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## INTRODUCTION: The End of History or the History that Started to Happen?

The transition in the Soviet Union went in multiple directions, which were unexpected to the architect of the *perestroika*. Apparently, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, as well as further developments in the countries that gained independence, were not even remotely wanted by Mikhail Gorbachev. However, the outcome of the transition was uneven in political or territorial terms. While for the former Warsaw Pact countries the collapse of the Soviet dominance and disintegration of the Communist parties' dictatorships opened the way to the restitution of sovereignty, for the former Soviet republics the change was quite tumultuous. The Lithuanian and Latvian bid to restore independence was met with Soviet armed response, the establishment of Moldovan, Georgian, Azerbaijani and Armenian independent states resulted in the ignition of national conflicts, exacerbated by Russian interference, and the formation of the unrecognised statehoods – Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), as well as the joining of the Nakhichevan to Azerbaijan, and the introduction of the so-called Gagauz clause in the Moldovan constitution. The course of the Tajik civil war was also an opportunity for Russian interference. The former Soviet imperial policies of Russification (equated with positively-seen Sovietisation) caused a forced influx of the Russian-speaking Soviet citizens into the other Soviet republics, and

the degradation of national languages and cultures (seen as beacons of a 'bourgeoisie nationalism'). The division of the Soviet empire along the boundaries of former Soviet republics – emerging as independent states, in many instances ruled by their former Communist party elites – resulted in forming states with unclear or non-existent allegiance of their citizens and inhabitants, economic and energy dependence, unstable national legitimacies, and conflicts spread along unexpected lines. The political shape of post-Soviet countries also emerged differentiated. The establishment of formal democratic rule went through divergent paths: from development into fully functioning democracies in the Baltic states, through the grey zone of states wavering from the rule of law to the kleptocratic and oligarchic rule, up to dictatorships. Those occurrences have set a number of deadlocks to the internal and international position of the then new post-Soviet states. The Russian interference left several "caches of conflict" in South Caucasus and in Moldova in form of the unrecognised statehoods of Transnistria, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, thwarting Georgian and Moldovan political aspirations and tying their policies to the Russian position in the matters of their very sovereignty. The large numbers of Russian-speaking inhabitants of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania undermine the political and social stability of those countries. In fact, many of the former Soviet countries appeared to be hostages to divisive Soviet policies, and their ability to achieve their own sovereignty and rule of law was distinctly tied to their capacity of establishing national aims and narratives.

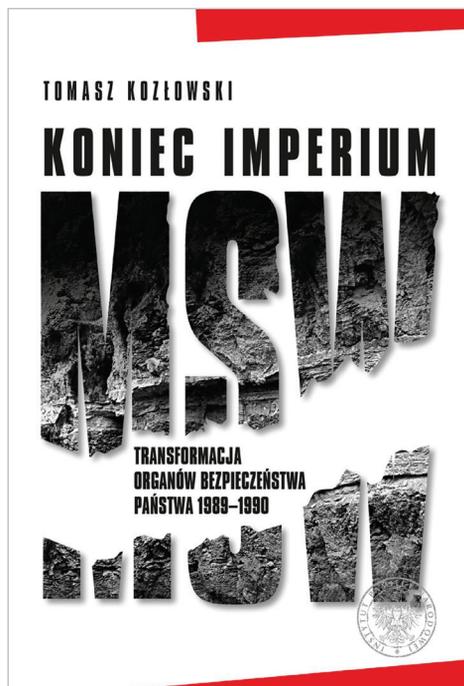
The distinct feature of the transformation in the former Soviet Union – in fact shared to some extent with the former Soviet Bloc

countries – was the occurrence that any kind of traditional political currents predating establishment of Soviet rule and even some elements of national identities was blurred or actually outdated (although matters of legal continuity were of key importance for the Baltic states). The ruling elites faced not only power struggles and confrontation with foreign (mainly Russian) interference, but also conflicting national and also religious identity narratives, often failing to navigate between the need to secure national identity and state cohesion, bid to establish rule of law and fair representative democracy, as well as overwhelming corruption, lack of identification with new state, post-Soviet nostalgias and allegiances. Building a new political entity and passage from a lack of freedom and ideologically motivated reign of lies to a system based on human and citizen rights, and identity security, needed political and also narrative cohesion as well as integrity and consistency in nation-building.

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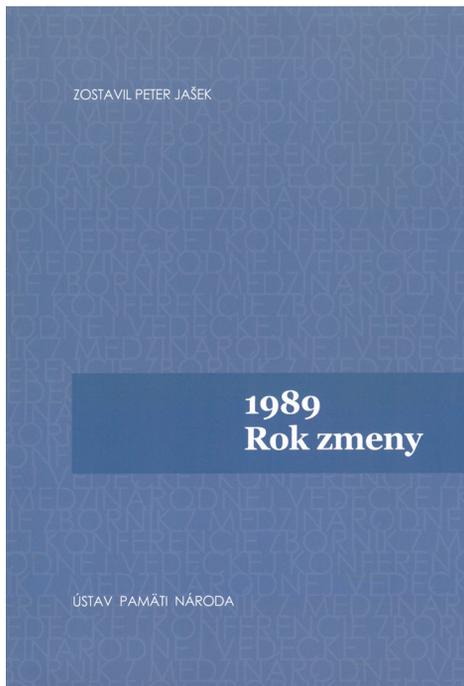
This volume was prepared concurrently to the edition of the issue 6 (2024–2025) of *Institute of National Remembrance Review*. The organisational and editorial matters caused the planned issue concerning transformation of Central and Eastern Europe in 1988–1991 to be split into two parts. This part encompasses the papers on the transformation occurrences in the former Soviet Union countries and provides overviews of selected books concerning their democratic transformation.

Among the included texts are articles by Jacek Wróbel (employee of the IPN Archives) on the separatist uprising in Transnistria – the



Tomasz Kozłowski. *Koniec imperium MSW*.  
Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2019

quasi-state on the border between Moldova and Ukraine; by Dr. habil. Dariusz Miszewski (lecturer with the War Studies University in Warsaw) on Russian interference in Ukrainian internal affairs in regard to its separatist and autonomous movements; by Dr. Monika Rogers (researcher at the Lithuanian Institute of History in Vilnius) on the legal changes originating from process of democratic transition and dealing with the Soviet past in Lithuania; and by Dr. Yuriy Serebriansky (Deputy President of the Kazakhstan PEN Club) on the impact of the transformation in the USSR on the Polish diaspora – in fact composed of the descendants of Polish deportees and exiles from Communist era – in Kazakhstan. The issue closes with some book review articles: by Dr. habil. Zbigniew Bereszyński (independent researcher) on Tomasz Kozłowski's book (*Koniec imperium MSW. Transformacja organów bezpieczeństwa*



1989. Rok zmeny. Zborník z medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie. Bratislava 4.–5. Novembra 2014. Ed. Peter Jašek. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2017

państwa 1989–1990, 2019) concerning the transition of the Communist security police during the democratic transformation in Poland; by Dr. Prokop Tomek (historian at the Military Historical Institute in Prague) on an edited volume about the events of 1989, published by the Slovak Nation's Memory Institute (*Ústav pamäti národa, ÚPN*) (*1989 Rok zmeny. Zborník z medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie, Bratislava 4-5 November 2014. 1989 – Year of Change. Anthology of the International Scientific Conference, Bratislava 4–5 November 2014*, 2017); by Dr. Daniel Povolný (historian at the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, USTR, in Prague) on an edited volume about the fall of communist regimes in Central Europe, published by the Institute of Contemporary History in Prague (*Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, ÚSD*) (*Dominový efekt: opoziční hnutí*

*v zemích střední Evropy a pád komunistických režimů v roce 1989*, 2013); by Professor Hubert Wilk (researcher at the Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw) on Michał Przeperski's book *Dziki Wschód. Transformacja po polsku 1986–1993* concerning the social face



*Dominový efekt. Opoziční hnutí v zemích střední Evropy a pád komunistických režimů v roce 1989*. Eds. Petr Blažek and Jaroslav Pažout. Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2013

of transformation in Poland; by Dr. habil. Cecylia Kuta (researcher at the Institute of National Remembrance Branch in Cracow) on Paulina Codogni's book (*Wybory czerwcowe 1989 roku*, 2012) about the process of political transformation in Poland; and by Professor Grzegorz Hryciuk (lecturer at the University of Wrocław) on Matěj Bílý's book (*Varšavská smlouva 1985–1991*.

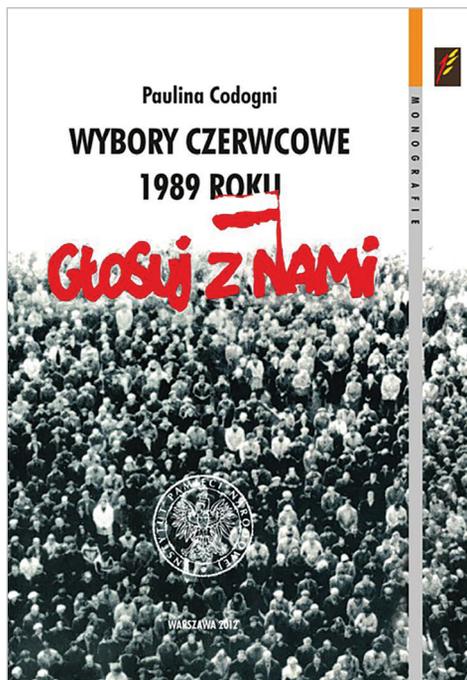
# Michał Przeperski



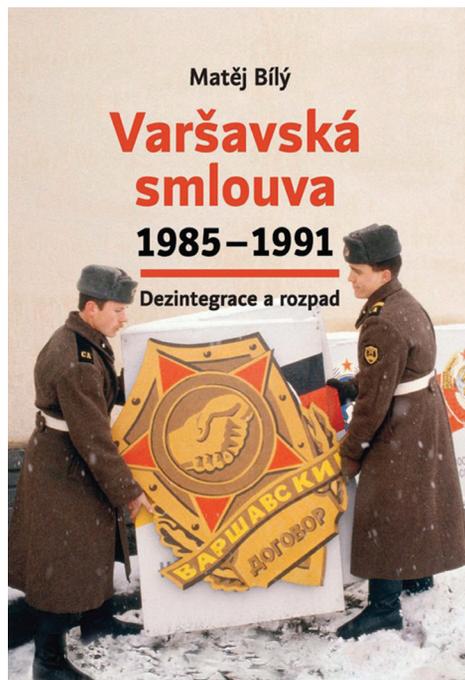
Transformacja po polsku

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Michał Przeperski. *Dziki Wschód. Transformacja po polsku 1986–1993*.  
Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2024



Paulina Codogni. *Wybory czerwcowe 1989 roku*. Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2012



Matěj Bílý. *Varšavská smlouva 1985–1991. Dezintegrace a rozpad*. Prague: ÚSTR, 2021

*Dezintegrace a rozpad*, 2021) concerning the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. The issue ends with a conference report penned by Piotr Skrzypiński (doctorate student at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) concerning the October 2024 conference in Toruń held on the 40th anniversary of abduction and murder of Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko.

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The next issue will focus on the relations between artists and dictatorial power in the former Soviet Bloc.

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