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## INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

The transformation in Central and Eastern Europe is still commonly understood as a transition from communist dictatorship to political, personal, and economic freedom. The causes that initiated this transformation are well established: the Soviet Union's defeat in its military-political rivalry with the United States, alongside the exhaustion of the Soviet bloc's economic model, which was ideologically driven and subordinated to the USSR's economic and military imperatives. However, the starting points, trajectories, and consequences of the transformation differed significantly across the countries of the region and have, in recent years, become subject to a certain degree of mythologisation. This process was accompanied by numerous social changes – many of which were not beneficial to the affected populations. Together with the wave of hope that accompanied the political transition, these adverse developments fostered an accumulation of resentment. Social and national conflicts emerged and were, at times, deliberately exacerbated. The necessity to manage entirely new life circumstances – at the level of states and societies, enterprises and institutions facing unfamiliar challenges, and ultimately in the realm of everyday life – brought forth demands for which societies and their elites were largely unprepared, lacking the necessary skills and experience. The economic transformation entailed dynamic changes not only in everyday life but also in the functioning of the entire economic

mechanisms of individual countries. The political transformation also followed different paths: in many Central and Eastern European countries, the change of 1989 was seen not only as liberation from dictatorship but also as the restoration of independence lost during and after the Second World War. However, many newly established states – particularly those that gained political sovereignty following the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia – could not refer to any lost independence. For most nations of Central and Eastern Europe, the transformation represented the fulfilment of fundamental national aspirations: the attainment (or restoration) of national sovereignty, democratic legitimacy of government, as well as political, personal, economic, and cultural freedom. One might assume that the dominant nations of the former Eastern Bloc – the Russians and the Serbs – would benefit from relinquishing their imperial role alongside the communist dictatorship; however, this occurred only to a limited extent.

The range of issues related to the transformation is quite extensive. Among the causes of the changes of 1989, one must acknowledge not only the Soviet failure to sustain its confrontation with the free world and maintain an ideologically driven political and economic system. Nevertheless, attempts to implement controlled reforms of the system – comparable to Khrushchev's efforts in 1956 – generally resulted not in the preservation of power by party oligarchies and their subordinate security police, but rather in a genuine transformation of the system itself. The significance of social dissatisfaction and resentment towards communist dictatorships, as well as the tangible influence of the

anti-communist opposition – which gained particular importance during the negotiation processes accompanying systemic change or came to represent popular emotions and aspirations – has been repeatedly emphasised as a major factor of change. The inefficiency of the planned economy, combined with ideological constraints, technological backwardness, widespread organisational incompetence among governments, a lack of investment funds, and extensive social control exerted by communist regimes, contributed to the progressive disintegration of the entire economic system in the former Soviet bloc countries. However, the mechanisms and trajectories of the collapse of dictatorships were not uniform across the region. The initiative – or lack thereof – of party structures and their subordinate apparatus of repression, as well as the unpredictable course of events, also played important roles.

Emerging from dictatorship meant that societies and nations confronted entirely new challenges – primarily economic ones – alongside the need to discover (and even redefine or construct from scratch) their social, political, and cultural identities. The aforementioned redefinition took place in the context of dynamic change, which was not necessarily perceived solely as modernisation. Efforts were often made to reverse – even if only symbolically – the communist social and cultural engineering, in the name of restoring traditional cultural, national, and religious values that had been trampled and destroyed by the dictatorship. Did this mean the revival of old national or social conflicts that had been ‘frozen’ for decades? Not in every case; such conflicts had often been forcibly suppressed by the communists a generation earlier and had lost relevance in light of new

challenges. However, the wars in Yugoslavia and the Caucasus offer contrasting and extreme examples: the outbreaks of national and religious conflicts in these regions were accompanied by very real political interests pursued by the parties involved. Communist leaders and elites frequently fuelled these conflicts by means of readily accessible mass media, their authority over security forces and military units, and the distribution of weapons.

The formal closure of the transition period, at least in theory, was marked by the accession of the Central and Eastern European countries to the European Union and NATO, preceded by significant legislative and organisational efforts undertaken by these states. However, it cannot be overlooked that many problems inherited from the communist dictatorship remain unresolved and continue to exert a disintegrative influence – comparable to toxic waste or radioactive fallout. The issue of the restitution of property confiscated under various pretexts by the communist authorities – in some cases even earlier, during the war by the Third Reich, and then appropriated by the communist state – remains unresolved in Central Europe’s largest country, Poland, giving rise to increasingly contentious political, legal, and property disputes. Restrictions on the participation of former members of the Communist Party and their subordinate security forces in public life have been only partially regulated, and only in certain countries of the region. One can even observe the consolidation and replication of post-communist elites and their networks of cooperation under these new conditions. Many officers of the communist security services – entire branches of these

organisations, at times – were incorporated into the special services and police of the new democratic states, which significantly affected not only the efficiency of these forces but, above all, their credibility. Transitional justice has encountered numerous serious obstacles, chiefly due to the combined effect of legal positivism and the evident failure to purge judicial institutions of representatives of the old regime and its deeply ingrained organisational culture. Some instruments of social control – such as the vast housing cooperatives formerly controlled by the party and state – have undergone only formal reforms. Legal systems were often maintained out of necessity; they consisted of sets of regulations introduced under the communist dictatorships (despite their obvious lack of legitimacy), amended on an *ad hoc* basis and only rarely in a systemic manner. The actions and narratives of post-communist parties undermine the process of reckoning with the past, discredit political and systemic change, perpetuate myths concerning the alleged positive aspects of communist dictatorship, and, in extreme cases, deny or relativise its crimes. The most enduring legacy, however, lies in the transformation of social mentality brought about by the communist dictatorship, which essentially involved the reduction or abolition of mutual trust and, consequently, the severing or weakening of numerous social bonds. The Sovietisation of social mentality as an obstacle to the reconstruction of social relations was recognised early in the transformation process in Poland. It is noteworthy that the primary response of Polish elites to social problems during the initial period of transformation was the creation of narratives that placed certain representatives – and sometimes entire social

groups – within a hierarchy of public respect, according to desirable or undesirable traits and behaviours. At that time, Alexandr Zinoviev's term *Homo Sovieticus* was adopted in Poland, describing an individual with a demanding personality, incapable of functioning within a community, cooperating, or working; focused solely on short-term personal gain; and inclined to project personal failures, as well as the costs of personal actions, onto others. However, this term quickly became a label used pejoratively against those who protested the negative consequences of the transformation, as well as against those who, during the transformation, lost the foundations of their previous way of life and were unable to meet the challenges of the new era. At the same time, a new approach to life during the transformation was emerging – centred on personal resourcefulness, initiative, and innovation, without relying on support from society, the state, or close communities. This was often accompanied by a certain detachment from the common good, seen only as a distant outcome of individual effort, or sometimes even met with lack of acceptance. Surprisingly, both social role constructs overlooked the possibility that individuals perceived as desirable and enterprising could, in fact, be motivated by traits traditionally attributed to *Homines Sovietici*, while 'demanding' attitudes might have stemmed from a desire to rebuild the social and state bonds and obligations that had been corrupted or stifled by the communist dictatorship. The figure of *Homo Sovieticus* became the target of an elite-driven aggression described as "antisocial anti-communism," which was no longer directed at communist institutions, laws, and cadres, but at society and individuals who had once been subjected to

them – those who now demanded guarantees of livelihood, respect for the common good, unity, and shared social responsibility. The ‘people’s’ response to these anti-egalitarian narratives was the mythologisation of the transformation as either the result of an elite conspiracy or as a process that fostered the corruption of social life and the operation of suspicious networks of interests, allegedly of post-communist or even criminal origin. Both types of narratives – manifested at various levels and in multiple forms – were constructed on the basis of real problems arising from the transformation, such as the collapse of social structures and safeguards, unemployment, rising crime, corruption and fraud, passivity and alienation of large segments of the population, the poor quality of political life, and the state’s retreat from responsibility for numerous areas of public affairs. While these narratives identified social problems, they refrained from addressing their fundamental political sources and, more importantly, did not propose methods for managing these problems beyond aspirational approaches. Certainly, the political aspiration to join the EU and NATO contributed to the establishment of certain standards in public life, which to some extent countered the most severe pathologies of the transformation process. An illustrative example may be the prominent role of ‘oligarchs’ and autocratic political structures in countries outside the Euro-Atlantic organisations, as well as the authoritarian responses to the social and political pathologies characteristic of this group.

However, the categorisation of individual transformations according to their effects and the political assessments of recent decades sometimes diverges from a *sine ira*

*et studio* description. The transformation model that recognises only the positive aspects of social modernisation (including overcoming the legacy of the past) fails to account for the aspirations and ambitions of societies connected to their traditional self-image. Conversely, the ‘dark’ portrayal of the transformation, which focuses exclusively on its aspects of deprivation and disintegration in relation to traditional social values, overlooks the undoubtedly positive – and at times even fundamental – outcomes of the transformation, such as the attainment of political and economic freedom. Both narratives overlook the fact that communist dictatorships were, in essence, systems of modernisation – imposed through coercion, dismantling entire social structures for ideological purposes, and lacking any organic foundation. If the transformation was to respond meaningfully to the legacy of communism, it needed not only to unleash the natural potential for modernisation but also to reconstruct the values that had been destroyed by communist modernisation. In Poland, a balance between these two objectives has not been achieved, it seems.

The failures and inconsistencies of transitional justice have undoubtedly influenced public perceptions of both the transformation process and, more broadly, of democracy as a political system. In principle, no country of the former Soviet bloc has held the party leadership or the heads of the repressive apparatus seriously accountable for their actions against the nations and societies they governed. Czechoslovakia stands out as the only country where members of the Communist Party were systemically and legally excluded from public affairs. The most notorious crimes

of the communist dictatorships became the subject of investigations and trials, which, however, encountered significant procedural and political obstacles for various reasons. The execution of Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife during the Romanian Revolution of 1989 can scarcely be regarded as an instance of transitional justice; rather, it should be perceived as part of the logic of an unfolding *coup d'état*. It is widely perceived that both high-ranking and lower-level members of regime organisations not only evaded accountability but, in many cases, benefited from the very freedoms and civil liberties whose suppression they had previously supported – or at least accepted.

The natural public disappointment arising from the failed implementation of transitional justice was also mirrored in other aspects of the transformation. The perception of the new system as inconsistent from the outset, marked by deficits in the justice that had been so widely anticipated – or even as fundamentally flawed – had a considerable impact on its overall public assessment.

The economic transformation – the transition from a centrally planned Marxist economy to a free market – was necessary at the macro level but, on the human scale, proved a profound challenge for millions. Economic changes, which often entailed the loss of employment for entire social groups and large segments of local communities, occurred beyond their control. The experience of unemployment or the threat thereof, the loss of the ability to support oneself and one's family, and the pervasive sense of insecurity in the face of externally imposed change undermined or even shattered the self-esteem of entire social strata and nuclear communities, becoming

a source of lasting trauma. Inevitably, this also shaped the perception of other dimensions of the transformation – above all, the political transition. The initial enthusiasm for long-awaited freedoms gave way to a calculus of gains and losses, which, for many, yielded a negative balance. Post-communist actors exploited these disappointments and, at times, the associated nostalgia (*Ostalgie*), both to rebuild political support and to distort interpretations of the past. The crimes and repressions of the former system were presented as justified, and the very nature of the regime was depicted as far removed from its totalitarian character and aspirations.

The history of the transformation is both one of failures and of successes. To a large extent, a significant part of the efforts related to transitional justice and 'dealing with the past' proved to be a failure, with certain exceptions; the German and Czechoslovak, and later Czech, experiences of decommunisation belong to these exceptions. In this respect, Poland found itself only halfway along this path: decommunisation did not take place, the lustration model adopted was limited in scope, and the revocation of privileges granted to the functionaries of the communist dictatorship's apparatus of repression was only partial and subject to reversal. Even the seemingly straightforward task of constructing an uncontested historical narrative of Poland under communist dictatorship proved to be difficult – only partly due to the natural course of social and historical debate, despite the considerable preparatory work undertaken by the democratic opposition prior to 1989, notably in exposing the falsehoods of communist propaganda. The successes of the transformation in Central Europe certainly include systemic and economic changes: the

transition to democracy, the restoration of the free market, and the improvement of living standards. However, these achievements did not come without considerable costs. Economic successes were accompanied by significant failures and negative phenomena, including social degradation, corruption, the decline of the state sector resulting from doctrinally driven privatisation, and the disintegration of municipal services. Among the failures of political transformation were the emergence of parasitic interest groups and individuals operating at the intersection of economic and political spheres in post-Soviet countries – the so-called oligarchs – as well as the regression of Belarus and Russia from formally functioning democracies to autocratic regimes. Moreover, the protracted political struggle in Ukraine may have also fostered anti-democratic tendencies. However, the contemporary and delayed response to the political consequences of the unfolding transformation in Southern and Eastern Europe has crossed the threshold of peaceful solutions. The attempt by Serbian communists to maintain political dominance in the disintegrating Yugoslavia contributed to the outbreak of wars in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Russia's efforts to retain control over the post-Soviet space, often referred to as the 'near abroad,' initially involved fuelling conflicts in lost territories by creating 'niches of confrontation' in the form of separatist *para-states* (as Wojciech Górecki termed them) – Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh – and also by stimulating separatist or autonomous sentiments or dissent in regions such as Gagauzia and Transcarpathian Ukraine, as well as in Polish-inhabited areas of Lithuania and among Russian-speaking populations in

Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. These 'pockets of conflict,' which could not be decisively exploited at the moment of their outbreak, became negative assets of sorts for future political and military influence – essentially providing Russia with an ability to impede the countries of the former Soviet empire in their potential complete withdrawal from its sphere of influence. Attempts by Soviet forces to suppress state transformation in Lithuania and Latvia through force also crossed the threshold of peaceful action.

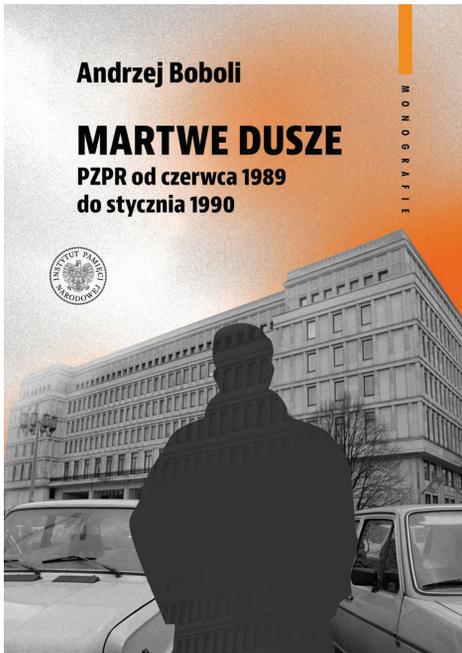
Many of the successes and failures of the transformation are connected both to the challenges inherited from the collapsing communist dictatorships and to the initial phase of the transformation itself. This circumstance encouraged the mythologisation of the transformation, including attempts to assess or settle its failures – particularly at an early stage – when we already understand the various consequences of the decisions and omissions made then (although we likely do not fully appreciate the dilemmas and pressures faced by the political actors at the time, nor the uncertainty surrounding the course of events they confronted). The settling of accounts with the transformation became, to some extent, a substitute for reckoning with the communist dictatorships: when it was impossible to end the period of unfreedom and repair the damage done (at least what was repairable), the transformation processes and their human and social costs became the target of resentment. In response, the failures of the transformation – especially in addressing problems and remedying past wrongs – were relativised, being presented as a necessary cost (even a kind of transaction arising from a social contract) for regaining sovereignty and freedom, alongside all the

positive changes and successes. In reality, bearing such a cost did not guarantee any of the transformation's benefits – the developments in many post-Soviet countries sadly attest to this.

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Over the past few decades, a significant number of books – and an even greater number of articles and individual chapters within edited volumes – have been published on the transformation in the countries of the former Soviet bloc. Many of these are records of academic conferences, while some take on a semi-journalistic or entirely journalistic character. Compiling a representative bibliography of these works would require substantial systematic effort; therefore, only some of the more important publications are indicated below, particularly those resulting from the institutional endeavours of groups and organisations dedicated to the contemporary history of Central Europe. The review of these publications is general in nature – a critical appraisal of all Central European scholarly achievements on this topic would require considerably more space. The process of transition from dictatorship to new political and economic systems, and the multi-level control over its effects, has become the subject of research conducted by numerous institutions – including those specifically established to oversee the legacy of the totalitarian past, such as the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation (Poland), the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic (now a branch of the German Federal Archives),

the Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship (for the reappraisal of the SED dictatorship) (Germany), the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (Czech Republic), the Nation's Memory Institute (Slovakia), as well as many other academic institutions. Among the latter are the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Centre for East European Studies at the University of Warsaw, the Centre for Political Thought in Cracow, the Centre for Contemporary History in Potsdam (Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung), and many others. Among the most important Polish publications on political transformation, one should mention the authoritative book by Antoni Dudek (*Reglamentowana rewolucja. Rozkład dyktatury komunistycznej w Polsce 1988–1990*, first edition 2004), as well as his published selection of sources (*Zmierzch dyktatury. Polska lat 1986–1989 w świetle dokumentów*, vol. 1 (czerwiec 1986 – maj 1989), vol. 2 (czerwiec – grudzień 1989)). Also noteworthy are the edited volumes by Krzysztof Brzechczyn (*Ścieżki transformacji. Ujęcia teoretyczne i opisy empiryczne*, 2003; *Interpretacje upadku komunizmu w Polsce i w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej*, 2011), the publications of Jan Skórzyński (*Ugoda i rewolucja. Władza i opozycja 1985–1989*, 1995; *Okrągły Stół. Wynegocjowany koniec PRL*, 2019), and Jadwiga Staniszkis (*Postkomunizm. Próba opisu*, 2001). Publications dedicated to processes that were part of the transformation include works by Paulina Codogni (*Okrągły Stół czyli Polski Rubikon*, 2009; *Wybory Czerwcowe 1989 roku. U progu przemiany ustrojowej*, 2012), Andrzej Boboli (*Martwe dusze. PZPR od czerwca 1989*



Andrzej Boboli. *Martwe dusze. PZPR od czerwca 1989 do stycznia 1990. Próba opisu zbiorowości* [Dead souls. Polish United Workers' Party from June 1989 to January 1990. An attempt to outline the collective]. Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2024

*do stycznia 1990. Próba opisu zbiorowości*, 2024), an edited volume by Tomasz Kozłowski and Michał Siedziako (*Kryzys w partii, partia w kryzysie. Ostatnia dekada PZPR*, 2023), Jan Winiecki (*Transformacja postkomunistyczna. Studium przypadku zmian instytucjonalnych*, 2012), Paweł Kowal (*Koniec systemu władzy. Polityka ekipy gen. Wojciecha Jaruzelskiego w latach 1986–1989*, 2012), Andrzej Konrad Piasecki (*Wybory w Polsce 1989–2011*, 2012), Jan Kofman and Wojciech Roszkowski (*Transformacja i postkomunizm*, 1999), works edited by Tadeusz Wallas (*Od totalitaryzmu do demokracji. Wybrane problemy okresu przemian*, 2003), Jan Wardzała and Małgorzata Lipińska (*Dwadzieścia lat po przełomie. Tradycje i współczesność demokracji parlamentarnej w Polsce*, 2009), Grzegorz Miernik and Anita Młynarczyk-Tomczyk

(*Transformacja systemowa w Polsce z przełomu lat 80. i 90. XX wieku. Wybrane konteksty*, 2023), and the collective work by Adam Burakowski, Aleksander Gubrynowicz, and Paweł Ukielski (1989. *Jesień Narodów*, 2009; second edition 2021; Romanian edition: 1989. *Toamna națiunilor*, 2013; Hungarian edition: 1989 – *a kommunista diktatúra végnapjai Közép- és Kelet-Európában*, 2014; Czech edition: 1989 – *podzim národů*, 2022).

Issues related to transformation in Central Europe have also been the subject of other Polish works, including those by Paweł Ukielski (*Aksamitny rozwód. Rola elit politycznych w procesie podziału Czechosłowacji*, 2007), an edited volume by Andrzej Nowak (*Ofiary imperium – imperia jako ofiary. 44 spojrzenia = Imperial victims – empires as victims. 44 views*, 2010), the book by Włodzimierz Marciniak (*Rozgrabione imperium: upadek Związku Sowieckiego i powstanie Federacji Rosyjskiej*, 2001), an edited volume by Witold Małachowski (*Polska – Niemcy a transformacja systemowa*, 1997), and works by Marek Bankowicz (*Transformacje konstytucyjnych systemów władzy państwowej w Europie Środkowej*, 2010), Miron Musiał (*Władza, media, propaganda, transformacja: Białoruś przełomu wieków*, 2012), as well as publications from the Kraków-based Centre for Political Thought, including works edited by Jan Holzer and Stanislav Balík (*Postkomunistyczne reżimy niedemokratyczne. Badania nad przemianami teorii politycznej w okresie po transformacji ustrojowej*, 2009; Czech edition: *Postkomunistické nedemokratické režimy: studie k proměnám politické teorie v posttranzitivním čase*, 2007), works edited by Artur Wołek and Justinas Dementavičius on the transformation in Lithuania (*Udana transformacija na*

peryferiach?, 2014), works edited by Paweł Kuglarz (*Od totalitaryzmu do demokracji: „pomiędzy grubą kreską” a dekomunizacją. Doświadczenia Polski i Niemiec*, 2001), and works edited by Maciej Ruczaj (*Dysydenci. Czeskie drogi od totalitaryzmu do demokracji*, 2020).

The social and economic consequences related to the transformation have been the subject of works by, among others, Jacek Tittenbrun (*Upadek socjalizmu realnego w Polsce*, 1992; *Z deszczu pod rynnę. Meandry polskiej prywatyzacji*, vols. 1–4, 2007), Maciej Bałtowski and Maciej Miszewski (*Transformacja gospodarcza w Polsce*, 2006), Tomasz Luterek (*Reprywatyzacja. Źródła problemu*, 2016), Kazimierz Z. Poznański (*Poland's Protracted Transition. Institutional Change and Economic Growth, 1970–1994*, 1997; *Wielki przekręt: klęska polskich reform*, 2000; *Obłęd reform: wyprzedaż Polski*, 2001), and Witold Kieżun (*Patologia transformacji*, 2012). Among the significant critics of the economic transformation, one should mention, among others, Tadeusz Kowalik (*Społeczne koszty transformacji*, 1997; *Nierówni i równiejsi: sprawiedliwość dystrybucyjna czasu transformacji w Polsce*, 2002; [www.polskatransformacja.pl](http://www.polskatransformacja.pl), 2009; Stanisław Gomulka, Tadeusz Kowalik, eds., *Transformacja polska: dokumenty i analizy 1990*, 2011; *From Solidarity to Sellout. The Restoration of Capitalism in Poland*, 2011; see also Grzegorz Konat, ed., *The Polish transformation: Tadeusz Kowalik on the epigonic bourgeois revolution of 1989*, 2024; Maciej Perszyński, ed., *After the market shock: Central and East-European economies in transition*, 1994; Christopher G. A. Bryant, Edmund Mokrzycki, eds., *The new great transformation? Change and continuity in*

*East-Central Europe*, 1994). The book by David Ost also deserves attention (*The Defeat of Solidarity. Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe*, 2005).

The role of the security police in the transformation process has been the subject of several works, including those by Andrzej Zybertowicz (*W uścisku tajnych służb. Upadek komunizmu i układ postnomenklaturowy*, 1993; and, co-authored with Radosław Sojak, *Transformacja podszyta przemocą. O nieformalnych mechanizmach przemian instytucjonalnych*, 2008), Jerzy Targalski (“Józef Darski”) (*Służby specjalne i pierestrojka: rola służb specjalnych i ich agentur w pierestrojce i demontażu komunizmu w Europie Sowieckiej*, vols. 1–5, 2017), and Tomasz Kozłowski (*Koniec imperium MSW: transformacja organów bezpieczeństwa państwa 1989–1990*, 2019). The changes in social customs in Poland that occurred during and as a result of the transformation were the subject of a book by Beata Łaciak (*Obyczajowość polska czasu transformacji, czyli wojna postu z karnawalem*, 2005).

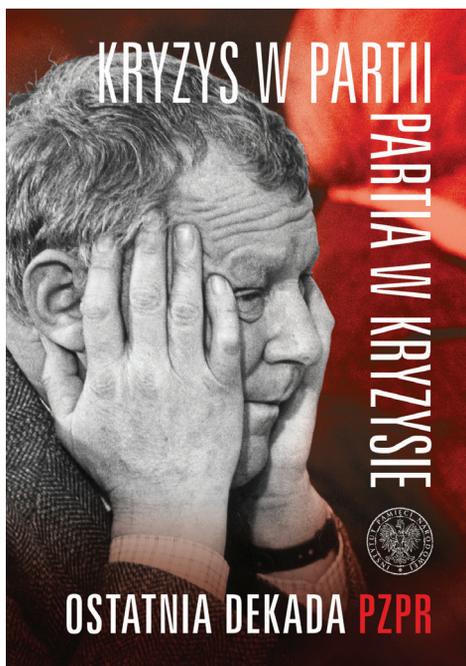
Journalistic or opinion-focused assessments of the transformation – particularly its social and political consequences – are also a key theme in the books by Rafał Woś (*Dziecięca choroba liberalizmu*, 2015; *Zimna trzydziestoletnia. Nieautoryzowana biografia polskiego kapitalizmu*, 2019), Michał Przeperski (*Dziki Wschód. Transformacja po polsku. 1986–1993*, 2024), Zdzisław Krasnodębski (*Demokracja peryferii*, 2005), and in collective volumes edited by Jacek Kloczkowski (*Od komunizmu do...? Dokąd zmierza III Rzeczpospolita?*, 1999; *Antykomunizm po komunizmie*, 2000; *Rzeczpospolita 1989–2009. Zwykle państwo Polaków?*, 2009), Zbigniew

Stawrowski (*Budowanie na piasku. Szkice o III Rzeczypospolitej*, 2014), Bronisław Wildstein (*Dekomunizacja, której nie było*, 2000), Marek A. Cichocki (*Władza i pamięć*, 2005), Magdalena Okraska (*Nie ma i nie będzie*, 2022), and Paweł Śpiewak (*Pamięć po komunizmie*, 2005; see also Cecylia Kuta, “Problems with the Memory of Communism...,” *Institute of National Remembrance Review* 2 (2020)).

Among the works published by the Centre for East European Studies at the University of Warsaw, noteworthy are the books by Jerzy Maćków (*Communism and its transformation in Europe and Russia*, 2020), Jane Leftwich Curry (*Democracy and democratization. The third and fourth waves*, 2020), and Mykoła Riabczuk (*Eastern Europe since 1989 between loosened authoritarianism and unconsolidated democracy*, 2020).

Research conducted at the Polish Institute of National Remembrance has also included studies on Poland’s political transformation: the history of the final decade of the communist dictatorship, the history of the democratic opposition, as well as investigations into the state and party apparatus of the dictatorship. Naturally, this research also covers the processes leading to and forming part of the political transformation, along with some of its consequences directly related to Polish politics of memory. In addition to the works by Andrzej Boboli, Tomasz Kozłowski, Paulina Codogni, and Krzysztof Brzechczyn mentioned above, collective volumes have been published by the IPN edited by Michał Przeperski and Daniel Wicenty (*Transformacja ustrojowa w Polsce. Nowe perspektywy*, 2022; see the chapter by Agnieszka Kolasa-Nowak in this volume), Michał Siedziako and Tomasz Kozłowski

(*Kryzys w partii – partia w kryzysie. Ostatnia dekada PZPR*, 2023), Patryk Pleskot (*Między PRL a III RP (1989–1990). Legalizm czy kontynuacja?*, 2020), Adam Dziuba and Bogusław Tracz (*Więcej niż partia. PZPR a polityka, gospodarka i społeczeństwo 1948–1990*, 2017), Konrad Białecki, Stanisław Jankowiak, and Rafał Reczek (*Krok ku wolności. Wybory czerwcowe 1989 i ich konsekwencje*, 2015), Sebastian Pilarski (*Służba Bezpieczeństwa wobec przemian politycznych w latach 1988–1990. Region łódzki*, 2009), and Małgorzata Machałek and Jan Macholak (*Narodziny III Rzeczypospolitej. Pomorze Zachodnie w latach 1988–1990*, 2006). A significant part of the research conducted by the IPN concerns the history of the democratic opposition in Poland – which became a key actor in the country’s democratic transformations. Accordingly, references to the involvement of the opposition (both its circles and individual activists), as well as political parties, in the transformation processes are scattered throughout a vast majority of IPN publications. Among the works addressing the starting points of the transformation, one can point to the studies by Krzysztof Brzechczyn (*Umysł solidarnościowy. Geneza i ewolucja myśli społeczno-politycznej „Solidarności” w latach 1980–1989*, 2022), as well as the biography of the last First Secretary of the PZPR by Michał Przeperski (*Mieczysław F. Rakowski. Biografia polityczna*, 2021), the monograph on the anti-reformist wing of the party authored by Przemysław Gasztold (*Towarzysze z betonu. Dogmatyzm w PZPR 1980–1990*, 2019), and the prosopographic and institutional guide edited by Aleksander Kochoński (*Polska 1944–1991. Informator historyczny. Struktury i ludzie*, vols. 1–2, 2022).



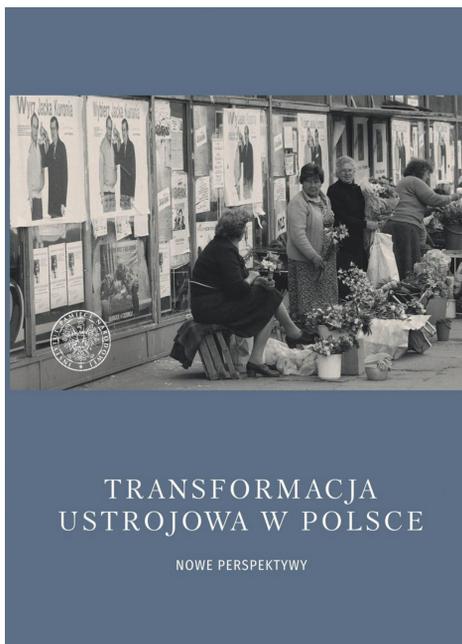
Kryzys w partii – partia w kryzysie. Ostatnia dekada PZPR [Crisis in party – Party in crisis. The last decade of Polish United Workers’ Party], eds. Tomasz Kozłowski and Michał Siedziako. Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2023

The transformation also occupies a significant place in the research and publications of scholars at the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The published works include an edited volume by Bogdan Góralczyk, Katarzyna Żukrowska, and Wojciech Kostecki (*In Pursuit of Europe. Transformations of Post-Communist States 1989–1994*, 1995), a work by Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński (*After Communism. A Multidisciplinary Approach to Radical Social Change*, 1995), an edited volume by Jerzy Holzer and Józef M. Fischer (*Przemiany w Polsce i NRD po 1989 roku*, 1996), a work by Andrzej Paczkowski (*Polska 1986–1989 – od kooptacji do negocjacji. Kilka uwag*

*o wchodzeniu w proces zmiany systemowej*, 1997), an edited volume by Leslie Holmes and Wojciech Roszkowski (*Changing Rules. Polish Political and Economic Transformation*, 1997), a book by Piotr Sztompka (*Trauma wielkiej zmiany. Społeczne koszty transformacji*, 2000), an edited volume by Jacek Wasilewski and Janina Frentzel-Zagórska (*The Second Generation of Democratic Elites in Central and Eastern Europe*, 2000), a collection of conference papers from 1999 edited by Paweł Machcewicz, Andrzej Paczkowski, Antoni Dudek, and Andrzej Friszke (*Polska 1986–1989: koniec systemu: materiały międzynarodowej konferencji, Miedzeszyn 21–23 października 1999*, vol. 1, *Referaty*, vol. 2, *Dyskusja*, vol. 3, *Dokumenty*, 2002), books by Antoni Z. Kamiński and Bartłomiej Kamiński (*Korupcja rządów. Państwa pokomunistyczne wobec globalizacji*, 2004), Andrzej Szpociński (*Różnorodność procesów zmian. Transformacja niejedno ma imię*, 2004), Piotr Kozarzewski (*Prywatyzacja w krajach postkomunistycznych*, 2006), Stanisław Mocek (*Dziennikarze po komunizmie. Elita mediów w świetle badań społecznych*, 2006), Inka Słodkowska (*Społeczeństwo obywatelskie na tle historycznego przełomu. Polska 1980–1989*, 2006), an edited volume by Piotr Dutkiewicz and Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone (*New Europe. The Impact of the First Decade*, vol. 1, *Trends and Prospects*, vol. 2, *Variations on the Pattern*, 2006) a book by Piotr Tadeusz Kwiatkowski (*Pamięć zbiorowa społeczeństwa polskiego w okresie transformacji*, 2008), a collection of conference papers from 2009 edited by Andrzej Paczkowski, Violetta Kmieć, and Joanna Warec (*Solidarność i upadek komunizmu. Międzynarodowa konferencja, Warszawa–Gdańsk, 3–4 czerwca 2009 = Solidarity and the Fall of Communism*.

*International conference. Warszawa–Gdańsk, 3–4 June 2009, 2009*), an edited volume by Ryszard Żelichowski and Wojciech Materski (*Polska transformacja. Spojrzenie po dwudziestu latach*, 2010), a collection of documents of Solidarność from the 1989 elections edited by Inka Słodkowska (*Wybory 1989. Dokumenty strony solidarnościowo-opozycyjnej*, vol. 1, *Kwatera Główna*, 2009, vol. 2, *Regiony*, 2011). Also to be mentioned is the record of the opposition's programmatic conference published by the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, edited by Inka Słodkowska: *U progu zmiany ustrojowej. Konferencja „Etos Solidarności” (9–10 grudnia 1989 r.)*, (2023), books by Konrad Świder (*Ewolucja elity władzy w Związku Radzieckim i Rosji w kontekście przemian ideowych, politycznych, społecznych i ekonomicznych*, 2013), Antoni Z. Kamiński (*Dezercja elit. Konsolidacja ustroju politycznego w pokomunistycznej Polsce*, 2014), Inka Słodkowska (*Komitety Obywatelskie 1989–1992. Rdzeń polskiej transformacji*, 2014), Józef M. Fischer and Tomasz Stępniewski (*Polska i Ukraina w procesie transformacji, integracji i wyzwań dla bezpieczeństwa Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, 2017), Maria Jarosz (*Transformacja. Elity. Społeczeństwo*, 2017), and finally, a series of edited volumes on settling accounts with the past, edited by Andrzej Paczkowski, Bartłomiej Różycki, Łukasz Jasiński, and Paweł Machcewicz (*Rozliczanie totalitarnej przeszłości. Instytucje i ulice*, 2017; *Rozliczanie totalitarnej przeszłości. Zbrodnie, kolaboracja i symbole przeszłości*, 2017; *Rozliczanie totalitarnej przeszłości. Karanie i upamiętnianie zbrodni*, 2018).

Of note is the well-considered research programme – and the resulting publications –



*Transformacja ustrojowa w Polsce. Nowe perspektywy* [System transformation in Poland. New research perspectives], eds. Michał Przeperski and Daniel Wicenty. Gdańsk–Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2022

of the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences (*Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR*). Among the publications by its researchers the following edited volumes deserve a mention: edited volumes by Adéla Gjuríčová and Tomáš Zahradníček (*Dlouhý volební rok 1990 ve střední Evropě. Očekávání, koncepty, praxe*, 2021); Jiří Kocian, Jaroslav Pažout, Tomáš Vilímek, Stanislav Balík, and Vít Hloušek (*Dějiny Komunistické strany Československa IV. 1969–1993*, 2020); Adéla Gjuríčová, Michal Kopeček, Petr Roubal, Matěj Spurný, and Tomáš Vilímek (*Architekti dlouhé změny. Expertní kořeny postsocialismu v Československu (1980–1995)*, 2019); Michal Kopeček and Piotr Wcislik (*Thinking through Transition. Liberal Democracy, Authoritarian Pasts, and Intellectual History in East Central Europe After 1989*, 2015); Miroslav Vaněk

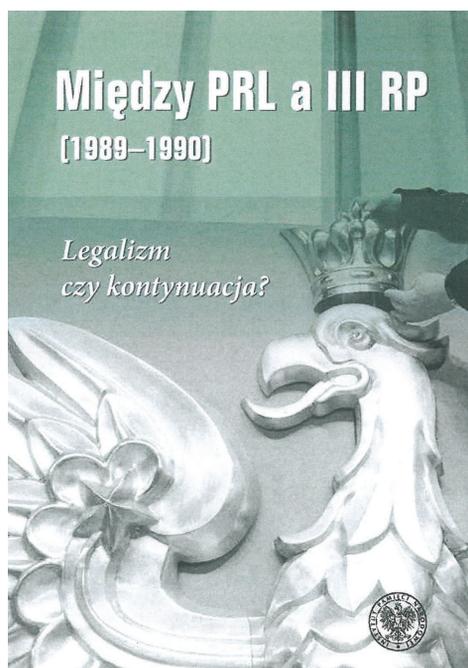
and Pavel Mück (*Velvet Revolutions. An Oral History of Czech Society*, 2016); Petr Blažek and Jaroslav Pažout (*Dominový efekt. Opoziční hnutí v zemích střední Evropy a pád komunistických režimů v roce 1989*, 2013); Mark Kramer and Vít Smetana (*Imposing, Maintaining, and Tearing Open the Iron Curtain. The Cold War and East-Central Europe, 1945–1989*, 2014); Jiří Suk (*Konstituční, nebo existenciální revoluce? Václav Havel a Federální shromáždění 1989/1990. Studie a dokumenty*, 2014); a collection of documents edited by Blanka Čiřarovská and Vilém Prečan (*Charta 77. Dokumenty 1977–1989*, 2007, vols. 1–3); studies edited by Adéla Gjuríčová, Michal Kopeček, Jiří Suk, and Martin Franc (*Kapitoly z dějin české demokracie po roce 1989*, 2008); Lenka Kalinová (*Konec nadějí a nová očekávání. K dějinám české společnosti 1969–1993*, 2012); a collection of documents edited by Vilém Prečan and Zdeněk Sládek (*K vývoji sovětské politiky vůči státům Varšavské smlouvy: dokumenty a materiály 1989–1990*, 1999); a collection of documents edited by František Koudelka, Alena Nosková, and Vilém Prečan (*Situační zprávy ústředního aparátu KSČ (20. listopadu – 1. prosince 1989). Pokyny a směrnice vedení KSČ nižším stranickým složkám (19. listopadu – 1. prosince 1989)*, 1999); a chronology of changes in Czechoslovakia edited by Jiří Suk, Jaroslav Cuhra, and František Koudelka (*Chronologie zániku komunistického režimu v Československu 1985–1990*, 1999); a collection of documents edited by František Koudelka, Alena Nosková, and Vilém Prečan (*Vedení KSČ o disentu a opozici. Dokumenty z ledna 1986 – října 1989*, 1999); studies edited by Vilém Prečan and Derek Paton (*The Democratic Revolution in*

*Czechoslovakia. Its precondition, course, and immediate repercussions, 1987–89*, 1999); Věra Břeňová, Vilém Prečan, Jan Rychlík, and Slavěna Rohlíková (*Transformace a rozdělení československé federace 1989/1990–1992. Studijní materiál pro účastníky conference*, 2002); and finally the book by Milan Otáhal (*Studenti a komunistická moc v českých zemích 1968–1989*, 2003). Among the publications devoted to transformation by the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (USTR), one can highlight the works of Matěj Bílý (*Varšavská smlouva 1985–1991. Dezintegrace a rozpad*, 2021), which constitutes the second part of his study on the Warsaw Pact. The Slovak Institute of National Remembrance has published, among other things, edited volumes and collections of documents edited by Peter Balun (*1988 Rok pred zmenou. Zborník a dokument*, 2009), as well as edited volumes by Peter Jašek (*1989 – Rok zmeny*, 2017; *20. výročie Nežnej revolúcie*, 2009). Publications affiliated with the Prague political science university CEVRO deserve particular attention, including an edited volume by Alexander Vondra (*Helsinki Process, Velvet Revolution of 1989 and the Czech Transformation: Lesson for Korean Peninsula?*, 2015), as well as a series of booklets titled *Memory of Nations. Democratic Transition Guide* (with separate issues concerning political transformation in Argentina, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Georgia, Cambodia, Germany, Poland, Romania, and Russia) (published 2015–2018). Worth noting are also the publications of Pavel Žáček, (including *Boje o minulost. Deset let vyrovnávání se s komunistickou minulostí – pokus o předběžnou bilanci*, 2000; *Jakešovo gestapo. Komunistické mocenské*

orgány a listopad 1989, 2019; Z Albertova na Národní třídu. 17. listopad 1989 v Praze 2 pohledem komunistických bezpečnostních složek, 2019; Vypovídat pravdu a nic nezamlčet. Protokoly parlamentní vyšetřovací komise pro objasnění událostí 17. listopadu 1989, vols. 1–2, 2013). Also worth mentioning is the album published by Ivana Koutská, Vojtěch Ripka, Pavel Žáček, Vojtěch Ripka, and Kamil Činátl entitled *Občanské fórum, den první. Vznik OF v dokumentech a fotografiích* (2009).

A significant contribution comes from the German Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic (BStU), which was partially dissolved and incorporated into the Federal Archive. Among the works are studies edited by Dagmar Unverhau and Roland Lucht (*Lustration, Aktenöffnung, demokratischer Umbruch in Polen, Tschechien, der Slowakei und Ungarn*, 2005); publications concerning the final period of the Stasi's activity ("*Keine Gewalt!*" *Stasi am Ende – die Demonstrationen im Herbst '89*, 2014; "*Stasi raus – es ist aus!*" *Stasi am Ende – die letzten Tage der DDR-Geheimpolizei*, 2015); publications on the 1989 demonstrations in the GDR provinces ("*Überall kocht und brodelt es ...*" *Stasi am Ende – die ersten Tage der friedlichen Revolution in Sachsen*, 2014; Andreas Niemann and Walter Süß, "*Gegen das Volk kann nichts mehr entschieden werden.*" *MfS und SED im Bezirk Neubrandenburg 1989*, 1997; Holger Horsch, *Hat nicht wenigstens die Stasi die Stimmung im Lande gekannt? MfS und SED im Bezirk Karl-Marx-Stadt*, 1997; Eberhard Stein, *Sorgt dafür, daß sie die Mehrheit nicht hinter sich kriegen! MfS und SED im Bezirk Erfurt*, 1999), as well as broader studies, including those edited by Helge Heidemeyer (*Opposition*

*und SED in der Friedlichen Revolution. Organisationsgeschichte der alten und neuen politischen Gruppen 1989/90*, 2011) and selections of source documents (*Die Stasi in der Friedlichen Revolution. Auszüge aus Stasi-Akten im Herbst 1989*, 2016; Daniela Münkel, ed., *Herbst '89 im Blick der Stasi. Die geheimen Berichte an die SED-Führung (Auswahledition)*, 2022), including a relevant volume from the series *Die DDR im Blick der Stasi*, which contains reports of the central analytical unit of the MfS, the *Zentrale Auswertungs-und Informationsgruppe (ZAIG)* (Daniela Münkel, Mark Emanuel Schiefer, Martin Stief, eds., *Die DDR im Blick der Stasi 1989. Die geheimen Berichte an die SED-Führung*, 2019). Among other publications prepared by BStU researchers, one can mention the edited volume by Bernd Florath (*Das Revolutionsjahr 1989. Die demokratische Revolution in Osteuropa als transnationale Zäsur*, 2011); the collective work on the destruction of files of the East German security police (Roger Engelmann, Christian Halbrock, Frank Joestel, eds., *Vernichtung von Stasi-Akten. Eine Untersuchung zu den Verlusten 1989/90*, 2020); the work by Walter Süß (*Staatssicherheit am Ende. Warum es den Mächtigen nicht gelang, 1989 eine Revolution zu verhindern*, 1999); and the book by Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk (*Endspiel. Die Revolution von 1989 in der DDR*, 2015). Researchers from the Potsdam-based Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung have also published several significant works, including the book by Rainette Lange (*Erzählen vom Umbruch. Die »Wende« von 1989/90 in der deutschen und tschechischen Gegenwartsliteratur*, 2020), an edited volume by Martin Sabrow, Tilmann Siebeneichner, and Peter Ulrich Weiß (*1989 – Eine Epochenzäsur?*, 2021),



*Między PRL a III RP (1989–1990). Legalizm czy kontynuacja?* [Between Polish People's Republic and Third Polish Republic. Legalism or continuation?], ed. Patryk Pleskot. Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2020

and the publication by Clemens Villinger (*Vom ungerechten Plan zum gerechten Markt? Konsum, soziale Ungleichheit und der Systemwechsel von 1989/90*, 2022). Worth noting are also the publications of the Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Germany (*Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur*), among which are: the book by Robert Grünbaum (*Deutsche Einheit. Ein Überblick 1945 bis heute*, 2010), an edited volume by Andreas H. Apelt, Robert Grünbaum, and Martin Gutzeit (*Der Weg zur Deutschen Einheit. Mythen und Legenden*, 2010), the book by Erhart Neubert (*Unsere Revolution. Die Geschichte der Jahre 1989/1990*, 2008), an edited

volume by Heike Tuchscheerer, Jens Schöne, and Robert Grünbaum (*REVOLUTION! 1989 – Aufbruch ins Offene*, 2020), an edited volume by Michael Gehler and Maximilian Graf (*Europa und die deutsche Einheit. Beobachtungen, Entscheidungen und Folgen*, 2017), the book by Thomas Ahbe (*Ostalgie. Zu ostdeutschen Erfahrungen und Reaktionen nach dem Umbruch*, 2016), an edited volume by Andreas H. von Apelt, Robert Grünbaum, and Martin Gutzeit (*Umbrüche und Revolutionen in Ostmitteleuropa 1989*, 2015), and an edited volume by Andreas H. Apelt and Robert Grünbaum (*Das letzte Jahr der DDR. Von der Volkskammerwahl zur Wiedervereinigung*, 2015).

Attention should also be drawn to publications covering a broad spectrum of issues involving multiple countries and their specific contexts. These include edited volumes by Vladimir Tismaneanu and Bogdan C. Iacob (*The End and the Beginning. The Revolutions of 1989 and the Resurgence of History*, 2012; *Remembrance, history, and justice. Coming to terms with traumatic pasts in democratic societies*, 2015; *Ideological Storms. Intellectuals, Dictators, and the Totalitarian Temptation*, 2019), a publication by Raluca Grosescu and Agata Fijalkowski (*Transitional Criminal Justice in Post-Dictatorial and Post-Conflict Societies*, 2015), other works by Raluca Grosescu (*Justice and Memory after Dictatorship: Latin America, Central Eastern Europe, and the Fragmentation of International Criminal Law*, 2024), as well as works specifically focused on the Romanian context (Raluca Grosescu and Raluca Ursachi, *Justiția penală de tranziție. De la Nürnberg la postcomunismul românesc*, 2009; Raluca Grosescu, *Les communistes dans l'après-communisme. Trajectoires de*

*conversion politique de la nomenclatura roumaine après 1989*, 2012). Attention is also drawn to publications by the Central European University in Budapest, which appear to be programmatically published in English. Among these are works such as Károly Attila Soós, *Politics and Policies in Post-Communist Transition. Primary and Secondary Privatisation in Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, 2011; Maria N. Todorova, Augusta Dimou, and Stefan Troebst, eds., *Remembering Communism. Private and Public Recollections of Lived Experience in Southeast Europe*, 2014; Oto Luthar, ed., *Of Red Dragons and Evil Spirits. Post-Communist Historiography between Democratization and the New Politics of History*, 2017; Tommaso Piffer, and Vladislav Zubok, eds., *Totalitarian Societies and Democratic Transition. Essays in Memory of Victor Zaslavsky*, 2017; M. Mark Stolarik, ed., *The Czech and Slovak Republics. Twenty years of Independence, 1993–2013*, 2017; Irina Tomescu-Dubrow, Henryk Domański, Zbigniew Sawiński, Kazimierz M. Słomczyński, Joshua Kjerulf Dubrow, and Dariusz Przybysz, eds., *Dynamics of Class and Stratification in Poland. 1945–2015*, 2018; Bálint Magyar, and Bálint Madlovics, eds., *The Anatomy of Post-Communist Regimes. A Conceptual Framework*, 2020; Bálint Magyar, and Bálint Madlovics, eds., *A Concise Field Guide to Post-Communist Regimes. Actors, Institutions, and Dynamics*, 2022). A distinct perspective is also required for the works of the Ukrainian researcher Tetiana Zhurzhenko (*Borderlands into Bordered Lands. Geopolitics of Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine*, 2010; *Gendernye rynki Ukrainy. Politicheskaya ekonomika natsional'nogo stroitel'stva*, 2008).

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The issue opens with a record of an editorial debate featuring Prof. Antoni Dudek, Prof. Krzysztof Brzechczyn, and Michał Przeperski, PhD – Polish scholars specialising in aspects of political and social transformation in Poland and Central Europe. Among the published texts is an essay by Prof. Alexandr Tomský on the effects of transformation in the Czech Republic, a presentation of the Berlin Wall Foundation, penned by Juliane Haubold-Stolle and Axel Klausmeier, and articles by: Andrzej Zawistowski (professor at the Warsaw School of Economics) on economic transformation in Poland at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s; Paweł Popieliński (researcher at the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw) on social transformation processes in East Germany; Marta Marcinkiewicz (researcher at the Institute of National Remembrance) on plans to introduce a state of emergency in Poland in 1988; Agnieszka Kolasa-Nowak (professor at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin) on Polish sociologists' perspectives on the interpretation of transformation in Poland; Antoni Dudek (professor at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw) on two significant cases of abuses related to the early transformation, namely the so-called alcohol scandal and the process of so-called party *nomenclatura* privatisation; Cristian Vasile (historian at the Nicolae Iorga Institute of History in Bucharest) on the state of research concerning the Romanian revolution of 1989; and finally Andrei Ursu (historian at the Romanian December 1989 Revolution Institute) and Andreea Badila (historian at the Institute for Defence Political

Studies and Military History in Bucharest) on the Romanian revolution of 1989.

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This issue of the journal is the first to be produced thanks to the efforts and commitment of new members of the editorial board: Dr. Filip Gańczak, Dr. Maciej Korkuć, Tomasz S. Gałązka, and Dr. habil. Bogusław Wójcik. It was certainly a time of significant challenges – and a glimpse into the future – for the now fully renewed editorial team.

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