convincingly the role and implication of Christian Democracy in the fall of communism and beyond as a sort of Pyrrhic victory as to its long-term impact on the fate of Christian Democracy in both parts of Europe. This volume might serve as a cogent and coherent methodological lesson on the applicability of Western European political concepts to Central and Eastern Europe.

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